

# LAKSHYA

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

### JANUARY 2024



Joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' was held between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)

DRDO conducted a successful flight test of the AKASH-NG

Indore and Surat were jointly awarded the cleanest city title under SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023

Dr. Arvind Panagariya assumed the role of Chairman of Sixteenth Finance Commission







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### SAVITRIBAI PHULE JAYANTI

India celebrated Savitribai Phule Jayanti on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. The day commemorates her significant contributions to education, social equality, and women's rights.

- **Birth and Background:**
  - ◆ She was born on **January 3, 1831**, in a small village in Satara district, Maharashtra.
  - ◆ She was trained at Ms. Farar's Institution and Ms. Mitchell's school, becoming **India's first female teacher**.
  - ◆ Alongside husband Jyotirao Phule, he opened **India's first school for women in Pune in 1848**.
- **Educational Advocacy:**
  - ◆ Despite societal resistance, managed 18 schools by 1851 for children of various castes, with 150 girls.
  - ◆ She was honoured by the British government in 1852 as the best teacher.
  - ◆ Active in the **Satyashodhak Samaj**, combating caste-based discrimination.
- **Women's Rights Activism:**
  - ◆ She initiated **Mahila Seva Mandal in 1852 for women's rights**, uniting members across castes.
  - ◆ Advocate for **widows' rights**, and **campaigned against oppressive customs, including a barbers' strike against head-shaving**. She fought against dowry and societal norms.
  - ◆ Founded **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha in 1863**, India's first home opposing infanticide, aiding pregnant widows and rape victims.
- **Literary Contributions:**
  - ◆ Authored '**Kavya Phule**' in 1854 and '**Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar**' in 1892, collections of her poems.
  - ◆ Wrote 'Go Get Education,' encouraging education for the backward and oppressed classes.



### DIVYA KALA MELA 2023

The **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)** inaugurated the **Divya Kala Mela 2023 in Bengaluru**. This event is part of a nationwide initiative aimed at empowering Persons with Disabilities (PwD) throughout the 2023-2024 period.

- The event showcase the talents of approximately **100 Divyang artisans hailing from 20 states/Union Territories**.
- Products across various categories be displayed, including **home décor, clothing, stationery, eco-friendly items, packaged food, organic products, toys, gifts, and personal accessories**.
- In addition to the diverse array of products, the Mela hosted cultural activities and performances by Divyangjan artists.



### INSCRIPTION OF KADAMBA DYNASTY

A recently discovered inscription, believed to **date back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. during the Kadamba period**, has been found in the Mahadeva temple at Cacoda in southern Goa. The inscription, inscribed in both **Kannada and Sanskrit**, commemorates the death of Gundayya, the son of Talara Nevayya. Gundayya valiantly fought and sacrificed his life to fulfill his father's ambition of capturing a gopura (gateway) in the port of Goa.

- Originally subordinate to the powerful **Chalukyas of Kalyana**, the **Kadambas of Goa** rose in prominence.
- Kadamba Shasthadeva, a notable figure among the Kadambas, was appointed as the **mahamandaleshwara of Goa** by Chalukyan emperor Tailapa II.
- Through an alliance with the **Chalukyas**, **Kadamba Shasthadeva successfully overthrew the Rashtrakutas**, achieving military success.



- In 960 A.D., he conquered the **city of Chandavara** and later expanded his conquests to **Gopakapattana**, the present-day Goa, including the port area.



## CHANDUBI FESTIVAL

The Chandubi Festival is a lively event held in the vicinity of **Chandubi Lake**, situated in **Assam's Kamrup district**.

- Marking its 14th year, the festival serves as a vibrant platform showcasing the **rich Assamese culture**.
- Activities during the event include captivating **folk music performances, traditional dance shows, exhibitions featuring local handicrafts, and stalls** offering Assamese cuisine.
- Notably, the festival has played a crucial role over the years in creating livelihood opportunities for various tribes, including the **Rabhas, Garos, Gorkhas, and tea tribes**.

### Chandubi Lake

- The lake, formed as a result of a **massive earthquake in 1897**, stands as a testament to nature's forces.
- This prosperous wetland in the state serves as a habitat for numerous species of aquatic flora and fauna, making it a significant ecological asset.



## PRASADAM

Prasadam, the inaugural **"Healthy and Hygienic Food Street"** in the country, has recently opened its doors at **Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh**. Positioned as a culinary bridge connecting people across the nation with pure and safe local and **traditional food**, **Prasadam spans an area of 939 square meters and features 19 shops**.

### Key Features of Prasadam

- Designed to enhance the overall experience, the **food street incorporates various amenities such as a kids' play area, drinking water facility, CCTV surveillance, parking, public conveniences, and ample seating spaces**.

### Mahakaleshwar Temple

- Located in the ancient city of **Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh**, the **Mahakaleshwar Temple** is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- Positioned beside the **Rudra Sagar Lake**, it holds the distinction of being one of the twelve Jyotirlingams of Lord Shiva.
- Unlike other Jyotirlingas, the Mahakaleshwar idol is **Dakshina Mukhi, facing south**.
- During the **Maha Shivaratri festival**, the temple witnesses a significant influx of devotees.

### Architecture

- The temple complex boasts a spacious courtyard adorned with finely crafted sculptures influenced by the **Chalukya, Maratha, and Bhumija styles of structural design**.
- Lingam sculptures of Mahakaleshwar are prominently featured within the temple.
- Images of **Ganesh, Parvati, and Karttikeya** are **strategically placed in the west, north, and east of the sanctum sanctorum**.



- Additionally, the temple houses a tank constructed in the **sarvatobhadra** style.

## KATEEL YAKSHAGANA MELA



The century-old **Yakshagana mela** in **Dakshina Kannada** is set to revive its all-night performances after receiving approval from the Karnataka High Court.

### Kateel Yakshagana Mela

- Established in the **mid-19<sup>th</sup> century**, **Kateel Yakshagana Mela**, formally known as **Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Yakshagana Dashavatara Mandali**, holds a distinguished place as an essential 'Harake Seva' troupe.
- This Yakshagana troupe engages in **performances upon the requests of devotees who have made a vow (Harake)** to organize a Yakshagana show either to fulfil a wish or as a form of service.

### Yakshagana

- Yakshagana is a **traditional folk dance** form deeply rooted in the culture of Coastal Karnataka, known for its unique blend of **dance, music, song, scholarly dialogues, and vibrant costumes**.
- Traditionally, all roles, including female characters, are **portrayed by men**, although modern Yakshagana troupes now include women performers.
- A typical **Yakshagana troupe** comprises **15 to 20 actors** and a **Bhagawatha**, who serves as the master of ceremonies and the primary storyteller.

## CHITTORGARH FORT



The Supreme Court, acknowledging **the rich history and legacy of Chittorgarh Fort in Rajasthan**, recently issued directives to safeguard it against blasting activities.

### About Chittorgarh Fort

- Constructed by local **Maurya rulers** in the **7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.**, Chittorgarh Fort in Rajasthan stands as one of India's largest forts.
- Originally believed to have been developed by **Chitrangada Mori, a local Maurya ruler**, the fort came under the control of **Mewar rulers** in **728 CE** and served as the capital for the **Mewar dynasty**.
- Positioned on a **180-meter-high hill** along the banks of the **river Berach**.
- Designated as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in **2013**, the fort holds significant cultural and historical importance.

### Features

- The fort boasts **seven gates**, namely **Padan Gate, Ganesh Gate, Hanuman Gate, Bhairon Gate, Jodla Gate, Lakshman Gate**, and the **main gate named after Lord Ram**, strategically designed to safeguard against enemy attacks.
- These gates, featuring protective arches, even deter elephants from entering.
- Covering an expansive **700 acres with a 13 km circumference**, the fort's kilometre-long road leads to the rampart after passing through the seven gates.
- The **lime mortar walls** rise up to **500 meters above ground level**.
- Within its premises, the fort houses **four palaces, 19 temples (including Jain and Hindu temples), 20 water bodies, and four memorials**.

## SAQQARA



Archaeologists in Egypt recently made significant discoveries at **Saqqara**, **unearthing tombs** containing mummy masks and a statue depicting the '**god of silence**'.



## About Saqqara

- Saqqara is an integral part of the **necropolis (burial place)** associated with the ancient Egyptian city of Memphis.
- Situated on the western bank of the Nile, approximately **40 kilometres south of Cairo**, it derives its name from the burial god Sokar.
- Serving as an active burial ground for over 3500 years, Saqqara is Egypt's largest archaeological site.
- It played a crucial role in the evolution of burial practices, marking the transition from **mastaba (massive brick or stone tombs with battered walls on a rectangular base)** to the more well-known pyramid design.
- The Step Pyramid, the oldest of Egypt's 97 pyramids, is one of Saqqara's most renowned structures.

## KALARAM TEMPLE

Recently, the Prime Minister of India visited the **Kalaram Mandir on the Godavari banks in the Panchavati area of Nashik, Maharashtra.**

### Kalaram Temple

- The Kalaram Temple is named after a **black statue of the Lord**, where **"Kala Ram"** translates literally to **"Black Ram"**.
- Constructed in 1792 through the dedicated efforts of **Sardar Rangarao Odhekar**, the temple stands on the banks of the Godavari in Nashik's Panchavati area.

### Features

- The sanctum sanctorum of the **Kalaram Temple houses statues of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman**, along with a black idol of Hanuman at the main entrance.
- The main temple structure is characterised by **14 steps, symbolising the 14 years of Lord Ram's exile.**
- Additionally, the temple comprises **84 pillars, representing the cycle of 84 lakh species that one is believed to complete to be reborn as a human.**



## PAKKE PAGA HORNBILL FESTIVAL



The 9th edition of the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF), a state festival of Arunachal Pradesh, was held at **Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district from January 18-20, 2024.**

### About Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival

- The inaugural PPHF was held in **2015 with the primary objective of recognizing the Nyishi tribal group's** crucial role in conserving hornbills in the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).
- Additional objectives include generating alternative sources of **income for the region and fostering awareness across India about the wonders of PTR and its surrounding areas.**
- This year's festival carries the theme **"Domutoh Domutoh, Paga hum Domutoh"**, translating to **"Let Our Hornbills Remain"** in the Nyishi language.
- The focus of the festival in 2024 is to emphasize the critical need for preserving these iconic birds.

## THIRUVALLUVAR DAY

Recently, the Prime Minister of India paid tributes to **Saint Thiruvalluvar on Thiruvalluvar Day.**

### About Thiruvalluvar Day

- Thiruvalluvar Day was initially celebrated on **May 17 and 18 in 1935.**
- In the present time, it is typically observed on either **January 15 or 16 in Tamil Nadu, coinciding with Pongal celebrations.**
- The occasion is named in honor of the poet, **Thiruvalluvar.**

### Who is Thiruvalluvar?

- Thiruvalluvar, a **poet and philosopher**, is revered as a **cultural icon among Tamils.**
- Thirukkural, his primary work, comprises **1330 couplets (kurals) organized into 133 sections, each containing 10 couplets.**
- The text is divided into three parts, addressing **dharma (virtue), artha (wealth), and kama (love).**

- Thiruvalluvar's teachings provide moral, ethical, and practical guidance, with the couplets presented in a concise and poetic form, making them easily memorable and quotable.

## MARATHA MILITARY LANDSCAPES OF INDIA

India has nominated the “**Maratha Military Landscapes of India**” for recognition as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** for the year 2024-25.

### Details about Maratha Military Landscapes of India

- **Development and Timeframe:**
  - ♦ Evolved between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Maratha Military Landscapes embody an exceptional fortification and military system envisioned by the Maratha rulers.
- **Geographical Integration:**
  - ♦ The **network of forts, varying in hierarchies, scales, and typological features**, is a result of integrating distinctive landscape, terrain, and

physiographic characteristics found in the **Sahyadri mountain ranges, Konkan Coast, Deccan Plateau, and Eastern Ghats** in the Indian Peninsula.

- **Components of the Nomination:**

- ♦ **Twelve integral components** include Salher fort, Shivneri fort, Lohgad, Khanderi fort, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala Fort, Vijay durg, Sindhudurg in **Maharashtra**, and Gingee Fort in **Tamil Nadu**.





## Environment and Geography

### INDIA RECORDS ITS FIRST-EVER CONFIRMED SIGHTING OF A RARE TIBETAN BROWN BEAR



- The first-ever confirmed sighting of the rare **Tibetan Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos pruinosus*)** was recorded in the high altitudes of **North Sikkim, India**, marking a significant addition to the country's mammal diversity.
- The bear was spotted in the Mangan district of North Sikkim, known for its pristine landscapes and rich biodiversity.
- Camera traps captured images of the bear, revealing its characteristic yellowish scarf-like collar that broadens from the shoulders to the chest.

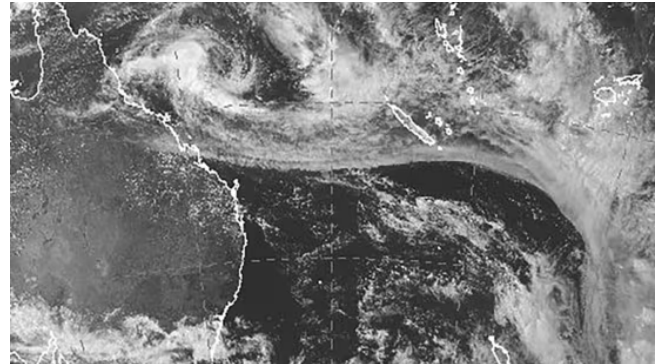
### ALVARO, FIRST CYCLONE OF 2024, HITS MADAGASCAR



- **Tropical Cyclone Alvaro** made landfall in **southwest Madagascar** on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, impacting over 17,200 people and resulting in at least 5 reported deaths and 8,400 individuals displaced. The actual death toll could potentially be higher.
- Madagascar has been facing a series of cyclonic events in recent times, including Cyclone Cheneso in January 2023, which impacted over 90,000 residents, and Cyclone Freddy in February 2023, which resulted in 17 fatalities and displaced 19,000 individuals.

- The cumulative impact of these successive cyclones has tested the country's resilience and disaster management capabilities.
- Cyclone Alvaro has particularly affected vulnerable regions like Atsimo-Andrefana in southwestern Madagascar, which already face immense flooding challenges during heavy rains.

### CYCLONE KIRRILY IN AUSTRALIA: THOUSANDS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY AMID HEAVY RAINFALL



- Australia is in the grips of an **El Nino weather event**, which is typically associated with extreme phenomena.
- Tens of thousands of people in Australia's Queensland state were without power on Friday after a tropical cyclone hit overnight, bringing damaging winds and heavy rains.
- **Cyclone Kirrily in Australia:** Cyclone Kirrily is shown off Australia's east coast. (AP)
- **Tropical cyclone Kirrily**, a category two system, made landfall late on Thursday along the coast bordering the Great Barrier Reef near the tourist town of Townsville, before being downgraded to a tropical low on Friday.
- Australia is in the grips of an El Nino weather event, which is typically associated with extreme phenomena such as cyclones, wildfires, droughts and heatwaves
- Queensland Premier Steven Miles told the Australian Broadcasting Corp that 64,000 people were without power on Friday due to the storm.
- Ergon Energy spokesperson Emma Oliveri said most power outages were in Townsville, adding that it was too early to say when power would be restored.

## NAMIBIAN CHEETAH 'JWALA' GIVES BIRTH TO THREE CUBS IN KUNO NATIONAL PARK



- **Kuno National Park (KNP)**
  - ♦ Recently, a Namibian cheetah translocated to KNP under Project
  - ♦ Cheetah gave birth to 4 cubs.
- **About Kuno National Park:**
  - ♦ **Location:** In Madhya Pradesh and is a part of Central Indian
  - ♦ Vindhyan Hills.
  - ♦ **Forest:** Dry Deciduous.
  - ♦ **River:** Kuno river is the main source of water.
  - ♦ **Flora:** Mainly dominated by Kardhai, Salai, Khair trees, along
  - ♦ with vast grasslands.
  - ♦ **Fauna:** Spotted deer, Chousingha, Nilgai, Black buck, Leopard,
  - ♦ Wild dog or Dhole, etc.

## WHEN ELEPHANTS HELP IN THE EFFORTS TO REDUCE HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT



- The **Odisha government** recently sought the help of **Tamil Nadu** to transport four **Kumki elephants** in a bid to resolve the man-animal conflict.
- To train elephants who can be used to lessen human-elephant conflict, the Odisha government has sought four Kumki elephants along with their mahouts from Tamil Nadu given the southern state's successful programme.

- When wild elephants create chaos, frighten people in inhabited areas, the forest department deploys kumkis who are trained elephants to tame other wild elephants to keep the animal and humans safe.
- In a letter to Supriya Sahu, additional chief secretary, environment, climate change and forests department of Tamil Nadu, her Odisha counterpart, Satyabrata Sahu, additional chief secretary said that kumki elephants could be effectively used in the eastern state to mitigate human-animal conflicts.

## AFTER 40 YEARS, CENTRE REVISES RULES ON WILDLIFE TRADE



- These rules aim to **replace Wildlife (Protection) Licensing (Additional Matters for Consideration) Rules, 1983.**
- 1983 rules prohibited issuing licenses to trade in a wild animal categorized under Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II under Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) 1972.
- Licenses were granted in exceptional cases with previous approval of the central government. This condition has been changed in 2024 rules.
- **New 2024 rules:**
- No such license shall be granted if it relates to any wild animal specified in Schedule I to the Act, except with previous consultation of the Central Government.
- Chief Wildlife Warden or an Authorized Officer issues the license based on parameters like existing licenses and implications of license on hunting or trade of wild animals concerned etc.
- **Impact of New Rules:**
- Might adversely affect mammals and birds enlisted in Schedule II, as some of them are already endangered. Examples: Bulbuls, Falcons, Turtles, Geckos, Snakes, Bats etc.
- Earlier, Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022 has reduced the number of Schedules from 6 (as of 1972 act) to 4.
- **Schedule I:** Animal species with highest level of protection.  
**Example:** Blackbuck, Sloth Bear, Cheetah, Swamp Deer etc.
- **Schedule II:** Animals with lesser levels of protection.  
**Example:** Nilgai, Indian Flying fox, Andaman Bulbul etc.



- **Schedule III:** Protected Plant species.  
**Example:** Neel Kurinji, Pitcher plant, Tree turmeric etc.
- **Schedule IV:** Specimens listed in Appendices under Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).  
**Example:** River Dolphin, Spider Monkeys, etc.

## USING MOSQUITOFISH TO FIGHT MOSQUITOES THROWS INDIA A TOUGHER PUZZLE



- A new study has revealed that two species of **mosquitofish** have invaded various ecosystems across India
- In the last few months, various government and non-governmental organizations in **Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Punjab** have released mosquitofish into local water bodies to address a mosquito menace that locals have complained about.
- In fact, officials in **Visakhapatnam** are set to release an additional six lakh mosquitofish after having released some 20 lakh a few months ago.
- The world's climate and habitats have changed noticeably in the last century, accelerating the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.

## PLACES IN NEWS



### Denmark (Capital: Copenhagen):

- Denmark's Queen Margrethe II, Europe's longest-reigning living monarch, announced plans to abdicate after 52 years.

#### Political Boundaries:

- Country in Northern Europe, made up of the Jutland peninsula and more than 400 islands in the North Sea.
- Bordering nations: Germany, Sweden and Norway.
- Bordering water bodies: North Sea and Baltic Sea.



### Iran (Capital: Tehran):

- India condemned the twin explosions that took place in Kerman city of Iran.

#### Political features:





- Iran is a country in the Middle East or West Asia.

#### Bordering nations:

- Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey, Iraq.

#### Bordering water bodies:

- Caspian Sea, Gulf of Oman and

	<p><b>Mauritius (Capital: Port Louis):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet approved MoU between Indian Space Research Organisation and Mauritius Research and Innovation Council on development of Joint Small Satellite.</li> </ul> <p><b>Political features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Island country in the Indian Ocean, located east of Madagascar.</li> <li>• Mauritius claims sovereignty over Chagos Archipelago (including Diego Garcia), although this claim is disputed by Britain.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Saudi Arabia (Capital: Riyadh):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• India and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement on annual Haj pilgrimage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Political features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located in the Middle East or West Asia.</li> <li>• It is the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula.</li> <li>• Bordering nations: Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, UAE, Qatar, Oman and Yemen</li> <li>• Bordering water bodies: Persian Gulf, Red Sea</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Timor Leste (Capital: Dili):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Indian Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with the President of Timor-Leste.</li> </ul> <p><b>Political features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Island country of South-East Asia.</li> <li>• Bounded by the Timor Sea (southeast), Wetar Strait (north), Ombai Strait (northwest) and western Timor (part of Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara) to the southwest.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Ecuador (Capital: Quito):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecuador has declared a nationwide emergency following the escape of high-profile prisoners.</li> </ul> <p><b>Political Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South American country, opening to the Pacific Ocean in its west.</li> <li>• Bordered by Columbia (North) and Peru (South).</li> <li>• It includes the Pacific archipelago of Galapagos Islands.</li> </ul>





#### **Cabo Verde (Capital: Praia):**

- Cabo Verde has been certified as malaria-free by WHO, becoming the third African country to achieve this status after Mauritius and Algeria.

#### **Political Features:**

- The archipelago lies around 500 km off the west coast of Africa in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Cape Verde has no direct neighbors.
- The former Portuguese colony comprises 10 islands and five islets.



#### **Nigeria (Capital: Abuja):**

- External Affairs Minister co-chaired the 6th Joint Commission Meeting between India and Nigeria.

#### **Political features:**

- Located on the west coast of Africa.
- **Territorial boundaries:** Niger in the North, Chad and Cameroon in the East and Benin in the West.
- **Maritime boundaries:** The Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean in the South.



#### **Switzerland (Capital: Bern):**

- Switzerland and India have reached consensus on a Free-Trade Agreement after 16 years of negotiation.

#### **Political features:**

- Landlocked country of central Europe.
- Bordered to France (west), Germany (north), Austria and Liechtenstein (east), and Italy (south).



#### **Singapore's Changi Airport Earns The Title Of World's Best Airport For 2023:**

- Changi Airport in Singapore has been named the World's Best Airport for the year 2023 by Skytrax, marking the twelfth time it has received this accolade.

## 2023 WAS WORLD'S HOTTEST YEAR ON RECORD, EU SCIENTISTS CONFIRM



- The year **2023** was declared the **hottest on record** by the **European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)**, surpassing previous temperatures and potentially marking the warmest period in the last 100,000 years.
- Each month in 2023 claimed the title of the hottest on record compared to its respective month in preceding years, indicating a consistent trend of breaking climate records.
- The global average temperature in 2023 was 1.48 degrees Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial period of 1850-1900, highlighting the impact of industrial-scale burning of fossil fuels on climate change.

## NIO IN GOA LAUNCHES UNDERWATER VEHICLE, C-BOT, TO MONITOR CORAL REEFS



- The **National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)** has launched a **coral monitoring autonomous underwater vehicle** called **C-bot** for long-term monitoring of coral reefs.
- C-bot can reach depths of 200 meters and is the first step towards building a capable underwater vehicle that can scan the depth of the Indian Ocean.
- The vehicle is equipped with different sensors and cameras to measure parameters and help explain why corals are dying due to climate change.

## WORLD'S FIRST WHITE RHINOCEROS IVF PREGNANCY MAY OFFER WAY TO SAVE SUBSPECIES



- Scientists have achieved the first-ever rhino pregnancy using in vitro fertilization, which involved implanting a southern **white rhino** embryo in a surrogate mother named **Curra**.
- The successful embryo transfer and early stages of pregnancy provide proof of concept for using this strategy to save the critically endangered northern white rhino.
- The process was documented exclusively by National Geographic for an upcoming Explorer special.
- The BioRescue project plans to soon implant a northern white rhino embryo into a southern white rhino surrogate mother, with the expectation that the embryo will develop.
- This approach may also help other critically endangered rhinos, such as the Asian Javan rhinoceros and the Sumatran rhinoceros.

## IN A FIRST IN THE COUNTRY, LAUGHING GULL FROM NORTH AMERICA SPOTTED AT CHITTARI ESTUARY IN KASARAGOD



- A **laughing gull**, a migratory bird from **North America**, has been sighted for the first time in India at the **Chittari estuary in Kasaragod district**.
- The bird was spotted by C. Sreekanth, a birdwatcher and school teacher, who noticed its unique features such as a dark upper part, black legs, long drooping bill, and a dark smudge on the back of the head.



- The sighting of the laughing gull increases the total number of bird species found in India to 1,367, with Kasaragod district contributing 400 species to the state's overall count of 554.
- Birdwatchers and researchers are interested in conducting further studies to understand the migratory

patterns and reasons behind the laughing gull's visit to Kasaragod.

- The e-Bird application played a vital role in disseminating this finding.

## GI TAGS



### Kachchhi Kharek, indigenous dates of Kutch receives GI Tag:

- Kachchhi Kharek, an indigenous date variety from the arid region of Kutch in Gujarat, has been awarded the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag, recognizing its unique qualities and origin.



### Red Ant Chutney of Odisha Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:

- In Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, the unique "Kai Chutney" prepared from red weaver ants has earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, as declared.
- This recognition highlights not only the dish's flavor but also its nutritional value. It is packed with iron, magnesium, potassium, calcium, zinc, protein, and vitamin B-12, offering a nutritional punch.

## INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES 150TH YEAR OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT AND SERVICE TO THE NATION



- India Meteorological Department (IMD) celebrated 150<sup>th</sup> Year of its establishment and service to the nation on 15<sup>th</sup> January.

- The Vice President of India, **Shri Jagdeep Dhankar** graced the occasion as Chief Guest in the inaugural ceremony celebration of 150th years of its establishment.
- Shri Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of Earth Sciences graced the occasion as Guest of Honour. Dr. M Ravichandran, Secretary MoES presided over the function.
- Former Secretaries of Ministry of Earth Sciences, former Director Generals of India Meteorological Department (IMD), Heads of various sister organizations in MoES, Secretaries of various Ministries, Chief Secretaries & Resident Commissioners of various States and Union Territories, Heads of various disaster management agencies, Heads of various Universities and institutions, employees of IMD, researchers & academicians and press & electronic media participated in the ceremony.

## VULTURE RESTAURANT SET UP IN JHARKHAND TO CONSERVE THE SPECIES



- A 'Vulture restaurant' has been set up in **Jharkhand** to conserve the dwindling population of vultures due to the use of drugs in livestock.
- The restaurant is located in **Koderma district** and will serve diclofenac-free animal carcasses from goshalas and municipalities as food for the scavenger birds.
- The establishment of the vulture restaurant aims to increase the population of vultures in the state and preserve their important ecological role in consuming animal carcasses.
- Plans are underway to expand operations and open another vulture restaurant in Chandwara block.

## IN A FIRST, HOG DEER SPOTTED INSIDE RAJAJI TIGER RESERVE

- The endangered **hog deer** has been spotted for the first time in the **Chilla Range** of **Uttarakhand's Rajaji Tiger Reserve**, captured by trap cameras.



- The spotting of the hog deer in the reserve is attributed to the work done to improve the habitat, including increasing vegetation and prey.
- Camera traps were installed in the reserve to monitor the results of the habitat improvement work, and it was found that the hog deer was present in the range.
- The hog deer population has seen a decline in recent years, including at the Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- The discovery of the hog deer in Rajaji Tiger Reserve is considered a wonderful New Year's gift for wildlife lovers.



## Defence and Military Exercises

### EXERCISE 'DESERT CYCLONE

- It is the name of the **Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024'** between **India and UAE**.
- 'Zayed Talwar' is a bilateral naval maritime partnership exercise conducted with the **United Arab Emirates (UAE) Navy**.
- Its primary objectives include improving interoperability, fostering synergy, and enhancing professional bonds between the Indian Navy and the UAE Navy through cross-training on tactics, techniques, and procedures.

#### Exercise Details

- Joint military exercise **'Desert Cyclone 2024'** between **India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- Scheduled from **January 2 to January 15 in Rajasthan**.
- Inaugural edition focusing on enhancing interoperability through shared best practices in Urban Operations.

#### Significance

- Aims to mark a significant milestone in the strategic partnership between India and the UAE.
- Emphasizes learning and cooperation in Urban Operations for improved joint military capabilities.



### INS KABRA

The INS Kabra, an **indigenous fast attackcraft** of the Indian Navy, recently docked at the **Colombo port**, reflecting a strategic move to strengthen bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka.

#### About INS Kabra

- This naval vessel is aptly named after an island in the **Andaman and Nicobar archipelago**.

- Belonging to the **Car Nicobar class**, it is one of the high-speed **offshore patrol vessels** manufactured by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) for the Indian Navy.
- As the eighth vessel in a series of 10 Fast Attack Crafts, it is a cost-effective platform designed for **patrol, anti-piracy, and rescue operations within India's Exclusive Economic Zone**.
- Notably, these vessels mark the Indian Navy's first **water jet propulsion technology deployment**.
- With a remarkable top speed exceeding **35 knots** and enhanced manoeuvrability due to its water-jet propulsion system, the INS Kabra is well-suited for high-speed interception of swiftly moving targets..



#### Key Features

Vehicle	Offshore patrol vessels
Class	Car - Nicobar Class
Speed	35 Knots

### DRISHTI 10 'STARLINER'

The **Chief of Naval Staff** recently inaugurated the maiden flight of the **Drishti 10 'Starliner'**, the first indigenously manufactured **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the Navy**.

#### About Drishti 10 'Starliner'

- Developed by **Adani Defence and Aerospace**, this UAV represents a significant advancement in indigenous technology.
- Functioning as an **advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)** platform.

- With a focus on high endurance, combat-proven capabilities, and advanced features, this UAV enhances India's naval capabilities substantially.
- Its autonomous capabilities, mission effectiveness and versatile payload configuration options position it as a valuable asset for strategic operations.
- This characteristic ensures **heightened operational readiness, minimising downtime, and maximising deployment** opportunities.
- Equipped with state-of-the-art communication systems, including satellite communication and Line-of-Sight (LOS) data links, the UAV ensures reliable and secure data transmission during its missions.

### Key Features

Pay load Capacity	450 kg
Endurance Time Period	36 hours
Working Condition	All Weathery both in segregated and unsegregated airspace.



### UGRAM

The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** recently introduced 'Ugram', an **indigenous assault rifle**, marking a significant advancement in military technology.

#### About Ugram

- Crafted by the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), a unit of DRDO, in collaboration with a private industry partner, 'Ugram' is a **cutting-edge indigenous assault rifle**.
- Tailored to meet the **General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR)** of the army, 'Ugram' is a result of meticulous consideration of the military's specifications.

### Key Features

Calibre	7.62 mm
Range	500 m
Weight	Less than 4 kg
Round of firing	20



### EXERCISE SEA DRAGON-24



The **Indian Navy's P8I aircraft** recently touched down at **Guam**, a **US island territory in the Western Pacific**, to participate in **Exercise Sea Dragon-24**.

#### About Exercise Sea Dragon-24

- This **multinational maritime exercise** fosters professional exchanges and collaborative teamwork among participating navies.
- The participating countries include **India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the United States**.
- The primary objective of the exercise is to enhance skills in various **maritime combat domains, incorporating both aerial and ground-based tasks**.

#### Key focus areas of the exercise include

- **Anti-submarine warfare (ASW)**: Identifying and neutralizing enemy submarines concealed beneath the seas.



- **Surface warfare:** Coordinated attacks on hostile surface vessels utilizing advanced weaponry and tactics.
- **Air defense:** Establishing an impenetrable air barrier to safeguard friendly forces from aerial threats.
- **Search and rescue (SAR):** Locating and rescuing maritime personnel in distress.
- **Communication and coordination:** Ensuring seamless synchronization of activities across multiple platforms and exchanging information efficiently.

## AN-32 AIRCRAFT

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) recently located the wreckage of an **An-32 aircraft** that had gone missing almost seven-and-a-half years ago.

### About AN-32 Aircraft

- The AN-32, or Antonov AN-32, is a military **transport aircraft of Soviet origin**.
- It is designed and manufactured by the Antonov Design Bureau of Ukraine specifically for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- Originally purchased by India from the former Soviet Union in 1984, the IAF operates a fleet of approximately 100 AN-32 planes.
- The aircraft is engineered to operate **day and night in tropical and mountainous** regions, including **hot climatic conditions of up to 55°C**.
- It can take off and land on rough airfields and dirt runways.
- The An-32 can transport **7.5 tons of cargo, 50 passengers, 42 paratroopers, or 24 patients and three medical crews**, serving various domestic and international air routes.
- Additionally, the aircraft has a limited bombing role and is utilized for para-trooping operations.

### Key Features

Speed	470 to 530 km/hr
Range	2500 to 9500 m
Maximum take-off weight	16800 kg to 27000 kg



## NEW GENERATION AKASH MISSILE



The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** recently conducted a successful flight test of the **New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG)** missile from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur**, off the coast of Odisha.

### About New Generation Akash Missile

- The AKASH-NG is a **state-of-the-art surface-to-air missile** designed for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- In a significant achievement, the missile **successfully intercepted a high-speed unmanned aerial vehicle** flying at a very low altitude during the test.
- The trial confirmed the efficient performance of the complete weapon system, which includes the missile with an indigenously developed **radio frequency seeker, launcher, multi-function radar, and command, control, and communication system**.
- This marked the **first live-target trial of the missile**, resulting in the successful interception and destruction of the target.
- Equipped with an active electronically scanned array (AESA) multi-function radar, the missile integrates search, track, and fire control functions into a single platform.

### Key Features

Type	Surface to Air Missile
Range	40 km
Targets	10

## ASTRA MISSILE

The Minister of State for Defence recently initiated the dispatch of indigenously developed **Astra Missiles to the Indian Air Force (IAF)** at Bharat Dynamics in Hyderabad.

### About Astra Missile

- Astra is a **Beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile** designed for installation on fighter aircraft.

- Developed domestically by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF), the missile is specifically designed to engage and eliminate highly manoeuvrable supersonic aircraft.
- Acknowledged as the best in its category globally, Astra Missile is part of a series developed to meet specific operational requirements.
- The ASTRA Mk-I Weapon System, integrated with SU-30 Mk-I aircraft, is currently being inducted into the Indian Air Force.
- Equipped with a locally developed Ku-band active radar guidance system and a 15-kg warhead, it allows the pilot to choose between “Lock on Before Launch – LOBL” and “Lock on After Launch – LOAL”. This allows the aircraft to shoot and retreat to safety after firing the missile toward the target.

### Key Features

Key Feature	Beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile
Range	80 to 110 km
Speed	4.5 Mach
Warhead	15 kg
Technology	Advanced solid-fuel ducted ramjet (SFDR) engine technology

### EXERCISE AYUTTHAYA



Recently, the inaugural **Bilateral Maritime Exercise “Ayutthaya”** took place between the **Indian Navy (IN)** and the **Royal Thai Navy (RTN)**.

#### About Exercise Ayutthaya

- The India-Thailand Bilateral Exercise is named “**Ex-Ayutthaya**”, which translates to “**The Invincible One**” or “**Undefeatable**”.
- The name symbolises the historical significance of two ancient cities, **Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya**

**in Thailand**, highlighting their rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives spanning centuries.

- **Indian Naval ships Kulish and IN LCU 56**, both indigenously built, participated in the inaugural edition of the exercise.
- During the maiden edition, participating units **conducted surface and anti-air exercises, including weapon firing, seamanship evolutions, and tactical manoeuvres**.
- The **36<sup>th</sup> edition of the India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT)** was also conducted alongside the maiden bilateral exercise.
- **Maritime Patrol Aircraft** from both navies participated in the Sea Phase of the exercise.

#### About INS Kulish

- INS Kulish is a **Kora-class corvette** currently in active service with the Indian Navy.
- Ordered in October 1994, **the keel for INS Kulish was laid in October 1995**, and the ship was launched in August 1997.
- Commissioned on 20 August 2001, Kulish is the third of the four Kora-class corvettes designed under **Project 25A**.

### PINAKA WEAPON SYSTEM



As per defence officials, two South American countries have expressed interest in acquiring the **Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers**.

#### About Pinaka

- Pinaka is a **Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL)** designed by the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It gained prominence during the Kargil War, effectively neutralizing Pakistani Army positions on mountain tops.

#### Key Features

- The Pinaka system comprises a multi-tube launcher vehicle, a **replenishment-cum-loader vehicle**, a replenishment vehicle, and a command post vehicle.



- Equipped with two pods containing six rockets, it can neutralize an area of **700 × 500 square meters within 48 seconds**.
- The launcher system is supported on four hydraulically-actuated outriggers during firing.
- With a range of **60 to 75 kilometres**, the system is mounted on a Tatra truck for enhanced mobility.

## EXERCISE KHANJAR

The **India-Kyrgyzstan** Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has recently commenced at the **Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh**.

### Exercise Khanjar

- **Initiation and Edition:**
  - ♦ First initiated in **December 2011 in Nahan, India**.
  - ♦ Marks the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise.
  - ♦ Conducted annually, alternating between both countries.
- **Participating Contingents:**
  - ♦ The **Indian Army contingent**, consisting of 20 personnel, represents troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces).
  - ♦ The **Kyrgyzstan contingent**, also comprising 20 personnel, is represented by the Scorpion Brigade.
- **Objectives:**
  - ♦ Aimed at exchanging experiences and best practices in **Counter-Terrorism and Special Forces Operations**.
  - ♦ Focus on **Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain operations** under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.



## EXERCISE CYCLONE

The Indian Army contingent, comprising 25 personnel, has arrived in Egypt to participate in the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE.

- **Edition and Venue:**
  - ♦ Marks the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Exercise Cyclone, scheduled at **Anshas, Egypt**, from January 22 to February 1, 2024.

- ♦ The inaugural edition of the exercise took place in India last year.

- **Participating Contingents:**

- ♦ The Indian contingent includes troops from **The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces)**.
- ♦ The Egyptian contingent, consisting of 25 personnel, is represented by the **Egyptian Commando Squadron and Egyptian Airborne Platoon**.

- **Exercise Objectives:**

- ♦ Aimed at familiarizing both sides with each other's operating procedures, specifically in the context of **Special Operations in desert/semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter**.
- ♦ Designed to enhance **bilateral military cooperation** and strengthen the bond between the Indian and Egyptian armies through discussions and rehearsal of tactical military drills.

- **Exercise Phases:**

- ♦ **Conducted in three phases:**

- ❖ **First Phase:** Military Exhibitions and Tactical Interactions.
- ❖ **Second Phase:** Focus on training related to Improvised Explosive Device (IED), counter-IED, and Combat First Aid.
- ❖ **Third and Final Phase:** Joint Tactical Exercise, emphasizing Fighting in Built-up Area and Hostage Rescue Scenarios.



## BRAHMOS

India is poised to commence the **export of ground systems for the BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines**.

- **Supersonic Cruise Missile:**

- ♦ BrahMos is a versatile supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from **land, sea, and air**.

- **Development and Joint Venture:**

- ♦ Developed by Brahmos Aerospace, a joint venture between **India and Russia**. The missile is named after the rivers **Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia)**.

- **Key Features:**
  - ♦ **Two-stage missile with a solid propellant booster engine** as the first stage, bringing it to supersonic speed before separation.
  - ♦ The liquid ramjet, or second stage, propels the missile to a cruise speed of nearly **3 Mach**.
  - ♦ Operational speed of **Mach 2.8** makes it one of the fastest cruise missiles deployed.
- **Specifications:**
  - ♦ Launch weight ranges from **2,200 to 3,000 kg**.
  - ♦ Extended-range variant with a maximum range of **400 to 500 kilometers**, maintaining supersonic speed throughout the flight.
- **Operational Principles:**
  - ♦ Operates on the “**Fire and Forget**” principle, adopting various flight profiles en route to the target.
  - ♦ Warhead and Stealth Technology:
  - ♦ Carries a conventional warhead weighing 200 to 300 kg.
- **Navigation Systems:**
  - ♦ Features an **inertial navigation system (INS)** for targeting ship-based objectives.



## MAHINDRA ARMADO

The recently unveiled **Mahindra Armado** made its debut appearance at the **Republic Day Parade**, showcasing its capabilities as **India's first Armoured Light Specialist Vehicle (ALSV)**.

### Armado

- **Indigenous Creation:**
  - ♦ Developed by **Mahindra Defence Systems (MDS)**, the Armado is India's inaugural **Armoured Light Specialist Vehicle** designed and manufactured domestically for the Indian armed forces.
- **Operational Versatility:**
  - ♦ Designed for diverse applications, including **counter-terrorist and special forces operations, quick reaction teams, reconnaissance missions, and border patrolling**.

- **Key Features:**
  - ♦ Seating capacity for six passengers, expandable to eight.
  - ♦ Can carry **400 kg beyond its standard 1,000 kg load capacity**.
  - ♦ Offers ballistic protection up to B7 level and STANAG level-2, safeguarding against armour-piercing rifles.
  - ♦ Comprehensive protection from ballistics and explosives on all sides (front, side, and rear).
- **Power and Performance:**
  - ♦ Equipped with a **3.2-litre multi-fuel diesel engine, generating 216 hp of maximum power**.
  - ♦ Accelerates from **0 to 60 kmph in just 12 seconds** and achieves a speed of over **120 kmph**.
- **Adaptability to Extreme Environments:**
  - ♦ Features a self-cleaning-type exhaust scavenging and air **filtration system, particularly designed for harsh and dusty climates such as deserts**.



## EXERCISE -SADA TANSEEQ

In a significant strengthening of bilateral relations, the military forces of India and Saudi Arabia are currently engaged in their inaugural Joint Military Exercise named “Sada Tanseeq”.

### Commencement and Venue

- The first edition of the India-Saudi Arabia Joint Military Exercise ‘SADA TANSEEQ’ started at **Mahajan, Rajasthan**.
- The exercise is scheduled to take place from **January 29 to February 10, 2024**.

### Objective of the Exercise

- The primary aim of the exercise is to train troops from both nations for Joint Operations in **Semi Desert terrain, operating under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter**.

### Training Activities

- The exercise involves various activities such as **the establishment of Mobile Vehicle Check Posts, Cordon & Search Operations, House Intervention Drills, Reflex Shooting, Slithering, and Sniper Firing**





## INS SUMITRA

The Indian Navy's INS Sumitra successfully rescued fishermen who had been hijacked by pirates along the **east coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden**.

- **Classification and Design:**
  - ♦ INS Sumitra is the **fourth and last vessel of the Saryu-class patrol vessels** in the Indian Navy.
  - ♦ Constructed based on an indigenous design, the vessel was built by **Goa Shipyard Limited**.
- **Commissioning and Location:**
  - ♦ Commissioned in 2014, INS Sumitra is stationed in **Chennai under the Eastern Naval Command**.
- **Primary Role and Operations:**
  - ♦ The ship's primary role includes **the surveillance of the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ)**.
  - ♦ Undertakes various operational tasks such as anti-piracy patrols, fleet support operations, maritime security of offshore assets, and escort operations.
- **Specifications:**
  - ♦ The vessel measures approximately **105 meters in length, 13 meters in breadth, and has a displacement of 2,200 tonnes**.



- ♦ Capable of achieving a speed of **25 knots**.
- ♦ Possesses an impressive range of **6,500 nautical miles**.
- **Propulsion:**
  - ♦ Propelled by two diesel engines.

## KH-22 MISSILE

Ukraine Air Force confirms inability to intercept Russia's Kh-22 supersonic cruise missiles.

### Kh-22 Missile Characteristics

It is a Soviet-era long-range airborne supersonic cruise missile. The missile is armed with a nuclear or highly explosive fragmenting cumulative warhead. Initially, the missile was designed to target aircraft carriers, large warships, or groups of such carriers.

### Development and Platform

It was developed in the 1960s in the USSR. It was specifically designed for launch from Tupolev-22 bombers. In 2000, Ukraine transferred 386 Kh-22 missiles to Russia as a gas debt instalment.

### Upgrades (1970s)

Speed	4,000 km/h.
Warhead	1,000 kilograms
Range	500 kilometers
Weight	5,820 kilograms

### Successor - Kh-32

- The missile was carried by **new Russian Tu-22M3M bombers**.
- Its features a conventional warhead, an improved rocket motor, and a new radar imaging terminal seeker. It is a Longer range but smaller warhead.

### Cruise Missile

- Unmanned vehicles propelled by jet engines.
- Launched from ground, air, or sea platforms.
- Remain within the atmosphere during flight.
- Can fly at low altitudes (a few meters above the ground).
- Low-altitude flight enhances stealth, though it consumes more fuel.

### INDIA PLANS 'BHARAT PARK' TRADE ZONE IN THE UAE FOR A GLOBAL SHOWCASE



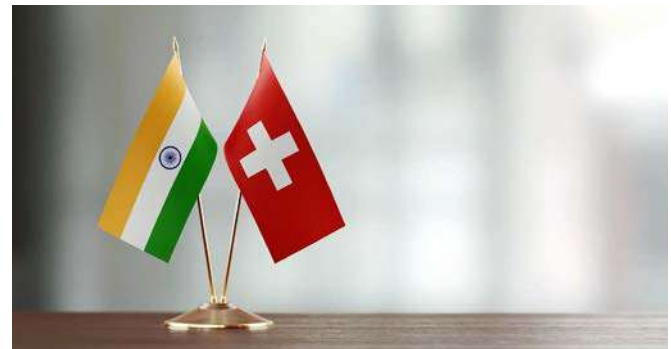
- The Indian government plans to establish '**Bharat Park**' in the UAE, a dedicated trade zone featuring showrooms and warehouses to display and store Indian-made goods for a global audience .
- The purpose of Bharat Park is to facilitate international purchases of Indian products, with secure transactions in the UAE .
- Union Minister Piyush Goyal emphasizes the importance of Man Made Fibre Textiles in the future of the textile industry due to challenges in meeting the increasing demand for cotton .
- The industry aims to surpass 6 billion in textile exports and 3 billion in technical textile shipments by the fiscal year-end, aligning with the government's ambitious export targets .
- The Synthetic and Rayon Textiles Export Promotion Council appeals for policy support, including addressing challenges such as GST rates and inverted duty structures, uniform GST rates across the value chain of Man Made Fibre Textiles, and the inclusion of textiles and clothing in the Interest Equalization Scheme to enhance competitiveness in the international market.

### T.N. GLOBAL INVESTORS MEET KICKS OFF WITH VISION REPORT FOR \$1 TRILLION ECONOMY; SLEW OF MOUS SIGNED



- The Tamil Nadu government aims to achieve a 1 trillion economy by 2030 through various strategies and principles.
- The government plans to attract 3.8-4.3 trillion in investments, both public and private, to boost the economy and attract foreign direct investment (FDI).
- There is a focus on increasing the participation of women in the workforce by adding 60 lakh women and transitioning 1 crore individuals into high-value jobs through upskilling and reskilling.
- The government aims to foster innovation through industry-academia partnerships, research and development (RD) leadership, and positioning Tamil Nadu as a preferred startup destination.
- Efforts will be made to create an industry-friendly climate by ensuring ease of doing business and providing seamless access to land, labor, and capital.
- The government emphasizes transparent and efficient policy-making to drive economic development.

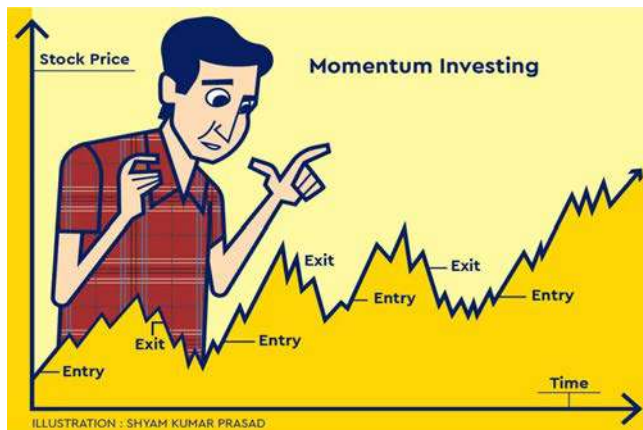
### SWITZERLAND-INDIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT ENDS AFTER 16-YEAR NEGOTIATION SAGA



- **Switzerland and India have concluded a free-trade agreement (FTA)** after 16 years of negotiations, marking a historic breakthrough in their diplomatic and economic relations.
- The Swiss Economy Minister involved in the discussions with India is Guy Parmelin.
- The FTA promises to generate employment opportunities for India's youthful population, addressing a critical aspect of the nation's economic landscape.



## VALUE INVESTING PIPS MOMENTUM FOR FIRST TIME IN 15 YEARS



- Momentum investing involves purchasing assets with rising prices and selling assets with falling prices, based on the belief that trends in asset prices persist over time.
- This strategy goes against the traditional advice of buying low and selling high during times of financial crisis.
- Momentum investors often invest in assets that have reached new all-time highs, even if they are trading above their intrinsic value.
- Academic studies have shown that momentum investing can generate high returns that outperform benchmark indices.

### CHENNAI IS TOP CITY FOR WOMEN IN INDIA: REPORT



- **Chennai emerged as the top Indian city for women** in terms of inclusivity and conduciveness to working women, followed by Tiruchirappalli. Tamil Nadu dominated both categories, with a total of seven cities featuring in the lists.
- The study ranked cities based on a **City Inclusion Score (CIS)**, which is a composite of three pillars: **Social Inclusion Score (SIS)**, **Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS)**, and **Citizen Experience Score (CES)**.
- Chennai retained its first-place rank in the Social Inclusion Score (SIS) category, but its Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS) slipped by 1 and is now second to Bengaluru.

### 6 COUNTRIES SHARE TOP SPOT FOR MOST POWERFUL PASSPORTS



- **France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain** share the top spot in the quarterly ranking of the world's most powerful passports, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to **194 destinations**.

- Finland, Sweden, and South Korea secure the second spot with easy access to 193 destinations.
- Austria, Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands claim the third position, providing access to 192 destinations.
- Belgium, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom collectively hold the fourth position with access to 193 destinations.
- Greece, Malta, and Switzerland secure the fifth spot.
- Australia, New Zealand, Czechia, and Poland share the sixth position.
- The United States, Canada, and Hungary are tied in seventh place with visa-free access to 188 destinations.
- India ranks 80th with visa-free access to 62 countries.

### SWACHH SURVEKSHAN AWARDS 2023: INDORE AND SURAT SHARE CLEANEST CITY TITLE



- **Indore and Surat** were jointly awarded the cleanest city title, with **Indore securing the title for the seventh consecutive time**.
- Sasvad, Patan, and Lonavala claimed the top three spots in the category of cities with a population under 1 lakh.
- Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh emerged **as the top performer in the cleanest cantonment board category**.
- Varanasi and Prayagraj received recognition as the **best and cleanest Ganga towns**.
- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh **secured the top three awards for their outstanding performance as the best performing states**.
- Chandigarh received the award for the Best Safaimitra Surakshit Sheher.

## 2024 MILITARY STRENGTH RANKING: US TOPS, BHUTAN AT THE BOTTOM, INDIA AT 4<sup>TH</sup> POSITION



- The rankings assess military capabilities of 145 countries based on factors like troop numbers, military equipment, financial stability, geographic location, and available resources.
- The PowerIndex score provides a comprehensive perspective on global military strength, considering economic strength, logistical efficiency, and geography.
- The methodology levels the playing field, allowing smaller, technologically advanced nations to compete with larger, less-developed powers.
- The rankings showcase the top 10 most powerful militaries in the world for 2024, reflecting the strengths and capabilities of each nation's military.
- The report also examines the changes in military strength from year to year, highlighting the dynamic nature of global military power and the influencing factors.

## INDIA ON TOP FOR TRUST IN BUSINESSES, NGOS; 4<sup>TH</sup> FOR MEDIA, 5<sup>TH</sup> IN GOVERNMENT



- India ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in trust in businesses and NGOs, 4<sup>th</sup> in media trust, and 5<sup>th</sup> in trust in the government.
- Developing nations tend to have higher overall trust perception compared to developed nations.

- Saudi Arabia ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in government trust, while India ranks 5<sup>th</sup>.
- China ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in media trust, with India in 4<sup>th</sup> place.
- Indonesia ranks 1<sup>st</sup> in employer trust, closely followed by India in 2<sup>nd</sup> place.
- India surges to the 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the overall trust index, overtaking its 2023 ranking, with China retaining the top spot.
- There is a global trend of skepticism, with concerns about intentional misinformation from government leaders.
- Science is perceived as politicized by 67% of respondents in the US.

## INDIA AGEING REPORT 2023: JAMMU KASHMIR'S LIFE EXPECTANCY



- Jammu Kashmir has a low elderly poverty rate, with only 4.2% of the aged population falling below the poverty line.
- Jammu Kashmir has the highest life expectancy after the age of 60, with males having a life expectancy of 20.3% and females having a life expectancy of 23.0%.
- Only 44% of the elderly in Jammu Kashmir utilize assistive devices, with spectacles (85.2%) and walking sticks (18.9%) being the most commonly used devices.
- Mental health concerns among the elderly in Jammu Kashmir include 15% falling into the lowest 10<sup>th</sup> percentile of the composite cognition score and nearly 30% exhibiting depressive symptoms.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLMENT INCREASED BY 19 LAKH IN 2021-22 FROM PREVIOUS SESSION: GOVT. SURVEY





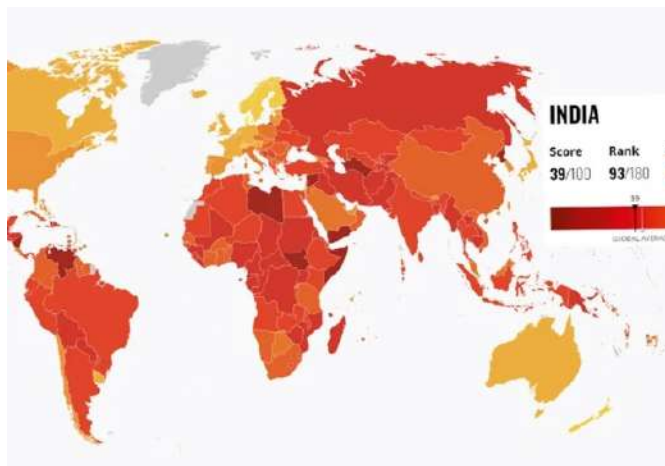
- The total enrollment in higher education increased by 19 lakh students from the previous session, reaching nearly 4.33 crore in 2021-22.
- Female enrollment in higher education showed a commendable rise, with a total of 2.07 crore female students enrolled in 2021-22, surpassing male counterparts.
- The number of female PhD enrollments doubled from 0.48 lakh in 2014-15 to 0.99 lakh in 2021-22, with an annual growth rate of 10.4%.
- In the science stream, there were 57.2 lakh students enrolled in 2021-22, with females (29.8 lakh) outnumbering males (27.4 lakh).
- The enrollment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) students increased by 65.2%, reaching 27.1 lakh in 2021-22 from 16.41 lakh in 2014-15.
- The North East States reported a total student enrollment of 12.02 lakh in 2021-22, with female enrollment (6.07 lakh) surpassing male enrollment (5.95 lakh).

### SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV RELEASES THE STATUS REPORT OF SNOW LEOPARDS IN INDIA



- The Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program is a scientific exercise to assess the population of Snow leopards in India, and it reported the presence of 718 Snow leopards in the country.
- The SPAI program was coordinated by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and supported by snow leopard range states, the Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru, and WWF-India.
- The SPAI covered over 70% of the potential snow leopard habitat in India, spanning about 120,000 km<sup>2</sup> across the trans-Himalayan region. The states and Union Territories included in the study were Ladakh, Jammu Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.

### INDIA RANKS 93 OUT OF 180 COUNTRIES IN CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2023



- India secured the 93<sup>rd</sup> position out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2023, with a score of 39.
- India's overall score in the CPI remained stable, with a minor fluctuation from the previous year's score of 40.
- The report highlights ongoing challenges concerning civic space in India, particularly mentioning concerns about a telecommunications bill that could potentially infringe on fundamental rights.
- In South Asia, countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka are facing corruption dynamics due to debt burdens and political instability. However, both nations have strong judicial oversight that serves as a check on governmental power.
- The broader Asia Pacific region has been stagnant in addressing corruption, with an average CPI score of 45 out of 100 for five consecutive years.

### FINANCE MINISTRY'S "THE INDIAN ECONOMY: A DECADE IN REVIEW" REPORT



- The report predicts that the Indian economy is likely to grow at over 7% in the coming years and is expected to become the third-largest economy in the world in the next three years, with a GDP of 5 trillion. It also suggests that India can aspire to become a **7-trillion economy by 2030**.
- The preface of the report highlights India's transition from fragility to stability and strength, expressing confidence in the country's ability to weather emerging disturbances. It also mentions India's adept management of crude oil supply.
- The report identifies challenges, including concerns over global supply chains, the impact of AI on services trade, and the significant energy transition challenge.

## India and The World

### KOCHI-LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS SUBMARINE OPTICAL FIBRE CONNECTION



- Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection (KLI-SOFC) was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi, which will lead to an **increase in internet speed in the Lakshadweep region**.
- It will enable telemedicine, e-governance, digital banking, digital currency usage, digital literacy, and faster and more dependable internet services.
- Total link distance: **1,868 kilometres**.
- Total cost of project : **₹1072 crore plus taxes**.
- The project is **funded by Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF)**, Department of Telecommunication.
- The Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Cable (KLI) project submarine cable connectivity from Mainland (Kochi) has been **extended to eleven Lakshadweep Islands namely**, Kavaratti, Agatti, Amini, Kadmat, Chetlat, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Androth, Kiltan, Bangaram and Bitra.
- The **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** was the **Project Executing Agency** and the work was done by M/s NEC Corporation India Pvt Ltd.

- Major activities related to the project includes Marine Route Survey, Submarine Cable laying, Civil Construction of CLS stations, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of End Terminals (SLTE).

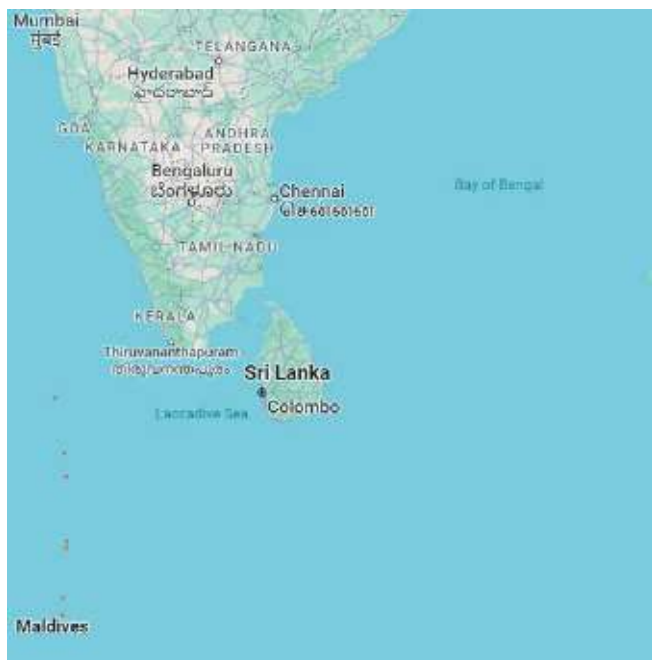
### INDIA PLANS TO END THE FREE MOVEMENT REGIME ALONG THE MYANMAR BORDER



- Indian Government to **eliminate the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the Myanmar border**.
- The residents of border regions, who currently have the ability to travel to India, will soon be required to have visas.
- The Free Movement Regime is a **bilateral agreement** between India and Myanmar that **grants tribes residing along the shared border** the privilege to travel up to a **distance of 16 km** into the territory of the other country without the need for a visa.
- India and Myanmar shares an international boundary of **1,643 km**.
- The **Foreign Minister's Residency (FMR)** was introduced in **2018** as a component of the government's Act East policy during a period of improving diplomatic ties between India and Myanmar.
- Indeed, the implementation of the FMR was originally scheduled for 2017, but it was postponed as a result of the Rohingya refugee crisis that occurred in August of that year.
- This step is taken by the government as **militant organisations utilise FMR to carry out strikes on the Indian side** and then escape toward Myanmar.
- India also aims to **curb the influx of illegal immigrants**, as well as the smuggling of drugs and gold.



## INDIA AND MALDIVES DIPLOMATIC TURMOIL



- The Maldivian government has formally requested that India **must withdraw its military forces** from the **island nation** due to a **diplomatic dispute** arising from **offensive remarks made by a Maldivian politician** against Prime politician Narendra Modi.
- India has maintained a small military presence in the Maldives for several years as per the request of the previous Maldivian administration.
- The diplomatic and political ties between India and the Maldives were **established in 1965** following the British withdrawal from the islands.
- India has dedicated significant time and effort during the democratic transition in 2008 to establish strong connections with many stakeholders in the Maldives, encompassing governmental, military, corporate, and civil society representatives.
- **Both countries have crucial significance on each other:**
  - ♦ For India, the Maldives, located south of India, play an important strategic role in the Indian Ocean, serving as a **gateway to the Arabian Sea** and beyond.
  - ♦ For Maldives, Indian tourists have become the leading source market for the Maldives accounting for 11.2% of total **tourist arrivals** and is a **crucial supplier of everyday essentials**.

## GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD - GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY

- India launched the “**Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality**” during the **54<sup>th</sup> annual World Economic Forum (WEF)** in Davos, receiving complete support from the World Economic Forum to

advance women’s empowerment and **promote gender equality**.



- The primary objective of this new Alliance is to unite worldwide innovative methods, exchange of knowledge, and financial contributions in the specified **domains of women’s health, education, and enterprise**.
- The coalition aims to expand upon the **efforts of the Engagement Group** and frameworks such as **Business 20, Women 20, and G20 EMPOWER** and is an immediate response to the G20 Summit 2023 Leaders’ Declaration and India’s dedication to promoting growth led by women.
- The alliance will be **operated by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Centre for Women Leadership**, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- The World Economic Forum has come on board as a ‘**Network Partner**’ and Invest India as an ‘**Institutional Partner**’.
- **About World Economic Forum:**
  - The World Economic Forum is an **international non-governmental organization** for public-private sector collaboration based in Cologny, Canton of Geneva, Switzerland.
  - It was **founded on 24 January 1971** by German engineer Klaus Schwab.
  - Its major aim is to **improve the state of the world by engaging business**, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

## INDIA ELECTED AS THE FIRST VICE CHAIR OF COFI SUB-COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



- India has been elected as **the First Vice Chair of the Food and Agriculture Organization** FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management.
- India will serve as a member of a FAO Fisheries Bureau on 'Capture Fisheries' **for the first time in 57 years.**
- India is one of the **top fishing nations** with over **28 million inland and marine fishers.**
- About FAO's Committee on Fisheries:
- It was established by the **FAO Conference in 1965** as a **subsidiary body** of the Food and Agriculture Organization.
- It provides policy guidance on fisheries management, acknowledges global challenges, and advocates for collective solutions to safeguard the fishing industry's environmental, economic, and social sustainability while addressing issues pertaining to international aquaculture and fishing.
- The **Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management** is a new sub-group formed under the COFI in 2022, during the **35<sup>th</sup> session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), held in Rome.**
- It will work closely with the two other COFI sub-committees, the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and the Sub-Committee on Fish Trade.

## MOU and Agreements

### MEMORANDUM OF SETTLEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM AND REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITED LIBERATION FRONT OF ASSAM (ULFA)



- A Memorandum of Settlement signed between **Government of India, Government of Assam and representatives of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)** for a peaceful, prosperous and insurgency-free Northeast and bringing **all-round development of Assam**.
- Previously, Government has also signed NLFT agreement in 2019, Bru and Bodo in 2020, Karbi in 2021, Adivasi agreement in 2022, Assam-Meghalaya border agreement, Assam-Arunachal border agreement and agreement with UNLF in 2023 and with ULFA in 2024.

### INDIA SIGNS BILATERAL HAJ AGREEMENT 2024 WITH KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA (KSA)



- **Ministry for Women and Child Development** and Minority Affairs Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani accompanied by Shri. V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs signed the **Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024** with H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah, **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)** at Jeddah, KSA.
- A total quota of **1,75,025 pilgrims from India** has been finalised for Haj **2024**, with 1,40,020 seats reserved for pilgrims to proceed through the Haj Committee of India.
- India Government has launched digital initiatives in facilitating and promoting ease and convenience for Indian Haj pilgrims by providing last-mile information.
- The Indian Government also launched an initiative to **encourage participation in the Ladies without Mehram (LWM) category**.

### NEPAL-INDIA JOINT COMMISSION MEETING



- **India and Nepal** recently concluded a **long-term agreement** regarding the export of power during the 7<sup>th</sup> Joint commission meeting of **India-Nepal** held in Kathmandu, Nepal.



- The bilateral agreement was reached between India and Nepal regarding the **export of 10,000 MW of power** over the next decade.
- **Nepal Electricity Authority and National Thermal Power Corporation Limited** of India also entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding **renewable energy cooperation**.
- Three cross-border transmission lines were jointly inaugurated including the **132 kV Raxaul-Parwanipur, 132 kV Kushaha-Kataiya, and New Nautanwa-Mainahiya lines**.
- The Service Agreement for Munal Satellite, built by Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, was also launched between Nepal Academy of Science and Technology and NewSpace India Limited.
- The Nepali students have **developed a satellite** that will be launched for free using an Indian launch rocket.

### MOU SIGNED BETWEEN INDIA-DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL PRODUCTS REGULATION



- Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding signed between **India-Dominican Republic**.
- The agreement was signed between the **Central Drugs standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, The Republic of India and Directorate General for Medicine, Foods and Sanitary Products Organizations of Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistant of **Dominican Republic on cooperation on Medical Products Regulation**.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will enable the **export of medical products**, resulting in the **generation of foreign exchange revenue**.
- This MoU will **promote information and cooperation** on medical products and administrative and regulatory matters within the parties' control.
- Through MoUs, regulatory agencies can collaborate to **combat substandard, falsified medicines in worldwide markets**.

### MOU SIGNED BETWEEN INDIAN RAILWAYS AND CII TO PROMOTE AND FACILITATE GREEN INITIATIVES



- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Indian Railways have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to jointly pursue the **reduction of energy and water consumption**, thereby mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.
- The MOU between CII and IR has been extended for a **third consecutive term**.
- First MoU was signed in **2016** for 03 years and upon its expiry another MoU was signed in **2019** for further 03 years.
- CII will collaborate in bringing new technologies and their implementation, assisting in achieving **ISO 50001 certification of workshops/production units**, developing a **Net-Zero Energy Railway station framework**, and creating an information dashboard to highlight the progress made in green initiatives undertaken jointly by IR and CII throughout the year.
- Significant progress has been made under above 02 MoUs in achieving:
  - **Energy efficiency in industry and railway workshops:** This programme saved 210 lakh kWh, ₹16 crores, and 18000 tonnes of CO2 from GHG emissions.
  - **GreenCo rating:** 75 Railways workshops and manufacturing facilities have implemented this initiative, improving their environmental performance.
  - **Green Railway Stations:** About 40 stations have earned green certificates and saved 22 million KWh and 3 billion litres of water yearly.
  - **Green buildings, hospitals:** Over 40 administrative, medical, school, and colony buildings have been green certified.
  - **Capacity building and skill development:** Over 20 new technology suppliers have been introduced, and 150 Indian Railways officials have visited India's six most energy-efficient private sector factories. Approximately 900 Indian Railways officials received energy efficiency training.

## CABINET APPROVES MOU BETWEEN INDIA & GUYANA



- The Union Cabinet has granted approval for the ratification of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between **India and Guyana to bolster cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector.**
- The proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) includes a wide range of collaboration projects throughout the hydrocarbon value chain.
- **Key components of the agreement include:**
  1. **Crude Oil Sourcing from Guyana:** The agreement intends to diversify India's crude oil sources, improving energy security and reducing dependence on one region.
  2. **Exploration and Production (E&P) industry:** Indian enterprises can participate in Guyana's E&P industry. This strategic move promotes worldwide relationships and India's "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" ideal of self-sufficiency.
  3. **Capacity Building and Bilateral Trade Strengthening:** The MoU covers capacity-building, crude oil refining, and bilateral trade strengthening to boost economic growth in both countries.
  4. **Natural Gas Sector Collaboration:** The agreement promotes knowledge exchange and coordinated efforts to harness the potential of natural gas, recognising its relevance.
  5. **Oil and gas regulatory policy framework development:** Both countries will work together to create a sustainable growth and investment environment in Guyana.
  6. **Clean Energy Initiatives:** The collaboration covers biofuels, renewables, and solar energy projects, aligning with both nations' environmental sustainability goals.

## NDB TO PROVIDE \$500 MILLION LOAN FOR GUJARAT'S INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Shanghai-headquartered New Development Bank (NDB) signed an agreement to **provide a \$500-million loan to Gujarat** during the Vibrant Gujarat Summit in Gandhinagar.
- Under the **Vibrant Gujarat Summit**, a project loan will be offered for the implementation of the **State's Mukhayamantri Gram Sadak Yojana.**
- NDB will also provide **knowledge support** to strengthen the rural road network in the State by adopting new technology, **safeguarding the environment and implementing safer road designs.**
- **About New Development Bank:**
- The New Development Bank (NDB) is a **multilateral development bank** established by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).
- Founded on: **15 July 2014** in Fortaleza, Brazil with its **headquarters in Shanghai.**
- It was established with the purpose of **mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs).

### DR. ARVIND PANAGARIYA BECAME THE CHAIRMAN OF INDIA'S SIXTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION



- The President has constituted the **Sixteenth Finance Commission under Article 280(1)** of the Constitution.
- The Chairman of the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission will be **Dr Arvind Panagariya**, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, and Professor, Columbia University.
- **Shri Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey** has been appointed as Secretary to the Commission.
- The Sixteenth Finance Commission shall **make recommendations** as to the following matters, namely:
  - (i) The distribution between the Union and the States of the **net proceeds of taxes**
  - (ii) The grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of **grants-in-aid** of their revenues under **article 275 of the Constitution**
  - (iii) The measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the **resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities** in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State.
- **About Finance Commission:**
- The Finance Commission is mentioned under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution and is constituted by the President of India.
- It is a **constitutional body** that recommends tax revenue allocation between the Union and States and among various States.
- It has a **Chairman and four other members**.

- They hold the office for a period as specified by the President.
- They are eligible for reappointment.

### AYODHYA AIRPORT NAMED MAHARISHI VALMIKI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



- The Union Cabinet approved the **temple town airport** name and elevated it to international status.
- Ayodhya airport is now **Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham**.
- The airport is named "Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham", in honour of Maharishi Valmiki, the sage credited with **authoring the epic Ramayana**, so infusing the airport's identity with a cultural significance.
- The airport is designed to **accommodate 600 peak-hour passengers** and can handle 10 lakh passengers annually.
- The exterior of the terminal building showcases the **architectural style of the forthcoming Ram Temple in Ayodhya**.

### GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PROMOTING INDIA AS A GLOBAL MICE DESTINATION

- Minister of Commerce & Industry, GoI is promoting India as a **global MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination** to showcase India's MSME sector, traditional handicrafts, artisanal offerings, weavers and manufacturing prowess.
- The '**Aatmanirbhar Bharat Utsav**' event held in New Delhi aims to showcase a diverse range of products,



including those made by skilled artisans, weavers, khadi producers, tribal craftsmen, MSMEs, and cottage industries



- MICE Tourism is one of the key **revenue spinners of travel and tourism** economy in modern times.
- The Ministry of Tourism is also actively working to take the G20 momentum forward and firmly establish India as a global leader in MICE.

### JUSTICE BR GAVAI HAS BEEN NOMINATED AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SUPREME COURT LEGAL SERVICES COMMITTEE



- **Justice BR Gavai**, a Supreme Court judge, has been **nominated to serve** as chairman of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.
- About Supreme Court Legal Services Committee:
- It was constituted under **Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**.
- Established to provide **“free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society”**, in cases falling under the top court’s jurisdiction.
- Section 3A of the Act states that the Central Authority (the National Legal Services Authority or NALSA) shall constitute the committee.
- **Composition:** The chairman is a sitting SC judge, and other members have Centre-required experience and qualifications.

- The **CJI shall nominate** the Chairman and other members. The CJI can also appoint the Committee Secretary.
- The Committee can designate officers and other personnel as prescribed by the Centre in consultation with the CJI.

### ONE VEHICLE, ONE FASTAG’ INITIATIVE



- National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) launched the **‘One Vehicle One FASTag’** Initiative to **enhance national highway experience**.
- The initiative will help to **enhance efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection system** and provide seamless movement at the Toll Plazas.
- NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to **complete the ‘Know Your Customer’ (KYC) process** of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines.
- FASTag users must also **follow ‘One Vehicle, One FASTag’** and **discard all previous FASTags through their banks**.
- After 31 January 2024, only the latest FASTag account will remain operational. FASTag users can call their issuer banks’ toll plazas or toll-free customer service numbers for help.

### INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS WORTH MORE THAN ₹4,000 CRORES IN KOCHI, KERALA



- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated **three major infrastructure projects** worth more than ₹4,000s crore in Kochi, Kerala.
- **The projects include:**
  - ♦ New Dry Dock (NDD) at Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL),
  - ♦ International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF) of CSL, and
  - ♦ LPG Import Terminal of Indian Oil Corporation Limited at Puthuvyppeen, Kochi.
- These projects aims to **transform India's ports, shipping, and waterways** sector, and build capacity and self-sufficiency in it.
- The New Dry Dock (NDD) has been constructed to **meet international standards**, measuring 310 metres in length with an investment of ₹1799 crores.
- It will be capable of handling **aircraft carriers twice the displacement of INS Vikrant** or other larger ships like Suezmax, Capesize, LNG ships and Jack Up rigs.
- The International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF) is India's **first fully developed pure ship repair ecosystem** which will add 25% capacity of the ship repair industry in the country. Built at an **investment of ₹970 crores**, it will also provide rapid turnaround for India's Naval and Coast Guard ships during emergency as planned refits.
- LPG Import Terminal of Indian Oil Corporation Limited at Puthuvyppeen, Kochi is **connected with Multi-User Liquid Terminal Jetty** through a 3.5 km Cross Country Pipeline.
- The terminal has a **storage capacity of 15,400 metric tonnes** and aspires to achieve a turnover of 1.2 million metric tonnes per annum.
- The terminal would facilitate the **delivery of LPG through both road and pipeline transfers**, resulting in immediate advantages for bottling factories located in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

## 75TH REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA



- President **Smt Droupadi Murmu** led the Nation on the **75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day from Kartavya Path** in New Delhi on January 26, 2024.
- French President **Mr. Emmanuel Macron** was the **Chief Guest**.

- The parade was based on the **twin themes of 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat-Loktantra ki Matraka'**.
- Over **100 women musicians** playing Indian instruments will lead the parade for the first time.
- The female artists played **Sankh, Naadswaram, Nagada**, etc. to begin the march.
- An **all-female Tri-Service contingent** marched along the Kartavya Path for the first time.
- **Women pilots representing Nari Shakti** captivated the crowd during the Fly-past.
- The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) was also commanded by all women.
- The **French military contingent participated** in the Republic Day parade. The contingent belonged to the **Corps of French Foreign Legion**.
- **Beating Retreat Ceremony:**
- Beating Retreat ceremony was **held at Vijay Chowk** on January 29, 2024, which witnessed all Indian tunes played by bands of Indian Army, Indian Navy, Indian Air Force & CAPF to mark the **culmination of Republic Day celebrations**.
- **Best Tableaux awards:**



- Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri **Ajay Bhatt** honoured the **top marching contingents** and tableaux during a ceremony on January 30, 2024, in appreciation of their exceptional performances in the 2024 parade.
- **Best Marching Contingents:**
- The **Sikh Regiment Contingent** was declared the best marching contingent among the three services, showcasing their discipline and precision.
- The **Delhi Police Women Marching Contingent** received the award, highlighting the increasing role of women in security forces.
- **Among the states, Odisha's tableau**, themed "Woman Empowerment in Viksit Bharat was at **first place**, followed by Gujarat's "Dhordo: A Global Icon of Gujarat's Border Tourism" tableau highlighting the state's border tourism. At the **third place came Tamil Nadu's "Kudavolai System** in Ancient Tamil Nadu – Mother of Democracy" tableau depicted the region's ancient democratic system.

- Among the ministries, the Ministry of Culture won with its tableau themed “Bharat: Mother of Democracy”, celebrating India’s democratic heritage.

## INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS CLARIFIED THAT AADHAAR IS NOT PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP OR BIRTH DATE



- Aadhaar **does not serve as evidence of citizenship**, as it is also **accessible to foreign nationals** who have been in India for **at least six months**.
- However, some government departments recognise Aadhaar for specific reasons that are typically reserved for residents or adults.
- The revised Aadhaar cards and PDF versions of the identification document now feature a more explicit and visible disclaimer stating that they **serve as “proof of identity”** and should not be utilised as evidence of citizenship or date of birth.
- This serves as a clear directive to government agencies and other entities to refrain from employing it for such reasons.
- The **Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** is **responsible for managing** the compulsory pension fund for salaried workers in India.
- On January 16, the EPFO released a circular that **removed Aadhaar from the list of eligible documents** for **verifying one’s date of birth**.



### SCHEME FOR RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN TARGETED AREAS (SHRESHTA)



- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment implements the Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA) to expand the scope of **development intervention** of the Government.
- It is a **central sector scheme**.
- The scheme is launched to fill the gap in service deficient SCs dominant areas in the education sector.
- There are two modes of the scheme:
- **Mode 1: SHRESHTA schools (Best CBSE/State Board affiliated Private Residential Schools)**
  - ♦ Every year, a certain number of meritorious SC students in States/UTs will be selected through the National Entrance Test for SHRESHTA (NETS) conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).
  - ♦ They will be admitted to the best CBSE/State Board-affiliated private residential schools in classes 9th and 11th to complete 12th grade.
  - ♦ Students whose parents annual income is upto 2.5 lakh are selected.
- **Mode 2: NGO/VO operated Schools/Hostels (EXISTING COMPONENT)**
  - ♦ Subject to good performance, VO/NGO/other organisations with higher classes (up to class 12) will continue to receive Grant-in-aid.
  - ♦ The Scheme would give grants for school fees and residential charges for SC students admitted to schools.

- ♦ The grant per SC student is 44,000 for primary residential school, 27,000 for primary non-residential school, 30,000 for primary hostel, 55,000 for secondary residential school, 35,000 for secondary non-residential school, and 30,000 for secondary hostel.

- A real time **Data Management Information System (MIS)** for collection and dissemination of progress of the scheme will be implemented.

### K-SMART APP



- Kerala has launched the K-SMART (**Kerala Solutions for Managing Administrative Reformation and Transformation**) application which will provide **digital access to services** offered by **local self-government bodies** through a unified platform across the state.
- K-SMART aims to **optimise local government services** in Kerala through the implementation of its broad range of **35 modules**.
- These modules cover a diverse range of services, such as birth, death, and marriage registrations, business licences, property taxes, and additional services.

### CONCERNS LIMITING WELFARE BENEFITS TO DISADVANTAGED INDIANS UNDER MGNREGA

- The Ministry of Rural Development addressed concerns about Aadhaar **limiting welfare benefits** to disadvantaged Indians and **delaying wage payments** under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

- About Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Scheme.
- It is one of the **world's largest work guarantee scheme** which was launched by the **Ministry of Rural Development in 2005**.
- MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee, ensuring a **100 days of employment** each financial year for adult members of **any rural household**.
- The total number of registered Job Cards is **14.32 crore**.
- Technologies used in MGNREGA:
- **Aadhaar seeding** is an ongoing procedure that **de-duplicates beneficiaries** to authenticate them and limit social welfare plan benefits to genuine beneficiaries.
- The **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app** records beneficiaries' **real-time attendance** at worksites, allowing beneficiaries and citizens to verify workers' identities.
- The **National Electronic Fund Management System** started in FY 2016-17 to provide **wage payment directly into the account** of beneficiaries. More than 99% wage payment is being made directly into their Bank/Post office account.

## BHARATMALA PARIYOJANA DEADLINE EXTENDED BY 6 YEARS



- The government recently announced a **six-year extension** to the deadline for the completion of the **prominent highway development project**, Bharatmala Phase-I.
- The project is now scheduled **to be finished by 2027-28**.
- Bharatmala Pariyojana is an **umbrella programme** launched under the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** to improve **road connectivity**.
- It was initially launched in **2017**, with the first phase planned to be finished by 2022. However, with an over 100% increase in the estimated cost of the mega project, and a **slower-than-expected rate of**

**implementation**, the government found it imperative to prolong the timeframe for achieving completion.

- Only 42 per cent of the project was completed as of November 2023, covering 15,045 km.
- Bharatmala Project categories include:
- **Economic Corridor:** The construction of 9000 kms of Economic Corridors will be undertaken by the central government.
- **Feeder Route or Inter Corridor:** The total length of the roads, which fall under the Feeder Route or Inter Corridor category, is 6000 kms.
- **National Corridor Efficiency Improvement:** 5000 kms of roads, constructed under the scheme will fall in the category of National Corridor for the better connection between roads.
- **Border Road and International Connectivity:** Connecting the cities and remote areas, which are situated in the border regions, the project has kept provision for constructing 2000 kms roads that fall in the Border Road or International Connectivity category.
- **Port Connectivity and Coastal Road:** To connect the areas that are dotted along the shorelines and important ports, the central government has ordered the construction of 2000 km of roads.
- **Green Field Expressway:** Development of Green Field Expressway for better management of traffic and freight.
- **Balance NHDP Works:** The project will see a construction and maintenance of about 10,000 kms of new roads.

## "PRITHVI VIGYAN (PRITHVI)" SCHEME



- The union cabinet approved the overarching scheme **"PRITHVi Vigyan (PRITHVI)"** of **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, for implementation during the period from **2021-26**.
- The estimated cost of the scheme is **₹4,797 crore**.
- The scheme encompasses **five ongoing sub-schemes** namely
  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**)
  5. Research, Education, Training and Outreach (**REACHOUT**)
- The **major objectives** of the overarching Prithvi Scheme are:
    1. Augmentation and **sustainance of long-term observations** of the atmosphere, ocean, geosphere, cryosphere and solid earth to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change.
    2. Development of modelling systems for understanding and **predicting weather**, ocean and climate hazards and understanding the science of climate change
    3. **Exploration of polar and high seas regions** of the Earth towards discovery of new phenomena and resources.
    4. Development of technology for exploration and **sustainable harnessing** of oceanic resources for societal applications
    5. Translation of **knowledge and insights** from Earth systems science into services for societal, environmental and economic benefit.

### PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHUYDAY YOJANA



- The **Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojana (PM-AJAY)** is a combined programme that merges **three centrally sponsored** schemes:
  - ♦ the Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (**PMAGY**)
  - ♦ the Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (**SCA to SCSP**)
  - ♦ the Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (**BJRCY**).
- It has been implemented since 2021-22 with the goal of **reducing poverty among the Scheduled Caste (SC) communities**.
- The programme aims to **improve socio-economic development indicators** by ensuring sufficient infrastructure and necessary services in SC-dominated villages.

- This will be achieved by **creating more employment opportunities** through skill development, income-generating schemes, and other initiatives.
- The Scheme has following three components:
  1. **Development of SC dominated villages into an "AdarshGram".**
  2. **'Grants-in-aid' for District/State-level Projects for socio-economic betterment of SCs.**
  3. **Construction of Hostels in higher educational institutions.**

### MUKHYAMANTRI MAHILA UDYAMITA ABHIYAAN (MMUA) SCHEME

- The **Assam Government** has launched a new scheme - the **Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA)** to enable rural women to gain **greater financial independence** by becoming micro entrepreneurs.
- The budget for the scheme is **approximately 4000 crore rupees**.
- The MMUA initiative aims to facilitate the **advancement of rural women** who are affiliated with self-help groups.
- The objective is to convert them into **"Rural Micro Entrepreneurs"** with a goal of achieving an **annual revenue of ₹1 lakh per member**.
- In order to be eligible for the grant, women belonging to the general and other backward caste (OBC) groups must have a maximum of three children. Nevertheless, women belonging to the Moran, Muttock, and tea-tribe clans are eligible for special exemptions, allowing them to apply if they have four or fewer children.
- Women belonging to the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Scheduled Caste (SC) groups must have a **maximum of four children** to meet the eligibility criterion.

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION 'PRERNA' PROGRAM



- The Department of School Education & Literacy, **Ministry of Education**, Government of India has launched **'Prerana: An Experiential Learning program'**.



- The program aims to offer a meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to all participants, thereby **empowering them with leadership qualities**.
- Prerana is a **seven-day residential programme** for selected children of **class IX to XII**.
- A batch of **20 selected students** (10 boys and 10 girls) will attend the program, every week from various parts of the country.
- **Prerana program** will run from a **Vernacular School**, established in 1888, in one of the oldest living cities of India, **Vadnagar, district Mehsana, Gujarat**.
- The curriculum of Prerana School **prepared by IIT Gandhi Nagar**.
- Activities include **yoga and meditation** sessions, experiential learning, thematic sessions, visits to ancient and heritage sites, inspirational film screenings, mission life creative activities, talent shows etc. ensuring a **holistic learning approach**.

### MULYA PRAVAH 2.0 BY UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC)



- The University Grants Commission (UGC) has implemented Mulya Pravah 2.0 to **enhance the ethical standards of higher education institutions**.
- It calls for utmost **transparency in administration**.
- The guidelines is an improved version of its previous edition from 2019, seeks to **inculcate human values and professional ethics**, addressing and countering unethical activities that have permeated diverse institutions.
- The emphasis is placed on **constructing institutions** that are rooted in core responsibilities and constitutional principles, encouraging a **dedication to honesty and moral behaviour**.
- A survey of human resource managers found widespread **unethical practices** like favouritism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, uneven punishment, lack of secrecy, and vendor deals for personal gain are prevalent in **higher education institutions**, which will be **addressed by Mulya Pravah 2.0**.

### E-SAKSHI APP UNDER MPLADS



- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** launched the **MPLADS e-SAKSHI** Mobile Application for revised fund flow procedure under MPLAD Scheme.
- The mobile application would provide easy access, enabling Members of Parliament to **propose, monitor, and supervise projects** using their smartphones.
- The ability to **access information in real-time** improves decision-making by allowing quick answers to developing demands or challenges.
- The programme aims to **optimise the communication** between Members of Parliament (MPs) and relevant agencies, enabling a more effective and streamlined exchange of information.
- The app will provide MPs with **instant updates on the status** and progress of their proposed projects and includes features for budget management, ensuring MPs can monitor expenditures.
- **About MPLAD scheme:**
- The purpose of the **MPLAD Scheme** is to enable Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend developmental activities, with an emphasis on the construction of **durable community assets** based on locally felt needs.
- It was launched in **1993** under the Ministry of Rural Development which was the Nodal Ministry for this scheme.
- In **October, 1994** this scheme was transferred to the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**.
- The scheme is **fully funded by the Centre** and funds released under the Scheme are **non-lapsable**.

### PRADHAN MANTRI SURYODAYA SCHEME



- Prime Minister Modi recently announced the '**Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana**', a government initiative that aims to **provide rooftop solar power systems to one crore families**.
- The Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana seems to be a new attempt to help reach the target of **40 GW rooftop solar capacity**.
- In 2014, the government also launched the Rooftop Solar Programme that aimed to achieve a cumulative installed capacity of 40,000 megawatts (MW) or 40 gigawatts (GW) by 2022 but could not achieve the target.
- **Solar Capacity of India:**
  - ♦ The **solar power installed** capacity in India has reached around **73.31 GW** as of December 2023.
  - ♦ The **rooftop solar installed** capacity is around **11.08 GW** as of December 2023.
  - ♦ In terms of total solar capacity, **Rajasthan is at the top** with 18.7 GW followed by **Gujarat** with 10.5 GW.
  - ♦ When it comes to rooftop solar capacity, Gujarat tops the list with 2.8 GW, followed by Maharashtra by 1.7 GW.

## THE AMRIT DHAROHAR CAPACITY BUILDING SCHEME



- The '**Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme**' is being implemented by the Central government to bring about a **substantial revolution in the field of wetland tourism**.
- The initiative was launched in **June 2023**, and seeks to fundamentally transform tourist practices in **environmentally sensitive wetlands**, with a specific focus on Ramsar sites such as **Chilika Lake in Odisha and Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary in Haryana**.
- The initiative to develop these sites has been taken by the **Union Tourism Ministry and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**.
- Currently, there are **16 Ramsar sites that have been identified**.
- Out of these, **5 sites have been selected** as a pilot project for the purpose of developing the skills of facilitators, tourism service providers, and stakeholders in the vicinity of these areas.
- **30 participants have received training** for a duration of 15 days each at the Ramsar sites of Sultanpur (Haryana), Yashwant Sagar, and Sirpur (Madhya Pradesh) as part of the Alternative Livelihood Programme (ALP).
- The ALP and Paryatan Navik Certificate training sessions, each lasting for 15 days, are nearing completion at Bhitarkanika and Chilika in Odisha.
- These programmes aim to provide **boatman certification** for tourism purposes.

## Summit and Conferences

### NATIONAL YOUTH FESTIVAL

- On **January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the **27th National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra**.
- This annual event, **dedicated to the ideals of Swami Vivekananda**, aims to empower and inspire youth nationwide.
- Under the theme **"MYBharat-ViksitBharat@2047 – By the Youth, For the Youth,"** this year's festival reflects the aspirations of the youth for India's future.
- Collaborating with various **government departments**, the **Department of Youth Affairs** plans to extend the celebrations to all districts, fostering a sense of national unity and progress.
- The festivities will include road safety awareness events in major cities and **750 district headquarters**, emphasising the importance of responsible citizenship.



### ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD-GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY

During the **World Economic Forum Annual Meeting**, India introduced the **"Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality,"** a significant initiative garnering support from key entities. **The World Economic Forum (WEF) and Invest India** have joined as crucial partners.

- WEF Founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab expressed full support, **designating WEF as a "Network Partner" and Invest India as an "Institutional Partner"**.
- The announcement occurred at an India Reception hosted by the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)**, attended by Union ministers Smriti Irani, Hardeep Singh Puri, and WEF Founder Klaus Schwab.

- The alliance's concept **originates from the G20 Leaders' Declaration**, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to **women-led development**, as highlighted by Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani. The **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation** will support the alliance.

The **"Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality"** is poised to be pivotal in promoting gender equity and equality globally, backed by influential partners from various sectors.



### WEF ANNUAL MEETING 2024

The **54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF)** commenced on January 15 at the local Swiss Alpine School in **Davos**, running until **January 19, 2024**.

#### Agenda Highlights

- Achieving Security and Cooperation Amid Geopolitical Tensions:** Strategies are sought to identify areas for cooperation amid global challenges, addressing crises like the **Middle East situation**.
- Creating Growth and Jobs for a New Era:** Emphasis on collaboration among **government, business, and civil society to prevent a decade of low growth**, prioritising individual well-being with innovative economic frameworks.
- Artificial Intelligence as a Driving Force:** The Center stage is the harnessing of **AI's potential for societal and economic benefits**, exploring interactions with transformative technologies like 5/6G, quantum computing, and biotechnology.



- **Long-term Strategy for Climate, Nature, and Energy:** The development of a comprehensive approach for carbon neutrality and a nature-positive world by 2050, with strategies for inclusive access to **energy, food, and water**.

## INDIA WILL CHAIR UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE AND HOST ITS 46TH SESSION IN 2024

- In a historic milestone for India, the nation is poised to chair the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024.

### Collaboration for Conservation

- The decision to hold the **46th session** in India was confirmed during the 19th extraordinary session of the **World Heritage Committee in 2023**.
- Stemming from a proposal by Indian authorities in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General, this decision reflects collaborative efforts between India and UNESCO in fostering global cooperation in education, arts, science, and culture to promote world peace.

### World Heritage Committee: Guardian of Global Treasures

- The **World Heritage Committee**, consisting of representatives from 21 member states, gathers annually to deliberate on matters related to the **identification, protection, conservation, and presentation of cultural and natural heritage sites**.
- These discussions contribute to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list, a catalogue of exceptional places with universal value.

### World Heritage Committee

- The World Heritage Committee operates under the **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) umbrella**.
- Tasked with overseeing the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the committee defines the usage of the World Heritage Fund and provides financial assistance upon requests from participating States Parties.
- The committee assesses reports on the **conservation status of listed properties and urges States Parties** to take corrective measures when necessary.
- Additionally, it plays a crucial role in deciding the inclusion or removal of properties from the **List of World Heritage in Danger**.

### Structure

- Comprising representatives from **21 States Parties to the Convention**, committee members are elected by the General Assembly.

- Although a Committee member's term is typically six years, many states voluntarily limit their membership to four years, allowing other states an opportunity to serve on the committee.



## INTERNATIONAL PURPLE FEST 2024

In a groundbreaking initiative, the **International Purple Fest – Goa 2024**, India's inaugural inclusive festival for persons with disabilities, kicked off today and is set to captivate audiences until January 13. The festival, organized by the **Office of the State Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Goa**, and supported by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, showcases unity and diversity in a spectacular display.

### Key Highlights

- **Purple Ambassadors:** 22 esteemed ambassadors representing the **21 types of disabilities listed under the RPwD Act, 2016**, and Spinal Cord Injury.
- **Performances:** The Opening Ceremony boasts engaging music, dance, and entertainment performances by Persons with Disabilities, symbolizing their remarkable talents.
- **Purple Anthem 'Dhumal':** A standout moment featuring PwDs and revered creators from the Indian Music Industry, emphasizing inclusivity and unity.
- **Initiatives Launch:** The launch of various initiatives by the **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the Government of Goa**.



## 58TH DGSP/IGSP CONFERENCE 2023

- Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the **58<sup>th</sup> DGsP/IGsP Conference 2023** at the Rajasthan International Centre in **Jaipur**.
- The three-day conference, held in a **hybrid mode**, brought together top law enforcement officials physically from Jaipur and over 500 police officers from various ranks participating through video conferencing from across the country.
- During the conference, the Union Home Minister distributed Police Medals for Meritorious Service to Intelligence Bureau (IB) officers, recognising their outstanding contributions.

- Additionally, **trophies were awarded for the three best Police Stations, highlighting and encouraging excellence in police services.**



### ISRO LAUNCHED ITS FIRST XPOSAT MISSION TO STUDY COSMIC X-RAY



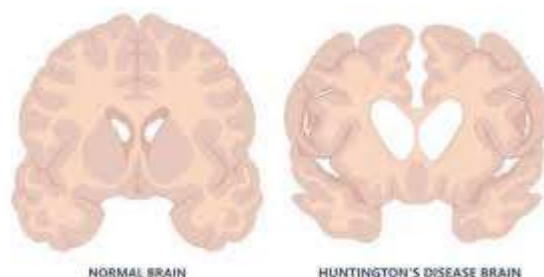
- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** successfully placed its first polarimetry mission, the **X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)**, into a highly accurate **circular orbit** at an altitude of 650 km on January 1<sup>st</sup>, following a 21-minute journey.
- XPoSat is the **second satellite mission in the world** that is specifically designed for **doing X-ray polarimetry observations**.
- XPoSat comprises **two payloads**- Indian X-ray Polarimeter (POLIX) and X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing (XSPECT).
- They have been built by **Raman Research Institute and UR Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru**.
- **Mission life**: five years during which it will observe sources that emit polarised X-rays
- The spacecraft is specifically intended for observation purposes while in low Earth orbit, at an altitude of approximately 650 km and a relatively low inclination of around 6 degrees.
- **POLIX**- It is the world's **first medium X-ray instrument** which operates in the 8–30 kilo electron Volt (keV) energy band. The collimator filters light from bright sources in the field of view. A scatterer with four X-ray proportional counter detectors prevents trapped light from escaping
- **XSPECT**- It is designed to conduct **fast timing and high spectroscopic resolution** in a soft X-ray energy band (0.8-15 keV) observing variety of sources like X-ray pulsars, black hole binaries, low-magnetic field neutron stars, active galactic nuclei, etc.

### KABIL WILL INVEST AROUND ₹200 CR FOR SUPPLIES OF LITHIUM IN ARGENTINA



- India's KABIL (**Khanij Bidesh India Ltd**) will invest **₹211 crore** (\$25.712 million) over a five-year-period for exploration stage activities of **five lithium blocks in the Fiambala area of Argentina**.
- The KABIL board approved an exploration and development **partnership with CAMYEN and a Catamarca branch office**.
- **About Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL):**
  - ♦ A **Joint Venture** Company among **NALCO, HCL and MECL** named Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has been **formed in August, 2019**.
  - ♦ Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has been formed **by the Ministry of Mines**.
  - ♦ The target of this company is to **identify, acquire, develop, process and make commercial use of strategic minerals in overseas locations** for supply in India.

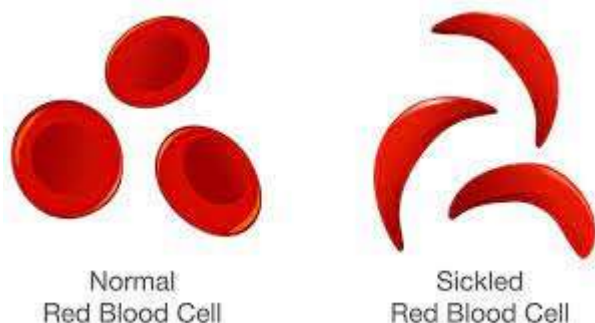
### HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE





- A research paper published in Scientific Reports Journal by studying **fruit flies(Drosophila melanogaster)** has provided important information on Huntington disease.
- Huntington is a **rare, hereditary condition** that leads to the gradual deterioration (**degeneration**) of **nerve cells** in the brain.
- It significantly affects an **individual's functional capabilities** and typically leads to impairments in movement, cognitive function, and psychiatric well-being.
- A **genetic change (mutation) of the HTT gene** causes Huntington's disease.
- The HTT gene makes a **protein called huntingtin**. This protein **helps your nerve cells (neurons) function**.
- Mutations in the HTT gene result in abnormality in the Htt protein, which leads to **misfolding and dysfunction**.
- The severity of Huntington's disease is directly proportional to the length of the enlarged polyglutamine tract.
- The symptoms usually **begin between 30-50 years**. The symptoms include movement, cognitive and psychiatric disorders.
- The patient also exhibits mood swings, difficulty in reasoning, involuntary and jerky movements, as well as difficulties in speech, swallowing, and walking.

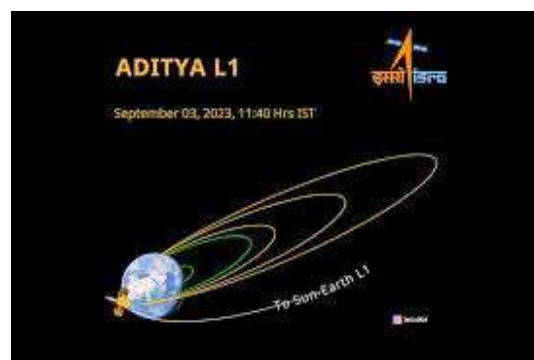
### MORE THAN 1 CRORE SCREENED FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE UNDER THE NATIONAL SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA ELIMINATION MISSION



- The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission aims to **screen 7 crore population in 3 years**.
- The National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 at **Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh**.
- The focus is on to study **278 districts in 17 states** that have a higher incidence of Sickle Cell Disease (SCD).
- These states include Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar, and Uttarakhand.

- **About Sickle Cell Disease:**
  - ♦ Sickle cell disease is a **genetic blood disease** which affects the whole life of the affected patient.
  - ♦ It **affects haemoglobin**, the chemical found in red blood cells responsible for transporting oxygen to cells throughout the body.
  - ♦ Individuals diagnosed with this condition possess **abnormal haemoglobin molecules known as haemoglobin S**, which can cause red blood cells to deform into a sickle or crescent shape.
- **Symptoms:**
  - ♦ **Early stage:** Jaundice, painfully swollen hands and feet, and extreme fatigue from anaemia.
  - ♦ **Later stage:** Anaemia, organ damage, severe pain, infections.
  - ♦ **Causes:** Sickle cell disease is caused by a faulty gene known as the sickle cell gene. It is inherited when an individual receives two genes, one from each parent.
  - ♦ **Bone marrow or stem cell transplantation** is the only cure for this disease.

### ISRO'S ADITYA-L1 MISSION SET TO BE PLACED IN A HALO ORBIT AROUND LAGRANGE POINT 1 (L1) OF THE SUN-EARTH SYSTEM



- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is currently in the final stages of **manoeuvring the Aditya-L1 mission** to its designated location, known as **Lagrange Point 1**, in orbit.
- This strategic position will provide an **uninterrupted line of sight to the Sun**.
- ISRO will perform a firing manoeuvre to place the Indian solar probe into its targeted **halo orbit**.
- This will happen after the probe has completed a trip of 1.5 million kilometres in space, starting from the coasts of Shriharikota.
- **About Aditya-L1 mission**
  - ♦ On **September 2, 2023**, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the Aditya-L1 solar observatory from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre**.
  - ♦ The primary objective of this mission is to conduct a **comprehensive study of the Sun** and gather substantial scientific information.

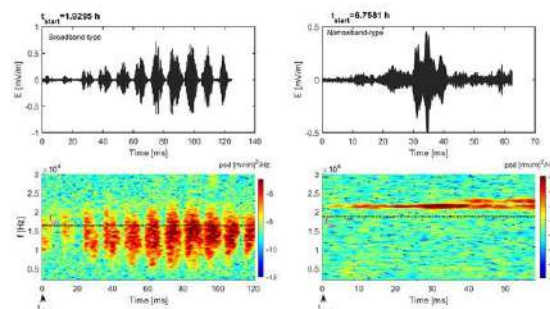
- ♦ **Lagrange Point 1 or L1** is a **single point** in space where the **Earth's and Sun's gravitational forces are in equilibrium**, providing an optimal viewpoint for studying solar events.
- ♦ However, achieving and maintaining orbit around L1 is a complex task.

## INDIA BECAME PART OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST RADIO TELESCOPE



- The Government of India has accorded its approval for **India's participation in the international mega science project**, Square Kilometre Array (SKA).
- The project will be **jointly funded** by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Department of Science and Technology (DST), with DAE as the lead agency.
- The project estimated cost is **₹1250 Crores**.
- This funding covers the construction phase of the **international SKA Observatory (SKAO)** spread over the next 7 years.
- The Indian participation in the SKA project is a comprehensive and nationwide initiative, spearheaded by a partnership of over 20 academic and research institutions, with **NCRA-TIFR serving as the nodal institute**.
- **About SKA Project:**
  - ♦ SKA is a state of the art, **mega science international facility** to build the world's biggest and most sensitive radio telescope for addressing a wide variety of cutting-edge science goals.
  - ♦ The Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO), **situated in Australia (SKA-Low) and South Africa (SKA-Mid)** with its **main administrative centre in the UK**.
  - ♦ It is anticipated to bring about a significant transformation in the field of radio astronomy, while simultaneously fostering the development of several cutting-edge technologies.
  - ♦ Following the clearance, India will sign the SKAO treaty to officially join the SKA Observatory as a full member, joining the increasing number of countries involved in the project.

## HIGH-FREQUENCY PLASMA WAVES IN THE MARTIAN UPPER ATMOSPHERE



- Scientists have detected the **presence of high-frequency plasma waves** in the **upper atmosphere of Mars**.
- These waves exhibit unique **narrowband and broadband characteristics**, which can provide valuable insights into the plasma processes occurring in the **Martian plasma environment**.
- The Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology, used NASA's **MAVEN spacecraft's high-resolution electric field data** to study high-frequency plasma waves in the Martian plasma environment.
- This study was carried out by IIG scientists in collaboration with scientists from Japan, USA, and UAE
- The **magnetosphere, a magnetic field field around Earth**, often has plasma waves.
- **Plasma waves are short-term variations in electric and magnetic fields**.
- Plasma waves **energize and transport charged particles** in Earth's magnetosphere.
- Plasma waves **like electromagnetic ion cyclotron waves** clear the Earth's radiation belt, which harms satellites.
- Researchers want to know if plasma waves exist near unmagnetized worlds like Mars.
- Mars has **no inherent magnetic field**, thus the Sun's high-speed solar wind interacts directly with its atmosphere, obstructing the flow.

## WHO LAUNCHES ICD-11, TRADITIONAL MEDICINE MODULE 2





- World Health Organisation has launched **ICD 11, Traditional Medicine Module 2**.
- The WHO ICD-11 categorization now includes data and terminology related to disorders derived from **Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani Medicine**.
- The vocabulary used to describe diseases in Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha medicine has been organised and assigned a code. This code has been incorporated into the WHO Disease Classification Series ICD-11.
- A Donor Agreement between the **World Health Organization and the Ministry of Ayush** in which the Ministry of AYUSH in collaboration with World Health Organization has prepared a classification of diseases used in Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani systems under TM-2 module of ICD-11 series.

## ISRO'S FUEL CELL FLIGHT TESTED IN PSLV C58



- ISRO conducted a successful test of a **100 W class Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel Cell based Power System (FCPS)** on its orbital **POEM 3** platform,, which was launched on PSLV-C58.
- The project aimed to evaluate the **functionality of Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel cells** in space and provide data to aid in the development of systems for next missions.
- During the brief duration test conducted on the POEM spacecraft, a power output of **180 W was obtained** from the high-pressure storage of Hydrogen and Oxygen gases onboard.
- The data collected provided information regarding the performance of many **static and dynamic systems** within the power system, as well as the underlying physics involved.
- **Hydrogen Fuel Cells** generate electricity by **directly utilising Hydrogen and Oxygen gases**, resulting in the

production of pure water and heat. This is an electric generator that operates based on **electrochemical principles**, similar to batteries, rather than using combustion processes like traditional generators.

- The direct conversion of **fuels into electricity without any intermediary** processes makes them highly efficient.
- They are completely **emission-free, with water being the sole waste**.
- These characteristics provide them optimal candidates for **space missions involving humans**, as they possess the ability to fulfil many critical requirements such as electric power, water, and heat inside a single system.
- **Application of fuel cell:**
  - ♦ Fuel cell is an ideal power source for the **Space Station** as it provides **both power and pure water**.
  - ♦ They are also the most suitable choice for **replacing car engines** and powering standby power systems.
  - ♦ Fuel Cells have a range and recharge time equal to conventional engines, giving them an advantage over batteries and enabling emission-free transportation.

## A WARM VACCINE AGAINST CURRENT SARS-COV-2 STRAINS FROM IISC BENGALURU

- The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) developed a **heat-tolerant vaccination** that is effective **against all current SARS-CoV-2 strains** and can be readily **customised for future strains**.
- The researchers identified the **S2 subunit and Receptor Binding Domain (RBD)** of SARS-CoV-2's spike protein to **build their vaccine** after evaluating several virus proteins.
- The S2 subunit is **highly conserved**. It mutates less than the S1 subunit, which most vaccines target.
- The RBD also induces a **robust host immunological response**, according to scientists.
- Thus, the team **developed RS2**, a hybrid protein, using these two components.

## MISSION GOVERNING BOARD FINALISES IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND TIMELINES OF NQM





- The first meeting of the **Mission Governing Board (MGB) of the National Quantum Mission (NQM)**, chaired by Dr. Ajai Chowdhry, discussed NQM's execution strategy and deadlines, as well as the foundation of the Mission Coordination Cell.
- The **MCC** will serve as the **Mission's coordinating agency**, working closely with the Mission Secretariat, Department of Science and Technology (DST).
- The MCC will be set up in an **institution identified by DST**, based on merit and existing infrastructure and will function under the overall supervision and guidance of **Mission Technology Research Council (MTRC)**.
- **About National Quantum Mission:**
  - ♦ On **April 19, 2023**, the Union Cabinet approved the National Quantum Mission (NQM), undertaken by the **Department of Science and Technology** for a time-period of **eight-year** at a total cost of **Rs.6003.65 crore**.
  - ♦ The Mission's goal is to **seed, nurture, and scale up scientific** and industry R&D while also creating a vibrant and **inventive environment in Quantum Technology**.
  - ♦ This would expedite **QT-led economic growth**, strengthen the country's ecosystem, and position India as a leader in the development of Quantum Technologies and Applications.

## OPERATION AMRITH



- The **Kerala Drug Control Department** launched Operation AMRITH (**Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention For Total Health**) with the aim of curbing the **over consumption of antibiotics inside the state**.
- It targets to conduct surprise raids in retail medical shops for detecting **Over-the Counter (OTC) sale of antibiotics**.
- The **public can also participate** in this initiative by reporting any pharmacies selling antibiotics without a prescription to the Drug Control Department.

- Operation Amrith activities are part of Kerala's Antimicrobial Resistance Strategic Action Plan (KARSAP) antibiotic literacy campaign.
- Kerala was the **first Indian state to develop a state action plan** on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) that is in accordance with India's national action plan.
- Kerala launched the **Antibiotic Literate Kerala Campaign** to increase awareness about antimicrobial resistance (AMR) after unveiling the state action plan on AMR.
- **What is Antimicrobial Resistance:**
  - ♦ AMR, or antimicrobial resistance, pertains to the **capacity of bacteria and germs to resist the effects of medications** that are meant to prevent or kill them.
  - ♦ Also known as AMR, has caused around 5 million deaths worldwide in 2019, with 1.3 million deaths directly linked to this issue.
  - ♦ It is often referred to as a **"silent pandemic"**.

## RABBIT R1



- The Rabbit R1 is an **AI device designed for humane interaction**.
- It operates on the **Rabbit OS** and enables users to communicate through voice commands, make phone calls, and access other services such as Spotify and Uber.
- The pocket-sized R1, which has been **developed by the startup Rabbit** and is powered by artificial intelligence, has the potential to ultimately replace your smartphone.
- The squarish device is equipped with a **2.88-inch LCD touchscreen** and a rotating camera that can record back-and-forth videos and photographs.
- Rabbit R1 is powered by an in-house developed operating system called RabbitOS that **uses a 'Large Action Model'** instead of a large language model like ChatGPT.

## WHO RELEASES GUIDELINES FOR MULTI-MODAL GENERATIVE AI IN HEALTHCARE



- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued extensive guidelines for the ethical utilisation and management of **large multi-modal models (LMM)** in the **field of healthcare**.
- LMMs, known for their **ability to mimic human communication** and **perform tasks without explicit programming**.
- This rapidly expanding generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology, with the ability to analyse various types of data such as text, videos, and photos, is transforming the way healthcare is provided and medical research is conducted.
- **Applications of LLM:**
  - ♦ **Diagnosis and clinical care**, such as responding to patients' written queries; patient-guided use for investigating symptoms and treatments
  - ♦ Clerical and **administrative tasks** in electronic health records
  - ♦ Medical and **nursing education** with simulated patient encounters
  - ♦ Scientific **research** and drug development.
  - ♦ According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), **LLMs pose risks**, including the **generation of false, inaccurate or biased statements**, which could misguide health decisions.
  - ♦ WHO recommends involving diverse stakeholders, such as prospective users and healthcare professionals, in the initial phases of AI development.
  - ♦ Additionally, it suggests **creating LLMs specifically tailored** for clearly specified activities, ensuring the required level of **precision** and comprehending the possible collateral consequences.

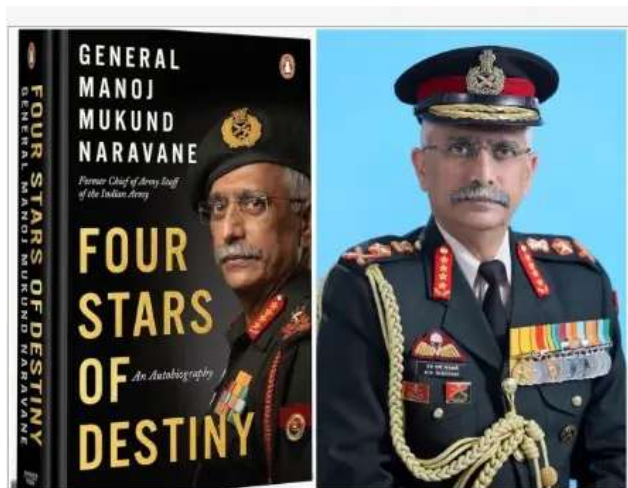
## KAIRALI AI CHIP



- The **Kairali AI Chip**, developed by **Digital University Kerala**, is the **first AI Chip in the State** that has been successfully tested and **shown to work on silicon**.
- It provides **high speed, power efficiency**, and scalability for a wide range of applications.
- **About Kairali AI Chip:**
  - ♦ The integrated circuit has been designed by a team led by **Dean (Academics) Alex P. James** at the AI Chip Centre that functions at the Digital University Kerala.
  - ♦ The chip leverages distinctive characteristics to provide functionalities such as **rapidity, energy efficiency, and expandability**.
  - ♦ Its edge intelligence, also known as **edge AI**, is highly regarded for its potential applications in several sectors such as agriculture, aerospace, mobile phone and automobile industries, drones, and security.
  - ♦ The chip can revolutionise **precision farming** by monitoring crop health, soil conditions, and environmental elements in real time, improving resource efficiency and crop yields.
  - ♦ The device also has huge potential in the **mobile phone sector** by enhancing smartphone economy and performance.
  - ♦ It can also enable **real-time language translation**, picture processing, and AI-powered personal assistants.
  - ♦ **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles** and **satellites** can use the chip's processing capability for navigation, data collection, and real-time decision-making.
  - ♦ It can provide the computational power for real-time sensory processing, which is essential for safe and **efficient autonomous driving**.
  - ♦ It can enable faster and efficient **facial recognition algorithms**, threat detection and **real-time analytics in security and surveillance**.

## Books and Authors

### FOUR STARS OF DESTINY



- In a notable literary endeavour, **General Manoj Mukund Naravane**, the former **Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) of the Indian Army**, has authored his autobiography titled **“Four Stars of Destiny: An Autobiography”**.
- Expected to be released in January 2024 by Penguin Veer, an imprint of Penguin Random House India, the book comprehensively explores **Gen MM Naravane’s** life, from his formative years to his distinguished service in the armed forces.

### MODI: ENERGISING A GREEN FUTURE

- Union Minister **Bhupender Yadav**, who leads the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**, has recently introduced a noteworthy book titled **“Modi: Energising A Green Future”**.
- This impactful contribution to environmental literature has been published through a collaboration between **Pentagon Press and the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation**.
- The book’s central theme revolves around Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision and actions for a sustainable and eco-friendly future.



### SANSKRITI KE AYAAM

- Retired General V.K. Singh, **Union Minister of State for the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)**, has unveiled the book **‘Sanskriti ke Ayaam’** authored by **Manorama Mishra**.
- Published in Hindi by the National Book Trust, India, operating under the Ministry of Education (MoE), the book delves into Indian knowledge, tradition, and culture.
- ‘Sanskriti ke Ayaam’ is structured as a triangular narrative that intricately weaves together **culture, traditions, and folk prosperity, presented in three distinct chapters**. While each chapter retains its autonomy, the internal essence of the book highlights their interconnection.



### GANDHI: A LIFE IN THREE CAMPAIGNS

Acclaimed author **M.J. Akbar**, in collaboration with co-author **K. Natwar Singh**, has introduced a new book titled **“Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns”**. The book was launched at a significant event hosted by Nripendra Misra, Chairman of the Executive Council of the Prime Minister’s Museum and Library Society, held at the Prime Minister’s Museum and Library at the Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya.



## Book's Content and Theme

The book provides an in-depth exploration of the life and challenges faced by Mahatma Gandhi, with a particular focus on three crucial mass campaigns he spearheaded:

- **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920):** The narrative emphasizes Gandhi's remarkable ability to mobilize the masses against British rule.
- **Salt Satyagraha (1930):** The book highlights the transformative act of turning a pinch of salt into a powerful symbol of resistance against colonial exploitation.
- **Quit India Movement (1942):** It delves into the significance of Gandhi's resolute call for the end of British colonialism in India.

## 'ASSAM'S BRAVEHEART LACHIT BARPHUDAN' BOOK

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, **Shri Amit Shah**, unveiled the book 'Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan' in Guwahati, Assam, with the distinguished presence of dignitaries, including **Assam Chief Minister Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma**.

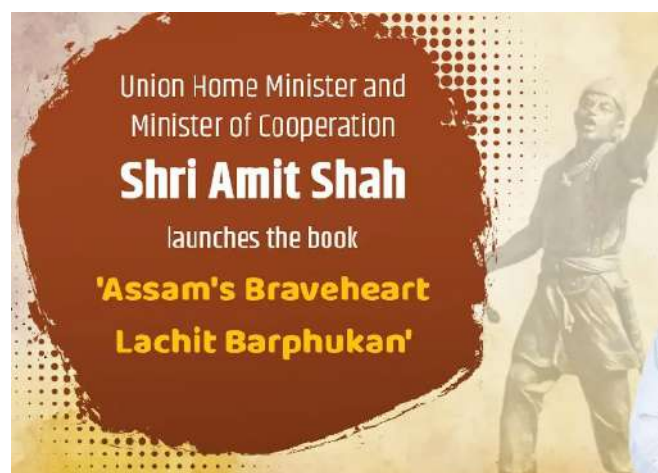
**Lachit Barphukan: Exemplifying Valor in the**

## Northeast

During his address, **Shri Amit Shah** brought attention to the remarkable saga of **Lachit Barphukan**, who valiantly battled against bigotry and power-driven forces in the Northeast.

## Saraighat Battle: A Historic Turning Point

Shri Shah underscored the significance of the **Battle of Saraighat**, expressing that **Lachit's triumph prevented Assam from becoming a part of Bangladesh**. He credited Lachit for successfully repelling invasions from the times of Khilji to Aurangzeb, **safeguarding Assam and contributing to the seamless integration of the region with the rest of India**.



### VIRAT WON THE 'PUBERTY ATHLETE OF THE YEAR' AWARD AFTER DEFEATING LIONEL MESSI



- Indian cricketer **Virat Kohli** won the **Puberty Athlete of the Year** award, surpassing **Lionel Messi**, with 78% of the votes from 500,000 people.
- Kohli had an exceptional year in cricket, scoring numerous runs and breaking records. He became the first cricketer to score 50 centuries in one-day matches and scored 765 runs in 11 games during the World Cup, the highest among all players. By the end of the year, he scored a total of 2048 runs, the second most in the world.
- Lionel Messi, on the other hand, did not have a great year. After winning the World Cup in 2022, he moved to play for Inter Miami in the Major Soccer League. He scored 10 goals in 11 games, but his team did not qualify for the playoffs.

### THE WOMEN'S WORLD RAPID CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP IS WON IN SILVER BY KONERU HUMPY



- Koneru Humpy won the women's individual silver medal at the **2023 World Rapid Chess Championships** in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- Humpy's silver medal completes her set of medals at the women's world rapid championships, having previously won bronze in 2012 and being crowned world champion in 2019.
- Humpy faced a tie-break against Anastasia Bodnaruk after a tense final round match against Kateryna Lagno. Despite a promising start in the blitz tie-break, Humpy ultimately lost in sudden death.

### AT THE 2023 SCOTTISH JUNIOR OPEN IN EDINBURGH, INDIAN ADOLESCENT ANAHAT SINGH WINS THE GIRLS' U-19 DIVISION



- Anahat Singh, a rising star in Indian squash, **won the girls' under-19 category at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash**, showcasing her dominance in the division.
- Anahat Singh had a successful year, winning both the under-19 and senior National championships and securing a mixed doubles bronze at the Asian Games and Asian Mixed Doubles Championships.
- Subhash Choudhary displayed resilience and skill in the boys' under-15 final, defeating Shiven Agarwal.
- Shresht Iyer emerged victorious in the all-Indian boys' under-13 final, defeating Shreyansh Jah.

## BEATRICE CHEBET BREAKS THE WORLD RECORD FOR 5 KM AT AN EVENT IN BARCELONA



- **Beatrice Chebet broke the world record for the women's 5 km marathon** at the Cursa dels Nassos in Barcelona, with a time of 14:13.
- Chebet outpaced her competitors and bettered the previous record by six seconds.
- The race featured strong competitors from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.
- Chebet's victory came after a thrilling sprint against Ejegayehu Taye, the former record holder.

## THE NATIONAL SPORTS AWARDS 2023 HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS



- The National Sports Awards 2023 were announced by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs Sports** to honor individuals and institutions that have excelled in their respective fields.
- The awards ceremony took place at Rashtrapati Bhavan and recognized sportspersons, coaches, and entities for their outstanding contributions to sports in the country.
- The Arjuna Awards, the second-highest athletic honor in India, were conferred to various sports personalities for demonstrating leadership, sportsmanship, discipline, and good performance over the preceding four years.

- The National Sports and Adventure Awards 2023 included athletes from various sports such as cricket, kabaddi, chess, athletics, hockey, wrestling, archery, table tennis, boxing, shooting, wushu, golf, lawn bowls, para-archery, equestrian, and more.
- The Khel Ratna honor was awarded to badminton players Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty.
- The Dronacharya Award for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games 2023 was given to coaches in mallakhamb, para athletics, wrestling, chess, and hockey.
- The Dhyan Chand Lifetime Award was presented to individuals in kabaddi, badminton, and hockey.
- The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2023 was won by Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, with Lovely Professional University, Punjab, and Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, as the first and second runners-up respectively.

## JAIPUR'S DIVYAKRITI SINGH BECOMES THE FIRST INDIAN WOMAN TO GET ARJUNA AWARD IN EQUESTRIAN GAMES



- **Divyakriti Singh**, an accomplished equestrian athlete, has been conferred with the prestigious **Arjuna Award**, making her the first woman from Rajasthan to achieve this honor.
- Divyakriti Singh played a pivotal role in securing the Gold Medal for the Indian Dressage team at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China .
- The Arjuna Award for Divyakriti Singh holds special significance for her home state of Rajasthan, ending a five-year hiatus for the region in receiving this prestigious honor .
- Divyakriti Singh also made history by becoming the first woman from Rajasthan to clinch a medal in Equestrian at the Asian Games .
- Her triumph in Hangzhou not only showcases her brilliance but also serves as an inspiration for aspiring athletes in the region.



## RHYTHM BOOSTS INDIA'S OLYMPIC QUOTA FACTORY TO BEST-EVER 16



- **Rhythm Sangwan secured a bronze medal** in the women's 25 m pistol event at the Asian Shooting Championships 2024, obtaining a Paris 2024 Olympic quota for India.
- This marked India's 16<sup>th</sup> shooting quota for the upcoming Olympics, surpassing the previous record tally of 15 set for the Tokyo 2020 Games.
- Sangwan scored 28 out of 45 in the intense 25m pistol final to claim the bronze medal.
- The gold and silver medals in the event were secured by Jiin Yang and Yeji Kim from the Republic of Korea, who shot 4150 and 3250, respectively.
- South Korea had already secured two quotas in the women's 25m pistol, so the Olympic quotas were redistributed to India and Chinese Taipei.
- The National Olympic Committees (NOCs) have the authority to decide on athlete participation at the Paris Games.
- Rhythm Sangwan topped the charts in the qualification round with a combined score of 588 in the rapid and precision rounds.
- Esha Singh, who had earlier secured an Olympic quota for India in the women's 10 m air pistol, finished 14<sup>th</sup> in the qualification round.

## THE SLOGAN, EMBLEM, AND MASCOTS OF THE NINTH ASIAN WINTER GAMES REVEAL THEIR ESSENCE



- The 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games in 2025 have unveiled their core symbols, including the slogan, emblem, and mascots.
- The official slogan of the Games is **"Dream of Winter, Love among Asia"**, which represents **unity, sportsmanship, and the passion for winter sports among Asian countries.**
- The mascots of the Games are **two Siberian tiger cubs** named **"Binbin"** and **"Nini"**, inspired by actual tiger cubs from the **Heilongjiang Siberian Tiger Park.** They symbolize the vitality and spirit of the Games.
- The official emblem of the Games, called **"Breakthrough"**, is a fusion of Chinese cultural elements and Olympic symbols. It represents speed, beauty, and cultural significance, reflecting the dynamic spirit of the Asian Winter Games.

## VINÍCIUS NETS HAT TRICK AS REAL MADRID BEATS BARCELONA 4-1 TO WIN SPANISH SUPER CUP IN SAUDI ARABIA



- Real Madrid won the game against Barcelona with a score of 4-1.
- Vinicius Junior was the standout player of the match, scoring three goals (a hat-trick) for Real Madrid.
- Barcelona managed to score one goal, which was scored by Robert Lewandowski.
- Ronald Araujo from Barcelona received a red card and had to leave the game.

## MADHYA PRADESH DOMINATES DIU BEACH GAMES 2024



- **Madhya Pradesh emerged as the overall champion** with 18 medals, including 7 golds, showcasing their exceptional talent.
- Maharashtra secured 14 medals with 3 golds, while Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and hosts Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Diu Daman each bagged 12 medals.
- Assam excelled with 8 medals, including 5 golds.
- Lakshadweep made history by winning gold in Beach Soccer, diversifying the medal tally and highlighting the inclusive nature of the games.
- The event featured a diverse range of sports, including Tug of War, Mallakhamb, and the debut of Beach Boxing, marking a historic milestone in India's athletic journey.
- India now has 12 beaches with Blue Flag certification for cleanliness and sustainable tourism, aligning with the government's initiative to promote coastal sports and environmental awareness.

### ROHIT SHARMA BECAME THE FIRST MEN'S PLAYER TO PLAY 150 T20I MATCHES



- **Rohit Sharma became the first men's player to feature** in 150 T20 International matches, marking a historic moment in Indian cricket.
- He made a triumphant return to India's T20I squad, leading his team to a convincing 6-wicket victory over Afghanistan in the first T20I.
- Rohit Sharma also achieved the milestone of winning 100 T20Is, highlighting his leadership prowess and the team's success under his captaincy.
- With 3853 runs in 149 games and a strike rate of around 140, Rohit Sharma is one of the top run-scorers in T20Is, showcasing his consistent performance at the top of the order.

### R PRAGGNANANDHAA BECOMES INDIA NO. 1 AFTER BEATING WORLD CHAMPION DING LIREN AT TATA STEEL MASTERS



- **Rameshbabu Pragnanandhaa, an 18-year-old chess prodigy**, achieved a historic milestone by defeating World Champion Ding Liren during the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, surpassing Viswanathan Anand as the top-rated Indian player.
- Pragnanandhaa's victory against Ding Liren marked the second time he defeated a reigning world champion in classical chess at the Tata Steel tournament.
- Anish Giri emerged as the sole leader in the Masters group, showcasing exceptional endgame skills against D Gukesh.
- Vidit Santosh Gujrathi secured a draw against Jorden Van Foreest, while Gukesh faced defeat against Anish Giri.
- In the tournament standings, Pragnanandhaa held the third position, Vidit was seventh, and Gukesh was tenth.

### WRESTLER RAVI KUMAR DAHIYA CLAIMS BRONZE AT FRANCE'S GRAND PRIX





- **Ravi Kumar Dahiya, Tokyo Olympic silver medallist**, made a triumphant return to wrestling by securing a bronze medal at the Grand Prix De France Henri Deglane wrestling tournament in Nice, France.
- Dahiya had faced setbacks due to injuries, including ACL and MCL injuries to his right knee, which forced him out of competitions in 2023.
- Despite his absence from the international scene, Dahiya showcased resilience and skill in the 61 kg freestyle category at the Grand Prix De France Henri Deglane.
- He secured victories over Julien Zinser of Germany in the round of 16 and Zangar Kabylbekov of Kazakhstan in the quarter-final.
- Dahiya faced a tough challenge in the semi-final against Arman Eloyan of France and lost with a score of 6-3.

### **RAIZA DHILLON AND GURJOAT KHANGURA WIN BRONZE IN SKEET MIXED TEAM IN ASIA OLYMPIC SHOTGUN QUALIFIERS**



- **Indian shooting duo Raiza Dhillon and Gurjoat Singh Khangura** won the bronze medal in the mixed skeet team event at the Asian Shotgun Championships 2024 in Kuwait City.
- India secured a total of one gold, three silvers, and four bronze medals on the closing day of the championships.
- China won the gold medal in the mixed skeet team event, defeating Kazakhstan.
- Bahrain also won a bronze medal by triumphing over Qatar.
- India finished in the seventh position in the qualification round but still earned a spot in the final due to a unique situation with Kazakhstan's two teams.
- The Asian Shotgun Championships served as a crucial qualifier for the Paris 2024 Olympics for Indian shooters participating in trap and skeet events.

### **INDIA OPEN SUPER 750: THE ARTISTRY OF TAI TZU YING, BADMINTON'S SORCERER SUPREME**



- **Tai Tzu Ying, a badminton player from Chinese Taipei**, won the India Open 2024 women's singles title by defeating the reigning Olympic champion, Chen Yu Fei of China, in straight sets with scores of 21-16, 21-12.
- Tai Tzu Ying credited the audience present at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall in New Delhi for their crucial support, which helped her make a comeback in the first set. She expressed gratitude for the encouragement that fueled her performance.
- Tai Tzu Ying's victory in the India Open 2024 marked a continuation of her winning streak, as she did not drop a single set throughout the tournament. She displayed superior skill and dominated every match played.

### **MAN SINGH BECOMES SECOND INDIAN MAN TO WIN GOLD AT ASIAN MARATHON CHAMPIONSHIPS**



- **Man Singh, a 34-year-old marathon runner from India**, won the gold medal, showcasing India's growing prowess in long-distance running.
- Singh's victory is significant as he became only the second Indian to claim the title of the Asian marathon champion, following Thonakal Gopi's achievement in 2017.



- Despite Singh's commendable performance, India's national record in men's marathon, held by Shivnath Singh since 1978, remains unbeaten.
- Singh's victory on an international platform like the Asian Marathon Championships significantly boosts India's reputation in long-distance running.
- Other Indian athletes, including Belliappa Appachangada Bo, Ashvini Jadhav, and Jyoti Gawate, also participated in the championships.

### **SREEJA AKULA WINS MAIDEN INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS TITLE AT WTT FEEDER CORPUS CHRISTI 2024**



- Indian table tennis player Sreeja Akula secured her maiden international title at the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024 in Texas, USA.
- Sreeja defeated world No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA in the final with a score of 3-0 (11-6, 18-16, 11-5).
- Sreeja expressed her joy and satisfaction with the victory, emphasizing its significance as her first international title.
- Sreeja overcame higher-ranked opponents in the quarter-finals and semi-finals, showcasing her resilience.

### **AT 43, ROHAN BOPANNA MAKES HISTORY AS OLDEST WORLD NO. 1 IN DOUBLES**



- Rohan Bopanna has become the oldest player to claim the No. 1 spot in the men's doubles rankings at the age of 43, after his quarter-final victory at the 2024 Australian Open alongside Matthew Ebden.

- Bopanna and Ebden's triumph over Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni in straight sets, 6-4, 7-6, showcased their skill, teamwork, and resilience.
- Seeded second in the tournament, Bopanna and Ebden have demonstrated exceptional performance, advancing to the semi-finals.

### **HYDERABAD'S TANMAY AGARWAL CRUSHES RECORDS WITH FASTEST FIRST-CLASS TRIPLE CENTURY**



- Tanmay Agarwal scored an unbeaten 323 off just 160 balls, including 33 fours and 21 sixes, in a Ranji Trophy Plate Group game, setting a new record for the fastest triple century by balls and the second-fastest by time.
- Hyderabad ended the day with a massive total of 529 runs in 48 overs, maintaining an extraordinary run rate of 11.02.
- Agarwal's partnership with Rahul Singh Gahlaut significantly contributed to Hyderabad's score.

### **ASIAN GAMES MEDALLIST ROSHIBINA NAMED FEMALE WUSHU SANDA PLAYER OF THE YEAR BY INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION**



- Naorem Roshibina Devi has been awarded the prestigious title of International Wushu Federation Female Athlete of the Year, solidifying her position as a powerhouse in the world of wushu.
- Roshibina's triumphs at the Asian Games in 2018 and 2022 have showcased her dominance in the sport, earning her widespread recognition and admiration.

- Despite facing a tough loss at the Hangzhou Asian Games, Roshibina's resilience and determination continue to inspire. Her ability to bounce back from setbacks is a hallmark of her character and dedication to her craft.

### KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES 2024 MASCOT, SNOW LEOPARD 'SHEEN-E SHE' (SHAN) REVEALS



- **The Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is set to commence**, with the Union Territory of Ladakh making its debut as a host alongside Jammu Kashmir.
- The event is part of the Khelo India Mission, which aims to promote Olympic sports and nurture talent in India.
- **The mascot for the Khelo India Winter Games 2024** is the snow leopard, named 'Sheen-e She' or 'Shan' in the Ladakh region, symbolizing the spirit of the Games and drawing attention to the conservation of this endangered species.
- The logo of the Games features the Indian tricolor and a **Dharmachakra atop a hill in Chanspa, Leh, representing** the unity and strength of the nation.
- The Games will be inaugurated by Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Union Minister for Youth Affairs Sports and Information Broadcasting, at the NDS stadium in Leh

### ISSF SHOOTING WORLD CUP: RHYTHM SANGWAN & UJJWAL MALIK SECURE INDIA'S FIRST GOLD IN CAIRO



- India's performance at the ISSF World Cup was exceptional, with notable achievements in the 10 m air pistol mixed team event and the 10 m air rifle mixed team event.
- Rhythm Sangwan and Ujjwal clinched gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event, showcasing impeccable precision and synchronization.
- Arjun Babuta and Sonam Uttam Maskar secured silver in the 10 m air rifle mixed team event, displaying remarkable composure and skill.

### DIVYANSH SINGH PANWAR CLINCHES ISSF WORLD CUP GOLD IN 10 M AIR RIFLE EVENT



- Divyansh Singh Panwar, a 21-year-old shooter from Rajasthan, secured his fourth World Cup gold in the 10 m air rifle event, adding to his victories in Munich, Beijing, and Delhi since 2019.
- Panwar showcased his talent early on at the ISSF World Cup and had a remarkable performance at the Tokyo Olympics.
- He topped the qualification round with a score of 632.4 and edged out Danilo Sollazzo of Italy by 1.9 points in the final to win the gold medal.



### GOVERNMENT APPOINTS ARVIND PANAGARIYA AS SIXTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION CHIEF



- Arvind Panagariya, former Niti Aayog vice chairman and Columbia University professor, has been appointed as the chairman of the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The Commission is responsible for recommending the tax revenue sharing formula between the Centre and the States for the period starting from April 2026 .
- The Finance Ministry officially notified the appointment of Arvind Panagariya as the chairman of the Commission, and the order was signed by President Draupadi Murmu .
- The other members of the Sixteenth Finance Commission will be notified separately, and Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey has been designated as the panel's secretary .
- The tenure for both the chairman and other members of the Commission will last until the submission of the Commission's report or October 31, 2025, whichever comes earlier .

### CHINA APPOINTS DONG JUN AS NEW DEFENSE MINISTER



- **Dong Jun** has been appointed as China's new defense minister, following the removal of his predecessor **Li Shangfu**.
- Dong Jun, a former navy commander, has extensive military experience and previously served as the commander of the navy.
- Dong Jun's previous role as deputy commander of the Chinese military's Southern Theatre Command is significant, considering the region's importance in territorial disputes, particularly in the South China Sea.
- The appointment of Dong Jun is part of a broader trend of leadership changes within China's military, which includes the removal of high-ranking officials like Qin Gang as foreign minister.

### IPS VIVEK SRIVASTAVA APPOINTED AS DG FIRE SERVICE, CIVIL DEFENCE





- **Vivek Srivastava**, a 1989-batch IPS officer of **Gujarat cadre**, has been appointed as the Director General of Fire Service, Civil Defence Home Guards under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The appointment was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) and made official through an order issued by the Department of Personnel Training (DoPT) on December 28. The appointment is effective from the date of Srivastava's joining the post and will continue until June 30, 2025, or until further orders.
- Vivek Srivastava has a distinguished career as an IPS officer, with over three decades of experience. He has served in various capacities, showcasing leadership skills and dedication to public service. Srivastava is known for his commitment to upholding law and order and has consistently demonstrated excellence in his roles within the police force.
- Currently, Vivek Srivastava holds the position of Special Director in the Intelligence Bureau.

### **ICE ADMIRAL SANJAY JASJIT SINGH, AVSM, NM ASSUMES CHARGE AS VICE CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF**



- **Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh** has taken charge as the **Flag Officer Commanding in Chief (FOC-in-C)** of the Indian Navy's Western Naval Command, succeeding **Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi**.
- Vice Admiral Singh paid homage to fallen heroes at the Gaurav Stambh - Victory at Sea Memorial in Mumbai.
- Vice Admiral Singh has a distinguished naval career spanning 37 years, with various command, training, and staff appointments.
- He has pursued further education in military strategy, including the Advanced Command and Staff Course in the UK and the National Security Strategy Course in India.

### **VICE ADMIRAL DINESH K. TRIPATHI APPOINTED AS NEW VICE CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF**

- **Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi** officially took over as the **Vice Chief of the Naval Staff on January 4, 2024**, succeeding in a distinguished naval career.



- He paid homage to fallen heroes by placing a floral wreath at the National War Memorial, showing his deep sense of duty and reverence for those who sacrificed their lives for the country.
- Vice Admiral Tripathi's naval career began in 1985 after his commissioning. He has had key assignments and accomplishments throughout his career.
- He specialized in Communication and Electronic Warfare and served on frontline warships in various capacities. He also held important operational and staff appointments.

### **RASHMI SHUKLA BECOMES MAHARASHTRA'S FIRST WOMAN DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE**



- Rashmi Shukla, a distinguished IPS officer, has been **appointed as the Director General of Police (DGP) in Maharashtra**, making her the first woman to hold this position in the state.
- Ms. Shukla's career has been marked by both achievements and controversies. She previously led the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and served as the Additional Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

- However, during her tenure as Commissioner of the State Intelligence Department (SID), she was accused of illicit phone tapping of Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition leaders, leading to her being named in two out of three FIRs filed against her.

### VIKAS SHEEL, A SENIOR IAS OFFICER, HAS BEEN APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK



- India has appointed seven civil servants to important positions abroad, showcasing its global engagement.
- **Mr. Vikas Sheel, a seasoned bureaucrat, is now the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila**, highlighting India's commitment to international development.
- Smita Sarangi has been appointed as Adviser to the Executive Director at ADB in Manila, emphasizing India's collaboration with ADB on development initiatives.
- Kalyan Revella, a senior bureaucrat, takes on the role of Counsellor (Economic) at the Embassy of India in Beijing, highlighting India's diplomatic and economic interests in China.
- Senthil Pandian C is now the Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, showcasing India's commitment to participating actively in global trade discussions.

### PHONEPE APPOINTS RITESH PAI AS CEO OF INTERNATIONAL PAYMENTS BUSINESS



- Walmart-owned fintech firm PhonePe has appointed Ritesh Pai as the CEO of its international payments business, aligning with India's ambition to globalize the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and attract interest from various countries.
- Ritesh Pai has a proven track record in the digital payments sector, with expertise in launching innovative solutions and structuring strategic business partnerships on a global scale.

### IAS OFFICER SENTHIL PANDIAN INDIA'S ENVOY TO WTO



- **Senthil Pandian C has been appointed as India's ambassador** to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva for a three-year term from the date of assuming office.
- Pandian is a 2002 IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre and currently serves as the commissioner of excise in Uttar Pradesh.
- His extensive experience in administrative roles within the Indian bureaucracy positions him well to represent India's interests on the global trade stage.

### BHUTAN'S TSHERING TOBGAY TO BECOME PM FOR SECOND TIME





- Tshering Tobgay has been chosen as Bhutan's Prime Minister for a second term, with his party winning nearly two-thirds of the seats in the recent election.
- The election was dominated by pressing economic challenges, raising questions about Bhutan's traditional approach of prioritizing "Gross National Happiness" over economic growth.
- Bhutan's ties with India, its key trading partner, are set to be strengthened under Tobgay's leadership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Tobgay and expressed his support.

### **SHEEL VARDHAN SINGH TAKES OVER AS UPSC MEMBER**



- **Sheel Vardhan Singh**, former Director General of CISF, has been appointed as a member of UPSC, marking a notable milestone in his career.
- Singh's tenure as the Director General of CISF from November 2021 to December 2023 was characterized by visionary leadership that significantly enhanced security measures in the industrial sector.
- UPSC is responsible for conducting the civil services examination and selecting individuals for key administrative and leadership roles in the country.

### **REAR ADMIRAL UPAL KUNDU HAS ASSUMED CHARGE AS CHIEF OF STAFF, SOUTHERN NAVAL COMMAND (SNC)**



- **Rear Admiral Upal Kundu is the new Chief of Staff** at the Southern Naval Command (SNC) and has a wealth of experience and expertise in anti-submarine warfare (ASW).
- Kundu was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1991 and quickly rose through the ranks, showcasing a natural aptitude for naval operations.
- He specialized in ASW and became known for his proficiency in countering submarine threats.
- Kundu has commanded notable naval vessels, including the guided missile frigate INS Trikanth, the missile corvette INS Kuthar, and the erstwhile INS Akshay, contributing significantly to their operational readiness.

### **VICE ADMIRAL AN PRAMOD ASSUMES CHARGE AS DIRECTOR GENERAL NAVAL OPERATIONS**



- **Vice Admiral AN Pramod** assumed the role of **Director General Naval Operations (DGNO)** on January 15, 2024.
- He is a distinguished alumnus of the 38th Integrated Cadet Course at Naval Academy, Goa.
- Vice Admiral Pramod has a professional background as a CAT 'A' Sea King Air Operations Officer and Communication Electronics Warfare Specialist.
- He has held important afloat appointments such as Fleet Operations Officer, Western Fleet, and command roles for IN ships Abhay, Shardul, and Satpura.
- Vice Admiral Pramod has completed the Staff Course at DSSC Wellington and the Naval Higher Command Course at NWC, Goa.



## VICE ADMIRAL VINEET MCCARTY TAKES OVER AS THE COMMANDANT, INDIAN NAVAL ACADEMY, EZHIMALA



- **Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty** assumed the position of **Commandant at the Indian Naval Academy** on January 15, 2024.
- He has a distinguished naval career, having been commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 1989.
- Vice Admiral McCarty has completed his education at the Defence Service Staff College in Wellington (2005) and the National Defence College in New Delhi (2017), which have contributed to his strategic acumen.
- He specializes in 'Gunnery and Missiles' and has demonstrated his expertise in naval weaponry and technology.

## SENIOR IPS OFFICER DALJIT SINGH CHAUDHARY APPOINTED SSB CHIEF



- Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary has been **appointed as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**.
- The appointment is significant in the administrative reshuffling within India's internal security apparatus.
- The SSB is one of India's central armed police forces responsible for guarding the country's borders with Nepal and Bhutan.

- Daljit Singh Chaudhary's appointment is expected to bring renewed vigor and strategic expertise in managing the crucial border areas, considering emerging security challenges in the region.

## JUSTICE PRASANNA BHALACHANDRA VARALE SWORN IN, TAKES DALIT REPRESENTATION IN SUPREME COURT TO THREE



- **Justice Prasanna B Varale is the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court** and will become the third sitting judge from the Dalit community in the Supreme Court.
- Justice Varale is the senior-most High Court Judge belonging to a Scheduled Caste and the only Chief Justice belonging to a Scheduled Caste among the Chief Justices of High Courts across the country.
- His legal career began in 1985, and he served as a lecturer at Ambedkar Law College until 1992. He was appointed as a judge of the Bombay High Court in 2008 and elevated to the position of Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka in 2022.

## PRESIDENT NOMINATES SHRI SATNAM SINGH SANDHU AS A MEMBER OF THE RAJYA SABHA



- Shri Satnam Singh Sandhu has been nominated as **a member of the Rajya Sabha by the President of India**, recognizing his contributions to education, philanthropy, and community development.

- Sandhu, the son of a farmer, founded Chandigarh Group of Colleges (CGC) in 2001 and established Chandigarh University in 2012. His university has achieved the prestigious recognition of ranking first among private universities in Asia within QS World Rankings 2023.
- Sandhu actively supports students pursuing quality education and provides financial assistance to thousands. He also champions social causes through his NGOs, focusing on health, wellness, and communal harmony.

### SCOTTISH 2-YEAR-OLD SETS RECORD: YOUNGEST TO REACH EVEREST BASE



- **Two-year-old Carter Dallas from Scotland became the** youngest person to reach the Mount Everest base camp, accompanied by his parents Ross and Jade.
- The Dallas family embarked on a year-long trip around Asia, selling their belongings and renting out their house in Scotland.
- Carter achieved this feat at an altitude of 17,598 feet above sea level, surpassing the previous record held by a four-year-old from the Czech Republic.
- Despite the arduous conditions and the risk of altitude sickness, Carter displayed remarkable resilience, while his parents experienced slight altitude sickness.

### MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS & SPORTS ANNOUNCED 'RASHTRIYA KHEL PROTSAHAN PURUSKAR' 2023



- The Ministry of Youth Affairs Sports has announced the recipients of the 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' for the year 2023, which recognizes the contributions of corporate entities, Sports Control Boards, NGOs, and

sports bodies in promoting and developing sports in India.

- The awards will be presented by the President of India in a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 9, 2024.
- The selection process involved online submissions, allowing sportspersons, coaches, and entities to self-apply through a dedicated online portal. The high number of applications received reflects the widespread enthusiasm and engagement in sports promotion and development.

### LATE SAVITA KANSWAL, 1ST INDIAN WOMAN WHO CLIMBED EVEREST, MAKALU WITHIN 16 DAYS, HONoured BY PRESIDENT MURMU



- Savita Kanswal, a courageous mountaineer, was posthumously awarded the Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award for her exceptional achievements in mountaineering.
- Savita Kanswal became the first Indian woman mountaineer to conquer both Mount Everest and Mount Makalu within a span of 16 days, showcasing her physical prowess and determination.

### ASSAM GOVT TO HONOR EX-CJI RANJAN GOGOI WITH 'ASSAM BAIBHAV' AWARD



- Former Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, is set to receive the prestigious 'Assam Baibhav' award, the highest civilian award in Assam, for his significant contributions to the field of justice and jurisprudence.



- The Assam Baibhav awards have been held for three years, with previous recipients including Ratan Tata and Tapan Saikia.
- Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma highlighted Gogoi's groundbreaking role as the first judge from the North East to become Chief Justice of India and praised his efforts in expanding the delivery of justice and enriching the country's jurisprudence.

## PRADHAN MANTRI RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR 2024



- The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 will be presented at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi on January 22, 2024, by President Droupadi Murmu. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will engage with the recipients on January 23, and the children will also be featured in the Republic Day parade on January 26, 2024.
- A total of 19 children from various parts of the country have been recognized for their outstanding accomplishments in the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024. The awardees include one child each in the fields of Bravery, Science Technology, and Innovation; four in Social Service; five in Sports; and seven in Art and Culture.
- The group of awardees consists of 9 boys and 10 girls from 18 different States and Union Territories.

## GALLANTRY AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT DRAUPADI MURMU ON 25TH JANUARY



- President Smt Droupadi Murmu has approved Gallantry awards to **80 Armed Forces personnel, including 12 posthumously, on the eve of 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day.**
- These include six Kirti Chakras, including three posthumous; 16 Shaurya Chakras, including two posthumous; 53 Sena Medals, including seven posthumous; one Nao Sena Medal (Gallantry) and four Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry).
- The President also approved 311 defence decorations to the Armed Forces and other personnel.
- These include 31 Param Vishisht Seva Medals; four Uttam Yudh Seva Medals; two Bar to Ati Vishisht Seva Medals; 59 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals; 10 Yudh Seva Medals; eight Bar to Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 38 Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 10 Nao Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); 14 Vayu Sena Medals (Devotion to Duty); five Bar to Vishisht Seva Medal and 130 Vishisht Seva Medals.

## PADMA AWARDS 2024 ANNOUNCED



- **Padma Awards** - one of the **highest civilian Awards** of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, **Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.**
- The Awards are given in various disciplines/fields of activities, viz. - art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc. '**Padma Vibhushan**' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; '**Padma Bhushan**' for distinguished service of high order and '**Padma Shri**' for distinguished service in any field.
- The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.
- These Awards are conferred by the **President of India** at ceremonial functions which are held at **Rashtrapati Bhawan** usually around March/April every year.
- 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.

## SHASTRI, ENGINEER HONOURED WITH COL CK NAYUDU LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



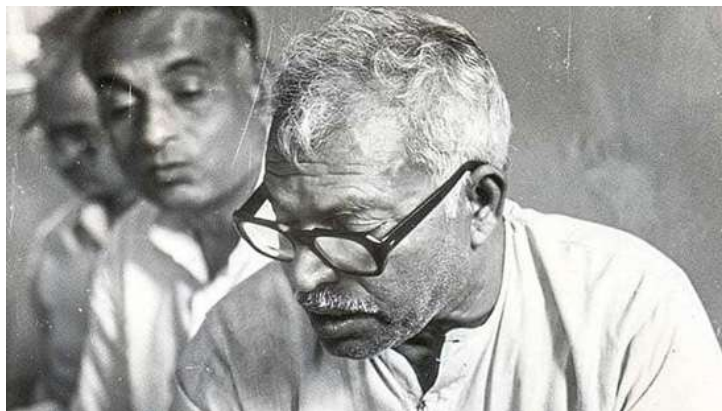
- Ravi Shastri expressed his gratitude for being awarded the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award at a ceremony organized by the BCCI.
- Farokh Engineer was also honored for his contributions to cricket at the same ceremony.
- Shastri acknowledged the BCCI's role in shaping his career and highlighted its growth as a powerhouse in world cricket.
- Jasprit Bumrah received the Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer - Men, while Shubman Gill received the Polly Umrigar Best Men's International Cricketer of the Year award.
- Mohammed Shami was recognized for his excellence in international cricket.
- Yashasvi Jaiswal was honored with the award for the Best International Debut for his remarkable innings of 171 against the West Indies.

## FILMFARE AWARDS 2024 FULL LIST OF WINNERS: ALIA BHATT IS BEST ACTRESS, RANBIR KAPOOR BEST ACTOR, 12TH FAIL BEST FILM



- The Filmfare Awards 2024 with Gujarat Tourism was held in GIFT City, Gujarat. Here's the full list of winners at the 69th Hyundai Filmfare Awards 2024 with Gujarat Tourism.
- Vidhu Vinod Chopra was recognised as the Best Director, with his biographical drama 12th Fail being crowned Best Film, triumphing over Animal, Atlee Kumar's Jawan, Amit Rai's OMG 2, Siddharth Anand's Pathaan and Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani.
- **Best Film (Popular):** 12<sup>th</sup> Fail
- **Best Film (Critics):** Joram
- **Best Actor in a Leading role (Male):** Ranbir Kapoor (Animal)
- **Best Actor in a Leading role (Female):** Alia Bhatt (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
- **Best Actor (Critics):** Vikrant Massey (12<sup>th</sup> Fail)

## FORMER BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER KARPOORI THAKUR TO BE AWARDED BHARAT RATNA POSTHUMOUSLY



- Karpoori Thakur, a prominent socialist leader and former Bihar chief minister will be awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously, the Rashtrapati Bhavan announced.
- Thakur, also revered by his followers as 'Jannayak', was known for his efforts to strengthen the backward castes.
- Born on January 24, 1924, Thakur was imprisoned during the Quit India Movement against the British regime. He won his election for the first time in 1952, and since then never lost a single election in his career.
- Karpoori Thakur paved the way for reservations for backward castes in government services in Bihar in 1978, a move that would set the tone for the implementation of the Mandal Commission report in 1990.
- He served as chief minister from December 1970 to June 1971 and from December 1977 to April 1979. Karpoori Thakur died on February 17, 1988.

## Important Days

### NATIONAL YOUTH DAY

National Youth Day, also recognised as **Vivekananda Jayanti**, is observed on **January 12<sup>th</sup>**, commemorating the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, a revered Hindu monk.

In 1984, the Government of India officially declared **National Youth Day**, and since 1985, it has been celebrated annually across the country.

The event serves as a tribute to Swami Vivekananda's teachings and ideals, emphasising the significance of youth in India.

National  
**YOUTH DAY**  
12 January



### NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE JAYANTI

Each year, on **January 23<sup>rd</sup>**, the nation commemorates the birthday of Subhas Chandra Bose, recognising his significant contributions to the Indian independence movement.

This event, officially known as **Parakram Diwas** or **Parakram Divas**, is a national celebration in India dedicated to honouring the renowned freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.

The annual celebration on January 23<sup>rd</sup> pays **tribute to his legacy and his pivotal role in India's struggle for independence**.



### INDIAN ARMY DAY

- Annually, on **January 15<sup>th</sup>**, India observes Army Day to commemorate the historic appointment of **Lieutenant General Kodandera M. Cariappa as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army**.
- This momentous occasion marks his assumption of command from **General Francis Roy Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief of India**, on January 15, 1949.
- Army Day serves as a tribute to the leadership transition and symbolises the strength and dedication of the Indian Army.

### REPUBLIC DAY

It is celebrated on **26<sup>th</sup> January** every year. Republic Day in India is a significant national holiday commemorating the adoption of the Constitution of India and the formal transition of the country to a republic. This historic event took place on January 26, 1950, signifying the culmination

of India's journey towards becoming a sovereign, democratic, and republic nation.



## INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

The **United Nations General Assembly** has assigned **January 27**, the anniversary of the **liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau**, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

This designated day serves as a solemn occasion to reflect on the profound tragedy of the Holocaust, remembering the six million Jewish victims and the millions who suffered under Nazi persecution.

## SHAHEED DIWAS

Martyrs' Day is observed nationally on **January 30<sup>th</sup>** to commemorate the assassination of **Mahatma Gandhi** in **1948** by **Nathuram Godse**.

Martyrs' Day, also recognised nationally as **Sarvodaya Day** or **Shaheed Diwas**, is a designated occasion in India dedicated to honouring the acknowledged martyrs of the nation.



## Practice Set

1. Recently launched, Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA) is implemented by which ministry?  
(a) Ministry of Panchayati Raj  
(b) Ministry of Rural Development  
(c) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment  
(d) Ministry of Education
2. Which of the following statements is not true about Bharatmala Pariyojana?  
(a) It is launched under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)  
(b) Bharatmala Project is related to the improving road connectivity.  
(c) Construction of 9000 kms of Economic Corridors is undertaken  
(d) It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme
3. Which space agency has recently launched XPoSat mission to study cosmic X-ray?  
(a) ISRO                      (b) JAXA  
(c) ROSCOSMOS      (d) NASA
4. Recently in news, Huntington's disease is related to which of the following?  
(a) Rare hereditary condition that leads to degeneration of nerve cells in the brain.  
(b) Rare hereditary condition that leads to a lack of haemoglobin  
(c) Rare hereditary condition that leads to formation of cyst in lungs  
(d) Rare hereditary condition that weakens the bones of the body
5. Who has become the chairman of India's Sixteenth Finance Commission?  
(a) Arvind Kumar  
(b) Arvind Rakesh  
(c) Arvind Panagariya  
(d) Arvind Ranjan
6. The Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India is promoting India as a global MICE destination. What does MICE stand for?  
(a) Meetings, Industry, Conclaves, Economy  
(b) Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions  
(c) Marketing, Industry, Conferences, Exhibitions  
(d) Marketing, Incentives, Conferences, Evolution
7. Recently, Perna: An Experiential Learning program has been launched by which ministry?  
(a) Ministry of Science and Technology  
(b) Ministry of Education  
(c) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare  
(d) Ministry of Cooperation
8. Recently launched the second edition of the Mulya Pravah 2.0, implemented by University Grants Commission aims to  
(a) enhance the ethical standards of higher education institutions  
(b) enhance the content quality of the institutions  
(c) enhance the teacher-student ratio in the institutions  
(d) enhance the co-curricular activities in the institutions
9. Which of the following statements regarding the E-Sakshi App is/are correct?
  1. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has launched the app.
  2. It will enable Members of Parliament to propose, monitor, and supervise projects under MPLADs Scheme using their smartphones.

(a) 1 only  
(b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2  
(d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Recently, CII has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to initiate green initiatives and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. The MoU has been signed with which of the following?  
(a) National Commission for Minorities  
(b) National Green Tribunal  
(c) Indian Railways  
(d) Inland Waterways Authority of India
11. Recently, India has signed a bilateral Haj Agreement with which of the following countries?  
(a) UAE                      (b) Saudi Arabia  
(c) Oman                      (d) Yemen

12. Recently in news, India has entered into an agreement on cooperation on Medical Products Regulation with which country?  
 (a) British Virgin Islands  
 (b) Cayman Islands  
 (c) Dominican Republic  
 (d) Cuba
13. Recently scientists have detected the presence of high-frequency plasma waves in the upper atmosphere of Mars. What are plasma waves?  
 (a) short-term variations in electric and magnetic fields  
 (b) long-term waves that travel in a circular motion  
 (c) compressional and longitudinal waves  
 (d) waves travel through only liquids and gas
14. Recently, Kerala Government has launched Operation AMRITH, which is related to  
 (a) curbing the over consumption of antibiotics  
 (b) celebrating 75 years of independence  
 (c) providing clean drinking water  
 (d) curbing corruption in the government departments
15. Which country has launched Global Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality” at the 54<sup>th</sup> annual World Economic Forum (WEF)?  
 (a) USA (b) India  
 (c) Canada (d) France
16. Which state has won the Best tableaux at Republic Day 2024?  
 (a) Gujarat (b) Uttar Pradesh  
 (c) Odisha (d) Tamil Nadu
17. Consider the following statements about “Savitri Bai Phule”:  
 1. Her birth anniversary is celebrated every year on 3<sup>rd</sup> January.  
 2. Kavay Phule is authored by her.  
 Which of the above statements are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above
18. Divya Kala Mela was organised in  
 (a) Goa (b) Bengaluru  
 (c) Nasik (d) Pune
19. Recently an inscription of the Kadamba period, has been found in the Mahadeva temple at Cacoda in southern Goa. This inscription is written in which of the following language?  
 (a) Kannada  
 (b) Sanskrit  
 (c) Both Kannada and Sanskrit  
 (d) Telugu
20. Which of the following states is the Chandubi Festival related to?  
 (a) Assam (b) Mizoram  
 (c) Manipur (d) Meghalaya
21. Consider the following statements about Yakshagana:  
 1. It is the traditional folk dance of coastal Karnataka.  
 2. It is a way of story telling.  
 Which of the above statements is correct?  
 (a) 1 only  
 (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 and 2  
 (d) None of the above
22. Kala Ram Temple is situated at the bank of river \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Krishna (b) Narmada  
 (c) Godavari (d) Kaveri
23. Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival was celebrated in the state of \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Arunachal Pradesh  
 (b) Nagaland  
 (c) Assam  
 (d) None of the above
24. Zayed Talwar is the military exercise between India and \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Bangladesh (b) Saudi Arabia  
 (c) UAE (d) Maldives
25. INS Kabra is recently placed at Colombo Port. It is a  
 (a) Offshore Patrol Vehicle  
 (b) Frigate  
 (c) Submarine  
 (d) Destroyer
26. The Chief of Naval Staff recently inaugurated the maiden flight of the Drishti 10 ‘Starliner. It is a  
 (a) Supersonic Missile  
 (b) Multi-barrel Rocket Launcher  
 (c) Transport Vehicle  
 (d) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)
27. Ugram was recently in the news. It is a \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) assault rifle  
 (b) unmanned Aerial Vehicle  
 (c) destroyer  
 (d) None of the above
28. Exercise Sea Dragon-24 was held in which of the following locations?  
 (a) Western Pacific (b) South China Sea  
 (c) Arabian Sea (d) Gulf of Aden

29. The range of New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG) is  
 (a) 200 km (b) 40 km  
 (c) 60 km (d) 10 km
30. Astra Missile is a type of  
 (a) Beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile  
 (b) surface-to-air  
 (c) Air to Surface Missile  
 (d) Surface to surface missile
31. Exercise Ayutthaya was conducted between India and \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Thailand (b) Indonesia  
 (c) Oman (d) Iran
32. Exercise Khanjar was held in \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Umeroi (b) Bakloh  
 (c) Nahan (d) None
33. Exercise CYCLONE was conducted between India and \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (a) Saudi Arabia (b) Egypt  
 (c) UAE (d) Oman
34. KH-22 Missile is related to which of the following country?  
 (a) Russia (b) India  
 (c) Somalia (d) Pakistan
35. Consider the following statements:  
 1. Naorem Roshibina Devi has been awarded the prestigious title of International Wushu Federation Female Athlete of the Year.  
 2. It solidifies her position as a power house in the world of wushu.  
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 & 2 (d) None of the above
36. Who is set to be posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, as announced by the Rashtrapati Bhavan, recognizing his contribution as a prominent socialist leader and former Bihar chief minister?  
 (a) Karpoori Thakur  
 (b) Lalu Prasad Yadav  
 (c) Bhola Paswan Shastri  
 (d) Bhagwat Jha Azad
37. What is the official slogan of the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games in 2025?  
 (a) "Unity in Winter, Strength in Asia"  
 (b) "Dream of Winter, Love among Asia"  
 (c) "Winter Passion, Asian Unity"  
 (d) "Asia's Winter Dream, Love Unites"
38. Which statement accurately describes Mr. Vikas Sheel's recent appointment?  
 (a) Mr. Vikas Sheel is now the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila, showcasing India's commitment to international development.  
 (b) Mr. Vikas Sheel has been appointed as the Adviser to the Executive Director at ADB in Manila, emphasizing India's collaboration with ADB on development initiatives.  
 (c) Mr. Vikas Sheel is now the Counsellor (Economic) at the Embassy of India in Beijing, underlining India's diplomatic and economic interests in China.  
 (d) Mr. Vikas Sheel is the new Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs in India.
39. Where did Tropical Cyclone Alvaro make landfall, causing significant impact?  
 (a) Southwest Madagascar  
 (b) Southeast Madagascar  
 (c) North Madagascar  
 (d) East Madagascar
40. Consider the following statements:  
 1. The mascots of the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games in 2025 are two Siberian tiger cubs named "Binbin" and "Nini".  
 2. The official emblem of the Games, called "Olympic Spirit".  
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
 (c) Both 1 & 2 (d) None of the above
41. Which organization recently launched a coral monitoring autonomous underwater vehicle named C-bot for long-term monitoring of coral reefs?  
 (a) NASA  
 (b) National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)  
 (c) NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)  
 (d) UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
42. Which of the following statements is correct regarding Justice Prasanna B Varale?  
 (a) He is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.  
 (b) He is the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court and will become the third sitting judge from the Dalit community in the Supreme Court.  
 (c) He is the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court.  
 (d) He is the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court.
43. Which of the statements given below is/are correct?  
 1. Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country.



2. They are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

3. These Awards are conferred by the Prime Minister of India.

- (a) 1 Only (b) 1 & 2 only  
(c) 2 & 3 only (d) All of the above

44. Which two cities were jointly awarded the title of the cleanest cities of India?

- (a) Indore and Bhopal  
(b) Indore and Surat  
(c) Surat and Ahmedabad  
(d) Bhopal and Jaipur

45. Match the following:

	List-I		List-II
A.	Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh	1.	Vice Chief of the Naval Staff
B.	Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi	2.	Director General Naval Operations (DGNO)
C.	Vice Admiral AN Pramod	3.	Flag Officer Commanding in Chief (FOC-in-C)
D.	Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty	4.	Commandant at the Indian Naval Academy

Code:

A B C D

- (a) 4 1 2 3 (b) 1 3 2 4  
(c) 3 4 2 1 (d) 3 1 2 4

46. Who won the 'Puberty Athlete of the Year' award?

- (a) Virat Kohli  
(b) Lionel Messi

- (c) Cristiano Ronaldo

- (d) Sachin Tendulkar

47. In the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2023, what position did India secure among 180 countries?

- (a) 76<sup>th</sup> (b) 93<sup>rd</sup>  
(c) 110<sup>th</sup> (d) 124<sup>th</sup>

48. Which six countries share the top spot in the quarterly ranking of the world's most powerful passports, boasting visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to 194 destinations?

- (a) France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain  
(b) USA, Canada, Australia, UK, New Zealand, and Switzerland  
(c) China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, India, and Mexico  
(d) Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, and Netherlands

49. Which Indian city emerged as the top city for women, based on a relevant study or survey?

- (a) Mumbai (b) Delhi  
(c) Bangalore (d) Chennai

50. Consider the following statements:

1. Kachchhi Kharek, indigenous dates of Tamil Nadu receives GI Tag.
2. Red Ant Chutney of Gujarat Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 & 2 (d) None of the above

## Answer Key

1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5. (c) 6. (b) 7. (b) 8. (a) 9. (c) 10. (c)  
11. (b) 12. (c) 13. (a) 14. (a) 15. (b) 16. (c) 17. (c) 18. (b) 19. (c) 20. (a)  
21. (c) 22. (c) 23. (a) 24. (c) 25. (a) 26. (d) 27. (a) 28. (a) 29. (b) 30. (a)  
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41. (b) 42. (b) 43. (b) 44. (b) 45. (d) 46. (a) 47. (b) 48. (a) 49. (d) 50. (d)

# Solution

1. (c) **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** implements Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA) to expand the scope of development intervention of the Government and to fill the gap in service deficient SCs dominant areas in the education sector.

It is a central sector scheme.

The Scheme would give **grants for school fees and residential charges for SC students** admitted to schools.

Every year, a certain number of meritorious SC students in States/UTs will be **selected through the National Entrance Test for SHRESHTA (NETS)** conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

2. (d) Bharatmala Pariyojana is an umbrella programme launched under the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** to improve road connectivity.

It was initially launched in **2017**, with the first phase planned to be finished by 2022. However, with an over 100% increase in the estimated cost of the mega project, government recently announced a six-year extension to the deadline.

It is a fully centrally funded.

**Bharatmala Project categories include:**

- **Economic Corridor:** The construction of 9000 km of Economic Corridors will be undertaken by the central government.
- **Feeder Route or Inter Corridor**
- **National Corridor Efficiency Improvement**
- **Border Road and International Connectivity**
- **Port Connectivity and Coastal Road**
- **Green Field Expressway**
- **Balance NHDP Works**

3. (d) The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** successfully placed its first polarimetry mission, **the X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)**, into a highly accurate circular orbit at an altitude of 650 km, with a 21-minute journey.

The mission life is of five years during which it will observe sources that emit polarised X-rays.

XPoSat is the second satellite mission in the world that is **specifically designed for doing X-ray polarimetry observations**.

XPoSat comprises two payloads: **Indian X-ray Polarimeter (POLIX)** and **X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing (XSPECT)**. They have been built by **Raman Research Institute and UR Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru**.

4. (a) Huntington is a rare, hereditary condition that leads to the **gradual deterioration (degeneration) of nerve cells in the brain**.

It significantly **affects an individual's functional capabilities** and typically leads to impairments in movement, cognitive function, and psychiatric well-being.

Recently, a research paper published in Scientific Reports Journal by studying fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) has provided important information on Huntington disease.

5. (c) The President has constituted the Sixteenth Finance Commission under Article 280(1) of the Constitution.

The Chairman of the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission will be **Dr Arvind Panagariya**, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, and Professor, Columbia University. Shri Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey has been appointed as Secretary to the Commission.

6. (b) Minister of Commerce & Industry, GoI is promoting India as a global **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions)** destination to showcase **India's MSME sector**, traditional handicrafts, artisanal offerings, weavers and manufacturing prowess.

**MICE Tourism** is one of the **key revenue spinners** of travel and tourism economy in modern times.

**The Ministry of Tourism** is also actively working to take the G20 momentum forward and **firmly establish India as a global leader in MICE**.

7. (b) Department of School Education & Literacy, **Ministry of Education**, Government of India has launched 'Prerana: An Experiential Learning program'.

The program aims to offer a **meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to all participants**, thereby empowering them with leadership qualities.

Prerana is a seven-day residential programme for selected children of class IX to XII.

Prerana program will run from a Vernacular School, established in 1888, in one of the oldest living cities of India, Vadnagar, district Mehsana, Gujarat.

8. (a) The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has implemented **Mulya Pravah 2.0** to **enhance the ethical standards of higher education institutions**. It calls for **utmost transparency** in administration.

The guidelines is an improved version of its previous edition from 2019, seeks to **inculcate human values and professional ethics**, addressing and countering unethical activities that have permeated diverse institutions.

The emphasis is placed on constructing institutions that are rooted in core responsibilities and constitutional principles, encouraging a **dedication to honesty and moral behaviour**.

9. (c) The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** launched the **MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application** for revised fund flow procedure **under MPLAD Scheme**.

The mobile application would **provide easy access**, enabling **Members of Parliament** to propose, monitor, and **supervise projects using their smartphones**.

The ability to access information in real-time **improves decision-making** by allowing quick answers to developing demands or challenges.

The programme aims to **optimise the communication between Members of Parliament (MPs) and relevant agencies**, enabling a more effective and streamlined exchange of information.

10. (c) The **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Indian Railways** have entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to jointly pursue the **reduction of energy and water consumption**, thereby **mitigating greenhouse gas emissions**.

The MOU between CII and IR has been **extended for a third consecutive term**. First MoU was signed in year 2016 for 03 years and upon its expiry another MoU was signed in year 2019 for further 03 years.

CII will collaborate in **bringing new technologies** and their implementation, assisting in **achieving**

**ISO 50001 certification** of workshops/ production units, developing a **Net-Zero Energy Railway station framework**, and creating an information dashboard to highlight the progress made in green initiatives undertaken jointly by IR and CII throughout the year.

11. (b) **Ministry for Women and Child Development** and Minority Affairs Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani accompanied by Shri. V. Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs **signed the Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024** with H.E. Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, Minister of Hajj and Umrah, **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)** at Jeddah, KSA.

A total quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims from India has been finalised for Haj 2024, with 1,40,020 seats reserved for pilgrims to proceed through the Haj Committee of India.

12. (c) The Memorandum of Understanding signed between **India-Dominican Republic on cooperation on medical products regulation**.

The agreement was signed between the Central Drugs standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The Republic of India and Directorate General for Medicine, Foods and Sanitary Products Organizations of Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistant of Dominican Republic **facilitating medical products and technologies** bilaterally.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will **enable the export of medical products**, resulting in the generation of foreign exchange revenue.

13. (a) Scientists have detected the presence of **high-frequency plasma waves** in the upper atmosphere of Mars.

These waves exhibit unique narrowband and broadband characteristics, which can provide valuable insights into the plasma processes occurring in the Martian plasma environment.

The magnetosphere, a magnetic field around Earth, often has plasma waves.

Plasma waves are **short-term variations in electric and magnetic fields**. Plasma waves energize and transport charged particles in Earth's magnetosphere.

14. (a) The **Kerala Drug Control Department** launched Operation **AMRITH (Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention For Total Health)** with the aim of **curbing the over consumption of antibiotics inside the state**.



It is aimed at conducting surprise raids in retail medical shops for detecting OTC sale of antibiotics.

Kerala was the **first Indian state to develop a state action plan on antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** that is in accordance with India's national action plan.

15. (b) **India launched the "Global Alliance for Global Good - Gender Equity and Equality"** during the 54<sup>th</sup> annual World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, receiving complete support from the World Economic Forum **to advance women's empowerment and promote gender equality.**

The primary objective of this new Alliance is to unite worldwide innovative methods, exchange of knowledge, and financial contributions in the specified domains of **women's health, education, and enterprise.**

The coalition aims to expand upon the efforts of the Engagement Group and frameworks such as Business 20, Women 20, and G20 EMPOWER and is an immediate response to the G20 Summit 2023 Leaders' Declaration and India's dedication to promoting growth led by women.

16. (c) **KeyConcept:** President Smt Droupadi Murmu lead the Nation on the **75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day** from **Kartavya Path** in New Delhi on January 26, 2024. French President Mr Emmanuel Macron was the Chief Guest.

**Explanation:**

- Among the states, **Odisha's tableau, themed "Woman Empowerment in Viksit Bharat was at first place.**
- At the second position is the Gujarat's "Dhordo: A Global Icon of Gujarat's Border Tourism" tableau highlighting the state's border tourism.
- At the third place came Tamil Nadu's "Kudavolai System in Ancient Tamil Nadu – Mother of Democracy" tableau depicted the region's ancient democratic system.

17. (c) India celebrated Savitribai Phule Jayanti on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. The day commemorates her significant contributions to education, social equality, and women's rights.

**Birth and Background:**

- She was born on **January 3, 1831**, in a small village in Satara district, Maharashtra.
- She was trained at Ms. Farar's Institution and Ms. Mitchell's school, becoming **India's first female teacher.**
- Alongside husband Jyotirao Phule, he opened

**India's first school for women in Pune in 1848.**

**Women's Rights Activism:**

- She initiated **Mahila Seva Mandal in 1852 for women's rights**, uniting members across castes.
- Advocate for **widows' rights**, and **campaigned against oppressive customs, including a barbers' strike against head-shaving.** She fought against dowry and societal norms.
- Founded **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha in 1863**, India's first home opposing infanticide, aiding pregnant widows and rape victims.

**Literary Contributions:**

- Authored '**Kavya Phule**' in 1854 and '**Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar**' in 1892, collections of her poems.
- Wrote 'Go Get Education', encouraging education for the backward and oppressed classes.

18. (b) The **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)** inaugurated the **Divya Kala Mela 2023 in Bengaluru.** This event is part of a nationwide initiative aimed at empowering Persons with Disabilities (PwD) throughout the 2023-2024 period.

19. (c) A recently discovered inscription, believed to **date back to the 10th century A.D. during the Kadamba period, has been found in the Mahadeva temple at Cacoda in southern Goa.** The inscription in **both Kannada and Sanskrit** commemorates the death of **Gundayya, the son of Talara Nevayya.**

Gundayya valiantly fought and sacrificed his life to fulfill his father's ambition of capturing a **gopura (gateway) in the port of Goa.**

20. (a) The Chandubi Festival is a lively event held in the vicinity of **Chandubi Lake, situated in Assam's Kamrup district.**

- Marking its 14<sup>th</sup> year, the festival serves as a vibrant platform showcasing the **rich Assamese culture.**
- Activities during the event include captivating **folk music performances, traditional dance shows, exhibitions featuring local handicrafts, and stalls** offering Assamese cuisine.

Notably, the festival has played a crucial role over the years in creating livelihood opportunities for various tribes, including the **Rabhas, Garos, Gorkhas, and tea tribes.**

21. (c) The century-old **Yakshagana mela** in **Dakshina Kannada** is set to revive its all-night performances after receiving approval from the Karnataka High Court.

**Kateel Yakshagana Mela:**

- Established in the **mid-19<sup>th</sup> century**, **Kateel Yakshagana Mela**, formally known as **Kateel Sri Durgaparameshwari Yakshagana Dashavatara Mandali**, holds a distinguished place as an essential 'Harake Seva' troupe.
- This Yakshagana troupe performs **upon the requests of devotees who have made a vow (Harake)** to organize a Yakshagana show either to fulfil a wish or as a form of service.

**Yakshagana:** Yakshagana is a **traditional folk dance** form deeply rooted in the culture of Coastal Karnataka, known for its unique blend of **dance, music, song, scholarly dialogues, and vibrant costumes**.

22. (c) Recently, the Prime Minister of India visited the **Kalaram Mandir on the Godavari banks in the Panchavati area of Nashik, Maharashtra**.

**Kalaram Temple:**

- The Kalaram Temple is named after a **black statue of the Lord, where "Kala Ram" translates literally to "Black Ram"**.
- Constructed in 1792 through the dedicated efforts of **Sardar Rangarao Odhekar**, the temple stands on the banks of the Godavari in Nashik's Panchavati area.

23. (a) The 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF), a state festival of Arunachal Pradesh, was held at **Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district from January 18-20, 2024**.

**About Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival:**

- The inaugural PPHF was held in **2015 with the primary objective of recognizing the Nyishi tribal group's** crucial role in conserving hornbills in the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).

Additional objectives include generating alternative sources of **income for the region and fostering awareness across India about the wonders of PTR and its surrounding areas**.

24. (c) 'Zayed Talwar' is a bilateral naval maritime partnership exercise conducted with the **United Arab Emirates (UAE) Navy**.

Its primary objectives include improving interoperability, fostering synergy, and enhancing professional bonds between the Indian Navy and the UAE Navy through cross-training on tactics, techniques, and procedures.

25. (a) The INS Kabra, an **indigenous fast attack craft** of the Indian Navy, recently docked at the **Colombo port**, reflecting a strategic move to strengthen bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka.

**About INS Kabra:**

- This naval vessel is aptly named after an island in the **Andaman and Nicobar archipelago**.
- Belonging to the **Car Nicobar class**, it is one of the high-speed **offshore patrol vessels** manufactured by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) for the Indian Navy.
- As the eighth vessel in a series of 10 Fast Attack Crafts, it is a cost-effective platform designed for **patrol, anti-piracy, and rescue operations** within India's **Exclusive Economic Zone**.
- Notably, these vessels mark the Indian Navy's first **water jet propulsion technology deployment**.

With a remarkable top speed exceeding **35 knots** and enhanced manoeuvrability due to its water-jet propulsion system, the INS Kabra is well-suited for high-speed interception of swiftly moving targets.

26. (d) The **Chief of Naval Staff** recently inaugurated the maiden flight of the **Drishti 10 'Starliner'**, the first indigenously manufactured **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) for the Navy**.

**About Drishti 10 'Starliner':**

- Developed by **Adani Defence and Aerospace**, this UAV represents a significant advancement in indigenous technology.

Functioning as an **advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)** platform.

**Key Features:**

Pay load capacity	450 kg
Endurance Period	36 hours
Working Condition	All Weather both in segregated and unsegregated airspace.

27. (a) The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** recently introduced '**Ugram**', an **indigenous assault rifle**, marking a significant advancement in military technology.

**About Ugram:**

- Crafted by the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), a unit of DRDO, in collaboration with a private industry partner, '**Ugram**' is a **cutting-edge indigenous assault rifle**.

Tailored to meet the **General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR)** of the army, 'Ugram'

is a result of meticulous consideration of the military's specifications.

28. (a) The **Indian Navy's P8I aircraft** recently touched down at **Guam, a US island territory. It is in the Western Pacific. The Indian Navy went there to participate in Exercise Sea Dragon-24.**

**About Exercise Sea Dragon-24:**

- This **multinational maritime exercise** fosters professional exchanges and collaborative teamwork among participating navies.
- The participating countries include **India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the United States.**

The primary objective of the exercise is to enhance skills in various **maritime combat domains, incorporating both aerial and ground-based tasks.**

29. (b) The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** recently conducted a successful flight test of the **New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG)** missile from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR) in Chandipur, off the coast of Odisha.**

**About New Generation Akash Missile:**

- The AKASH-NG is a **state-of-the-art surface-to-air missile** designed for the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- In a significant achievement, the missile **successfully intercepted a high-speed unmanned aerial vehicle** flying at a very low altitude during the test.
- Its range is **40 km.**

30. (a) The Minister of State for Defence recently initiated the dispatch of indigenously developed **Astra Missiles to the Indian Air Force (IAF)** at Bharat Dynamics in Hyderabad.

**About Astra Missile:**

- Astra is a **Beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile** designed for installation on fighter aircraft.
- Developed domestically by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF), the missile is specifically designed to engage and eliminate highly manoeuvrable supersonic aircraft.
- **Key Features:**

<b>Key Feature</b>	Beyond-visual-range (BVR) air-to-air missile
<b>Range</b>	<b>80 to 110 km</b>

<b>Speed</b>	<b>4.5 Mach</b>
<b>Warhead</b>	<b>15 kg</b>
<b>Technology</b>	Advanced solid-fuel ducted ramjet (SFDR) engine technology.

31. (a) Recently, the inaugural **Bilateral Maritime Exercise "Ayutthaya"** took place between the **Indian Navy (IN) and the Royal Thai Navy (RTN).**

**About Exercise Ayutthaya:**

- The India-Thailand **Bilateral Exercise is named "Ex-Ayutthaya",** which translates to **"The Invincible One" or "Undefeatable".**
- The name symbolises the historical significance of two ancient cities, **Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand,** highlighting their rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives spanning centuries.

**Indian Naval ships Kulish and IN LCU 56,** both indigenously built, participated in the inaugural edition of the exercise.

32. (b) The **India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR** has recently commenced at the **Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.**

**Exercise Khanjar:**

- **Initiation and Edition:**
  - First initiated in **December 2011 in Nahan, India.**
  - Marks the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise.
  - Conducted annually, alternating between both countries.

33. (b) The Indian Army contingent, comprising 25 personnel, has arrived in **Egypt to participate in the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE.**

**Edition and Venue:**

- Marks the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Exercise Cyclone, scheduled at **Anshas, Egypt,** from January 22 to February 1, 2024.
- The inaugural edition of the exercise took place in India last year.

**Participating Contingents:**

- The Indian contingent includes troops from **The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces).** The Egyptian contingent, consisting of 25 personnel, is represented by the **Egyptian Commando Squadron and Egyptian Airborne Platoon.**



34. (a) Ukraine Air Force confirms inability to intercept **Russia's Kh-22 supersonic cruise missiles**.

**Kh-22 Supersonic Cruise Missile is related to Russia.**

**Kh-22 Missile Characteristics:** It is a Soviet-era long-range airborne supersonic cruise missile. The missile is armed with a nuclear or highly explosive fragmenting cumulative warhead. Initially, the missile was designed to target aircraft carriers, large warships, or groups of such carriers.

**Development and Platform:** It was developed in the 1960s in the USSR. It was specifically designed for launch from Tupolev-22 bombers. In 2000, Ukraine transferred 386 Kh-22 missiles to Russia as a gas debt instalment.

**Upgrades (1970s):**

<b>Speed</b>	4,000 km/h.
<b>Warhead</b>	1,000 kilograms
<b>Range</b>	500 kilometers
<b>Weight</b>	5,820 kilograms

35. (c) **Explanation:**

- Naorem Roshibina Devi has been awarded the prestigious title of **International Wushu Federation Female Athlete of the Year**, solidifying her position as a **powerhouse in the world of wushu**.
- Roshibina's triumphs at the Asian Games in 2018 and 2022 have showcased her dominance in the sport, earning her widespread recognition and admiration.

36. (a) **Karpoori Thakur**, a prominent socialist leader and **former Bihar chief minister** will be awarded **Bharat Ratna posthumously**, the Rashtrapati Bhavan announced.

Thakur, also revered by his followers as 'Jannayak', was known for his efforts to strengthen the backward castes.

37. (b) **Explanation:**

- The 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games in 2025 have unveiled their core symbols, including the slogan, emblem, and mascots.
- The official slogan of the Games is **"Dream of Winter, Love among Asia"**, which represents **unity, sportsmanship, and the passion for winter sports among Asian countries**.

38. (c) **Explanation:**

- Mr. Vikas Sheel**, a seasoned bureaucrat, is now the **Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila**, highlighting India's commitment to international development.

- Smita Sarangi** has been appointed as Adviser to the Executive Director at ADB in Manila, emphasizing India's collaboration with ADB on development initiatives.
- Kalyan Revella**, a senior bureaucrat, takes on the role of Counsellor (Economic) at the Embassy of India in Beijing, highlighting India's diplomatic and economic interests in China.

39. (a) **Explanation:**

- Tropical Cyclone Alvaro** made landfall in **southwest Madagascar** on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, impacting over 17,200 people and resulting in at least 5 reported deaths and 8,400 individuals displaced.
- The actual death toll could potentially be higher.

40. (a) **Explanation:**

- The official slogan of the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games in 2025 is **"Dream of Winter, Love among Asia"**, which represents **unity, sportsmanship, and the passion for winter sports among Asian countries**.
- The mascots of the Games are **two Siberian tiger cubs** named **"Binbin"** and **"Nini"**, inspired by actual tiger cubs from the **Heilongjiang Siberian Tiger Park**. They symbolize the vitality and spirit of the Games.
- The official emblem of the Games, called **"Breakthrough"**, is a fusion of Chinese cultural elements and Olympic symbols. It represents speed, beauty, and cultural significance, reflecting the dynamic spirit of the Asian Winter Games.



41. (b) **Explanation:**

- The **National Institute of Oceanography (NIO)** has launched a **coral monitoring autonomous underwater vehicle** called **C-bot** for long-term monitoring of coral reefs.
- C-bot can reach depths of 200 meters and is the first step towards building a capable underwater vehicle that can scan the depth of the Indian Ocean.

42. (b) Explanation:

- **Justice Prasanna B Varale** is the **Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court** and will become the **third sitting judge from the Dalit community in the Supreme Court**.
- Justice Varale is the senior-most High Court Judge belonging to a Scheduled Caste and the only Chief Justice belonging to a Scheduled Caste among the Chief Justices of High Courts across the country.



43. (b) Explanation:

- **Padma Awards** - one of the **highest civilian Awards** of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, **Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri**.
- The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz. - art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc. '**Padma Vibhushan**' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; '**Padma Bhushan**' for distinguished service of high order and '**Padma Shri**' for distinguished service in any field.
- The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.
- These Awards are conferred by the **President of India** at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March/April every year.

44. (b) Explanation:

- **Indore and Surat** were jointly awarded the cleanest city title, with **Indore securing the title for the seventh consecutive time**.
- Sasvad, Patan, and Lonavala claimed the top three spots in the category of cities with a population under 1 lakh.
- Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh emerged as the top performer in the cleanest cantonment board category.

45. (d) Explanation:

- **Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh** has taken charge as the **Flag Officer Commanding in Chief (FOC-in-C)** of the Indian Navy's Western Naval Command, succeeding **Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi**.
- **Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi** officially took over as the **Vice Chief of the Naval Staff**, succeeding in a distinguished naval career.
- **Vice Admiral AN Pramod** assumed the role of **Director General Naval Operations (DGN0)**.
- **Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty** assumed the position of **Commandant at the Indian Naval Academy**.

46. (a) Explanation:

- Indian cricketer **Virat Kohli** won the **Puberty Athlete of the Year** award, surpassing **Lionel Messi**, with 78% of the votes from 500,000 people.
- Kohli had an exceptional year in cricket, scoring numerous runs and breaking records.
- He became the first cricketer to score 50 centuries in one-day matches and scored 765 runs in 11 games during the World Cup, the highest among all players.
- By the end of the year, he scored a total of 2048 runs, the second most in the world.

47. (b) Explanation:

- **India secured the 93<sup>rd</sup> position** out of **180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2023**, with a score of 39.
- India's overall score in the CPI remained stable, with a minor fluctuation from the previous year's score of 40.
- The report highlights ongoing challenges concerning civic space in India, particularly mentioning concerns about a telecommunications bill that could potentially infringe on fundamental rights.

48. (a) Explanation:

- **France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain** share the top spot in the quarterly ranking of the world's most **powerful passports**, with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to **194 destinations**.
- **India ranks 80<sup>th</sup> with visa-free access to 62 countries**.

49. (d) Explanation:

- **Chennai emerged as the top Indian city for women** in terms of inclusivity and

conduciveness to working women, followed by Tiruchirappalli. Tamil Nadu dominated both categories, with a total of seven cities featuring in the lists.

- The study ranked cities based on a **City Inclusion Score (CIS)**, which is a composite of three pillars: **Social Inclusion Score (SIS)**, **Industrial Inclusion Score (IIS)**, and **Citizen Experience Score (CES)**.

50. (d) **Explanation:**

- **Kachchhi Kharek**, an **indigenous date variety** from the arid region of **Kutch in Gujarat**, has been awarded the prestigious

Geographical Indication (GI) tag, recognizing its unique qualities and origin.

- **Red Ant Chutney of Odisha Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:** In **Odisha's Mayurbhanj district**, the unique "**Kai Chutney**" prepared from red weaver ants has earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, as declared.
- This recognition highlights not only the **dish's flavor but also its nutritional value**. It is **packed with iron, magnesium, potassium, calcium, zinc, protein, and vitamin B-12**, offering a nutritional punch.





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