

THE OAS GAZETTE

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First Skill India Centre (SIC) in Sambalpur, Odisha

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Kendu Leaf Pluckers to Get Rs 25,000 Aid for Daughters' Wedding



Gupteswar Forest declared the state's 4th Biodiversity Heritage Site



First edition of Biswa Odia Bhasha Sammilani



Bhubaneswar Development Authority announces Ekamra Utsav

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COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE OF CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR ODISHA STATE CIVIL SERVICES EXAMS



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RANK 2



And many more...

Odisha Current Affairs

Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, spearheaded the inauguration of the first Skill India Centre (SIC) in Sambalpur, Odisha.

- Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, spearheaded the inauguration of the first Skill India Centre (SIC) in Sambalpur, Odisha. The event witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including the Secretary, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, and CEO, NSDC and MD, NSDC International, Shri Ved Mani Tiwari.
- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) plays a pivotal role in catalyzing the skill ecosystem in India. As a unique Public Private Partnership (PPP) enterprise, NSDC works under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India. It aims to empower India's youth by offering opportunities in futuristic skills and building strategic partnerships to enhance vocational training initiatives.

Odisha's Gupteswar Forest declared the state's 4th Biodiversity Heritage Site

- The pristine Gupteswar Forest, which lies adjacent to the Gupteswar Shiva temple in Odisha's Koraput district, has officially been designated as the fourth Biodiversity-Heritage Site (BHS) in the state. Spread over a vast area of 350 hectares, the site features sacred groves revered by the local community and is endowed with a diverse range of flora and fauna.

CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Bagchi-Sri Shankara Cancer Centre in Bhubaneswar

- The centre has facilities to provide radiotherapy to 300 patients and chemotherapy to 150 patients daily
- The 750-bed comprehensive cancer care hospital will provide world-class oncology treatment to the people of the region.

The Odisha Government has extended the farmers' welfare scheme KALIA (Krushak Assistance for

Livelihood and Income Augmentation) for three more years and allocated a budget of Rs. 6029.70 crores for 2024- 25 to 2026-27.

- The State implemented the KALIA Yojana from 2018-19 since the majority of the population of the State is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.
- The scheme aims at accelerating the prosperity and progress of agriculture and alleviating the poverty of farmers, and landless agricultural households. Besides, the State had implemented the KALIA Scholarship under the Farmers' Welfare KALIA Scheme to ensure the educational development of the children of KALIA beneficiaries to avail professional/ technical education in different educational institutions, as the future of the farmer's family depends on the development of their children.

Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) announces Ekamra Utsav, a festival celebrating Odia language and culture.

- Ekamra Utsav comprises of three distinct components:
- Sangitara Murchana-featuring captivating performances by acclaimed artists from across the nation and region.
- Food Festival - "AMA BYANJAN," offering attendees the opportunity to immerse themselves in the vibrant traditions and flavors of Odisha.
- The Ekamra Haat - Night Flea Market of Ekamra Utsav.

First edition of Biswa Odia Bhasha Sammilani

- The first Biswa Odia Bhasha Sammilani will be held at Janata Maidan, Bhubaneswar from February 3 to 5, 2024. In the four halls named after Adikabi Sarala Das, Atibadi Jagannath Das, Kabisamrat Upendra Bhanja, Byasakabi Fakir Mohan Senapati would witness diverse discussions on the relevant topics related to the Odia language in various fields.
- The event aims to popularize the Odia language globally and ensure its effective preservation.
- The event aims to promote Odia language not only within the State but also globally.

Tata Power and the government of Odisha, through TP Northern Odisha

Distribution Limited (TPNODL), have successfully provided power to 42 remote villages in Similipal.

- This initiative, part of the 'Biju Gram Jyoti Yojana' (BGJY), aims to illuminate every home in mountainous and inaccessible regions across Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has announced the inclusion of an additional 30,000 beneficiaries in the Mukhyamantri Kalakar Sahayata Yojana, administered by the Odia Language, Literature, and Culture department.

- With this inclusion, the total number of beneficiaries now stands at 80,000.
- Under the scheme, each beneficiary receives a monthly assistance of Rs 1,200.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik awarded 'Mukhyamantri Sikhya Puraskar' to districts, blocks, students, teachers, alumni committees, gram panchayats, district and block education officers.

- The Mukhyamantri Shiksha Puraskar honours more than 50,000 Students, 1,500 Principals, the School Management Committee, alumni, the Gram Panchayat, and the District Administrators.
- The State Government's Mo School Abhiyan is identified as the nodal agency to rollout the Mukhyamantri Shiksha Puraskar from the session 2023-24.
- Mo School is a citizen-government partnership in which the former leads in designing the programme, defining its goals and directing its implementation.

Odisha government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS) of Jaipur.

- The MoU aims to facilitate the supply of artificial limbs to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the state.
- The MoU outlines a 5-year collaboration between the Odisha government and BMVSS.

- BMVSS, known for Jaipur Foot production with indigenous technology, will extend its services for artificial limbs under the agreement.

The ongoing excavation at Barabati fort complex in Cuttack has unravelled several architectural remains of a temple (Kalingan style of architecture), a palace, shreds of Chinese pottery and many more antiquities.

- Trace maritime trade link between Odisha and South East Asian countries, focusing on material culture before the 12th-13th century.
- Shreds of Chinese porcelain pottery from the 14th century Ming dynasty.
- Pottery features paintings of Chinese pagodas, flowers, and trees in rich blue color.
- Temple fragments, including a large sculpted piece, a sandstone sculpture of a lion, and an elephant panel.
- Remains of a floor and pathway spanning the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries.

Four Catamaran Cruises funded by the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP) are set to sail on Bhitarkanika waterways

- Cruises acquired for Rs 6 crore 8 years ago but remained non-functional.
- Tourism Department repurposed the cruises for tourism; handed over to a Delhi-based company 20 months ago.

Kendu Leaf Pluckers to Get Rs 25,000 Aid for Daughters' Wedding

- The state government has also hiked the price of Kendu leaves in Odisha.
- The price of a bundle of 20 Kendu leaves has been hiked from Rs 1.40 to Rs 1.60 while the same for a bundle of 40 leaves has been raised to Rs 3.20 from Rs 2.80.
- The state government has also accepted a proposal for revision of wages for the seasonal staff of Kendu leaf sector.
- Besides, the traveling and cycle allowances for the seasonal employees have been hiked by 50 per cent. Now, Kendu leaf pluckers can avail the social security measures till 62 years of age.
- "The state government will provide financial assistance of Rs 25,000 for the wedding of daughters of Kendu leaf pluckers during the

upcoming crop season. Each plucker can avail the benefits for the wedding of at best two daughters,”

- As many as 9 lakh Kendu leaf pluckers, binders and seasonal employees will be benefitted by the welfare measures announced by the Chief Minister. The state government will spend around Rs 150 crore for this purpose.

President Droupadi Murmu appoints Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh as the new Chief Justice of Orissa High Court.

- The Supreme Court Collegium recommended Justice Singh's name for the position of Chief Justice of Orissa High Court in November of the previous year.

Odisha's Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, inaugurated the commencement of two significant projects centered around green hydrogen and green ammonia in Gopalpur, Ganjam district.

- ACME Cleantech Solutions Private Limited is investing Rs 27,000 crore in establishing a green ammonia plant with a capacity of 1.10 MMTPA, which is anticipated to create job opportunities for 3,700 individuals.
- Similarly, Avaada Green H2 Private Limited is investing Rs 8,000 crore to set up a green hydrogen/ammonia production facility with a capacity of 0.5 MTPA, expected to provide jobs for at least 1,500 people.

Mahurigarh fort, a historic monument near Aska in Ganjam district, faces imminent extinction due to neglect and government indifference.

- Originally established as a royal seat by Puri royal Purushottam Dev in the medieval era, Mahurigarh later became the capital of the Mahuri princely state, ruled by the Mahuri royal family for six generations.
- However, the fort's fortunes changed when it faced attacks, first from the French army in 1755 and then from the East India Company in 1765.
- These conflicts, along with internal family disputes, led to the decline of the Mahuri royals.

Prana Ranjan Behera, a young farmer from Jayapatana block in Kalahandi

district, is in the spotlight after he created a portrait of President Droupadi Murmu on his paddy field.

- Kalahandi district, once the landmark of hunger in India's political map, has now become an example for the entire country in agriculture and pisciculture.
- Proud of its farmers and their success stories, this western district in Odisha is now attracting attention and making headlines owing to different types of rice cultivation in the area.

The high school students of Odisha successfully set a new Guinness World Record by collectively uploading over 21,000 photos of handwritten notes on Facebook within one hour.

- Under the 'Mo Katha Mo Kahani' initiative in the state, students from both government and non-government aided high schools participated in this event.
- They uploaded photos of handwritten notes featuring stories and poems.

Odisha ranks among the top 12 states in India with a significant contribution to the country's cancer incidence.

- Approximately 100 out of one lakh people in Odisha are diagnosed with cancer.
- Over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in both cancer incidence and mortality rates in Odisha, with a rise of 22.5% and 22.6% respectively.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare projects that the number of new cancer cases in Odisha will exceed 55,000 by 2025.

The Odisha government has launched the Mukhyamantri Baristha Bunakar O Karigar Sayahata Yojana, a scheme designed to offer financial support to women weavers, their assistants, and handicraft artisans.

- Under this scheme, the state government will provide a monthly financial allowance of Rs 2,000 to female beneficiaries aged 40 to 80 years and male beneficiaries aged 50 to 80 years.
- Weavers and artisans above 80 years old will receive Rs 2,500 per month.

- Previously, the government provided Rs 500 to senior weavers and Rs 700 to those above 80 years old, but there was no provision for handicraft artisans.

The Koraput tourist office has submitted a proposal of ₹50 lakh to the state Tourism department for the development of Dudhari Waterfalls.

- Dudhari Waterfalls, located in Semiliguda block of Koraput district, Odisha, is a popular tourist destination attracting thousands of visitors daily.

The Odisha government has requested permission from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to introduce female tigers from other regions into the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) to enhance the genetic diversity of its tiger population.

- Similipal is globally unique for being the sole habitat of black or pseudo-melanistic tigers, a rare variant of the Royal Bengal Tiger.
- The latest All Odisha Tiger Estimation (AOTE) report revealed that 13 out of the 24 tigers camera-trapped in Similipal are melanistic, a condition caused by melanism leading to dark pigmentation in the skin.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated 67 health facilities across 15 districts of Odisha in the second phase of the ambitious 'Ama Hospital' scheme.

- The Ama Hospital scheme aims to include 1,858 hospitals across the state, with an estimated expenditure of around Rs. 3,300 crore over five years from 2023 to 2028.
- All public health facilities such as district headquarter hospital (DHH), sub divisional hospital (SDH), community healthcare centre (CHC) and primary health centre (PHC) would be upgraded in a phased manner.
- It is a part of the Government's 5T initiative.

Rashmi Ranjan Parida, Founder and Director of Kalinga Literary Festival, announced that all four Kalinga

Literary Awards for 2024 have been won by women writers.

- Renowned Hindi novelist Nasira Sharma for her Hindi novels such as 'Parijat' and 'Mere Priya Kahaniyaan' and former United Nations diplomat Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri with a distinguished career in diplomacy and authorship of 'Swallowing The Sun' will be honored with Kalinga Literary Awards.
- Professor Bina Paudyal, a prolific Nepalese writer and researcher known for her extensive work on Nepali culture.
- Radhika Iyengar, a journalist and writer recognized for her work on the Dom community of Varanasi.

Finance Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha presented a Vote on Account worth Rs 1.18 lakh crore for the initial four months of the 2024-25 fiscal year in the Odisha Assembly.

- The highest allocation of Rs 24,764.28 crore is designated for the School and Mass Education department, followed by Rs 22,543.33 crore for the Panchayati Raj department.
- Allocations include Rs 19,729.33 crore for the Health department, Rs 13,267 crore for Water Resources, and Rs 10,950 crore for Works department.
- Allocations include Rs 700 crore for railway projects, Rs 6,194 crore for roads, and Rs 200 crore each for Nua-O programme and Biju Setu Yojana.

As per the National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS), Girl child marriages in Odisha have seen a marginal decline

- It has seen a decline in the prevalence of girl child marriage from 21.3 per cent in NFHS-4 to 20.5 per cent in NFHS-5, a reduction of 0.8 per cent.
- This progress likely reflects sustained efforts by the government and NGOs.
- However, this improvement is overshadowed by a rise in underage marriages among boys.
- The same data reveals an increase from 11% to 13.3%, with rural areas witnessing a more significant jump.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik recently inaugurated the new campus of the Iconic Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya in Bhubaneswar.

- The Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS) is an initiative of Shri Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha.
- The Adarsha Vidyalaya aims to promote the rural talents by inculcating the 21st century learning skills through a holistic and integral approach.

A Filmmaking Workshop for Tribal Students in Koraput, Odisha, aims to empower Scheduled Tribe (ST) students through skill development in film-related courses.

- It is a collaborative effort between the Central University of Odisha (CUO) and the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII), initiated under the Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav Programme.

The Odisha Travel Bazaar (OTB) wraps up successfully at Eco Retreat Konark after a three-day event.

- Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik virtually inaugurated the fifth edition of the OTB on February 7.
- The aim is to elevate the prominence of brand Odisha, ensuring participation from leading foreign and domestic tour operators, as well as travel writers and bloggers.

Former Indian cricket team coach Ravi Shastri is set to establish a cricket coaching center in Odisha.

- The proposed center, which is anticipated to be the largest private cricket coaching unit in Eastern India, will be situated at the MGM School of Sports in Athagarh, within Odisha's Cuttack district.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was released announcing the center's operational commencement on April 1 of the current year.

Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), a prominent scheme of the Odisha government, has received the National SKOCH Gold Award for 2023.

- The award highlights the scheme's impact and effectiveness in the health sector.
- BSKY was recognized for its innovativeness, inclusivity, transparency, and effectiveness.

The Odisha government has ordered the withdrawal of 48,018 minor cases against tribals.

- These cases primarily fall under the Excise (36,581), Home (9,846), and Forest & Environment (1,591) departments.
- The decision aims to provide relief to tribals, who often face challenges navigating the legal system and bear financial and mental burdens due to ongoing cases.
- It also intends to reduce the pressure on courts and the judicial system.

An MoU was signed between Odisha Govt and JSW Group for setting up electric vehicle (EV) and battery manufacturing units.

- The project includes setting up mega EV plants in Cuttack and Paradeep.
- Cuttack will host EV vehicle and component manufacturing plants, while Paradeep will accommodate a copper smelter and lithium refinery.

The administration in Odisha's Puri town has launched a mobile app to facilitate online registration for cremation of bodies at Swargadwar cremation ground.

- The Swargadwar App has been launched to facilitate easy registration for cremation at the Swargadwar ground in the Holy Town here.
- The mobile app will help reduce waiting time at the offline registration counter at Swargadwar. The mobile app has been developed in three languages – Odia, Hindi and English."
- Apart from the registration option, people can get all information related to facilities at Swargadwar from the mobile app, said the official.

The Government of Odisha has launched the "Nua-O" scholarship scheme to provide financial assistance to Plus-III (degree) and postgraduate students pursuing their education in state universities, government and non-government aided colleges, including aided Sanskrit colleges.

- This initiative aims to enhance accessibility and affordability of higher education, particularly for female students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Odia author Rojalin Mohanty has been chosen to participate in the PM-YUVA 2.0 Mentorship Scheme for 2022-23, organized by the National Book Trust (NBT).

- She is one of 44 young writers under 30 selected to create books that promote Indian heritage, culture, and knowledge.
- Rojalin's selection was based on her manuscript in Odia about Mayurbhanj King Maharaja Sriramchandra Bhanj Deo.

The Odisha govt doubled the financial assistance provided under the Mamata scheme from existing Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000,.

- The beneficiaries in the State will get the assistance amount at an increased rate in two phases with "Retrospective effect" from August 2023.
- Beneficiaries will get assistance in two phases Rs 6,000 and Rs 4,000, respectively.
- Besides, the arrear amount will be remitted to each beneficiary between February 20 and February 25.

Ganjam has emerged as the top egg-producing district in Odisha.

- Ganjam currently produces 50% of the state's total egg requirements, supplying not only to Odisha but also to neighbouring states like West Bengal and the northeast.
- To further boost production, the Odisha government launched the 'Mukhya Mantri Krushi Udyog Yojana' offering subsidies to encourage youths to enter poultry farming.

Odisha's "Location Accessible Multi-modal Initiative" (LAccMI) scheme, providing affordable public transport, has reached all 30 districts of the state.

- Odisha CM launched the service in five more districts on February 21st, 2024.
- 255 new buses will connect 1,057 panchayats in Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Ganjam, Nuapada, and Boudh districts, benefiting over 71 lakh people.

Odisha is home to 30 Royal Bengal Tigers, with at least 24 residing in the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary in Mayurbhanj district.

- Additionally, the state has around eight Royal Bengal Tiger cubs under a year old, as per a tiger census report released recently.
- One Royal Bengal Tiger each was recorded in the Keonjhar, Paralakhemundi, and Hirakud forests.
- The census, conducted in FY 2023-24, identified a total of 13 male and 14 female Royal Bengal Tigers across various forests.

President Murmu laid the foundation stones for a Central Government Holiday Home and Sports Complex in Rairangpur, her hometown.

- The President inaugurated the Eklavya Model Residential School in Barsahi, located in the tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district.
- President announced the launch of a national mission aimed at eradicating sickle cell anaemia, a disease affecting generations of the tribal community.
- President Murmu emphasized the importance of women empowerment for a strong society.



OPSC Current Affairs

**NATIONAL**

Sitharaman announces cervical cancer vaccination for girls aged 9-14 in interim budget.

- In India, cervical cancer ranks as the second most common cancer among women, posing a significant health challenge. The primary cause of cervical cancer is the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). The prevalence of HPV remains high due to low awareness and limited access to vaccination programs, despite the central government's efforts to implement cancer screening programs nationwide.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated ONGC's sea survival centre in Goa

- It aims to advance the Indian sea survival training ecosystem to global standards as a one-of-a-kind Integrated Sea Survival Training Centre. It is expected to train 10,000-15,000 personnel annually.
- Personnel will be trained in simulated and controlled harsh weather conditions. The centre will help trainees deal with real-life disasters and enhance their sea survival skills.

Recently, the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, has been introduced in Lok Sabha.

- The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024 was introduced in Lok Sabha on February 5, 2024. The Bill seeks to prevent use of unfair means in public examinations. Public examinations refer to examinations conducted by authorities specified under the Schedule to the Bill, or notified by the central government. These include: (i) Union Public Service Commission, (ii) Staff Selection Commission, (iii) Railway Recruitment Board, (iv) National Testing Agency, (v) Institute of Banking Personnel Selection, and (vi) Departments of the central government and their attached offices for recruitment.
- Offences in relation to public examinations: The Bill defines several offences in relation to public examinations. It prohibits collusion or conspiracy to facilitate indulgence in any unfair means. It specifies unfair means to include: (i) unauthorised access or leakage of question paper or answer key, (ii) assisting a candidate during a public

examination, (iii) tampering with computer network or resources, (iv) tampering with documents for shortlisting or finalising of merit list or rank, and (v) conducting fake examination, issuing fake admit cards or offer letters to cheat, for monetary gain. It also prohibits: (i) disclosing exam-related confidential information before time, and (ii) unauthorised people from entering exam centres to create disruptions. Above offences will be punishable with imprisonment between three and five years, and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh.

- Responsibilities of service providers: In the event of violation of provisions of the Bill, service providers must report to the police and the concerned examination authority. A service provider is an organisation that provides computer resources or any other support to a public examination authority. Failure to report such incidents will be an offence. In case, the service provider themselves commit an offence, the examination authority must report it to the police. The Bill prohibits service providers from shifting the exam centre without permission from the examination authority. An offence by a service provider will be punishable with a fine of up to one crore rupees. Proportionate cost of examination will also be recovered from such a service provider. Further, they will also be barred from conducting public examinations for four years.
- If it is established that offences involving service providers were committed with the consent or connivance of any Director, senior management, or persons-in-charge of the service providers, such persons will be held personally liable. They will be punished with imprisonment between three years and 10 years, and a fine of one crore rupees.
- Organised crimes: The Bill specifies a higher punishment for organised crimes. An organised crime is defined as an unlawful act committed by a person or a group of persons to further a shared interest for wrongful gain in relation to public examinations. Persons committing an organised crime will be punished with imprisonment between five years and 10 years, and a fine of at least one crore rupees. If an institution is held guilty of committing an organised crime, its property will be attached and forfeited, and a proportionate cost of the examination will also be recovered from it.
- Inquiry and investigation: All offences under the Bill will be cognisable, non-bailable, and non-

compoundable. No action will count as an offence if it is proved that the accused had exercised due diligence. An officer not below the rank Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police will investigate the offences under the Act. The central government may transfer the investigation to any central investigating agency.

Union Culture Minister G. Kishan Reddy laid the foundation stone for India's digital National Museum of Epigraphy at the Salar Jung Museum.

- Spearheaded by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), this museum will house approximately one lakh ancient writings spanning various times and languages.
- This initiative follows the announcement made last year by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman regarding the establishment of the Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (BharatSHRI), with the goal of digitizing one lakh ancient inscriptions.

Tata Trusts to open India's 1st state-of-the-art small animal hospital in Mumbai

- The hospital, to be located in Mahalaxmi, Mumbai, will be a 5-floor, 98,000-square-foot facility, with 200 beds, and will dedicate itself to providing round-the-clock services. The hospital will specialize in pet care to bridge the gap in quality pet care in India.
- The hospital will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including diagnostic services, treatment facilities, and an emergency room. It will also have a dedicated training centre for pet parents and veterinarians.
- The hospital is expected to provide pet-sensitized veterinarians, nurses, and technicians with the skills and support needed to deliver quality care, making a positive impact on the lives of many pets and their owners.

President Draupadi Murmu inaugurated the 'Amrit Mahotsav of Diversity: A Cultural Odyssey' at the Amrit Udyan of Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi, on February 8, 2024.

- Over 320 stalls showcased unique handicrafts, handlooms, and agro products from eight Northeastern states.

- GI Pavilion featured 25+ textile, craft, and agricultural GI products, celebrating the region's diversity.
- Live demonstrations at 20+ stations showcased traditional craftsmanship, offering firsthand experiences.
- Cultural performances, including traditional dances and fusion performances, entertained the audience.
- Gastronomic journey offered diverse food stalls representing Northeastern flavors and traditions.
- Kids Activity Zone and Youth Engagement Zone provided creative exploration of Northeast's historical and cultural richness.

Lok Sabha passes the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

- Lok Sabha today passed the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024. The historic Bill aims at empowering (i) Pahari Ethnic Group (ii) Padari Tribes (iii) Koli and (iv) Gadda Brahmin by providing Scheduled Tribe status. This has been long pending demand of these communities.
- The inclusion of these communities in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir will have absolutely no impact on current level of reservations available to the existing Scheduled Tribe communities such as Gujjars and Bakarwals. They will continue to get reservation like before.
- Reservation to the newly listed Scheduled Tribes will be provided in such a manner that it does not impact the communities which are already listed as Scheduled Tribes. After the Bill is passed by the Parliament, the Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will issue necessary notifications on reservation, which will ensure that the people included in the existing list of Scheduled Tribes continue to get the same level of reservation.
- Under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Government is committed to inclusive development of every section and community of society with the mantra of Sabka Sath, Sabka Vishwas. Passage of the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is another significant step in this direction.

PM Modi inaugurates Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple.

- Located on a 27-acre site near Al Rahba off the Dubai-Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway, the

temple was constructed at a cost of approximately Rs 700 crore.

- It stands as a testament to ancient architectural principles derived from Hindu scriptures, the Shilpa and Sthapathya Shastras, which guide mandir design and construction.
- The temple's architecture harmonizes traditional methods with modern scientific techniques, incorporating over 300 high-tech sensors to monitor temperature, pressure, and seismic activity. This innovative approach allows for ongoing research and ensures the temple's safety and sustainability.

16th Finance Commission holds first meeting under Chairmanship of Dr. Arvind Panagariya in New Delhi.

- The 16th Finance Commission (XVI-FC) held its first meeting under the Chairmanship of Dr. Arvind Panagariya in Jawahar Vyapar Bhawan, Janpath, New Delhi. The Chairman and Members were welcomed by Secretary, XVI-FC, Shri Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey and other officials of the Finance Commission.
- The XVI-FC discussed its Terms of Reference, as per the order made by the President of India and notified by the Ministry of Finance vide Notification S.O. 5533(E), dated 31st December, 2023.
- The XVI-FC acknowledged the need for wide ranging consultations with various stakeholders, including State Governments, Local Bodies, Ministries of Government of India, and experts.
- The XVI-FC recognised that it will be carrying out detailed analytical work and would require to rope in all the expertise that it can garner, including that from leading research organisations, leading think tanks and other organisations working in the area of fiscal federal relations.
- The XVI-FC approved the setting-up of its office at Jawahar Vyapar Bhawan on Janpath in New Delhi.
- The XVI-FC will make its recommendations available by 31st October, 2025, covering an award period of 5 years commencing 1st April, 2026.

EPIC Foundation unveils the 1st designed in-India education tablet powered by BharatGPT

- The first designed-in-India and powered-by-AI tablet is here. EPIC Foundation, a non-profit organisation, launched the indigenously manufactured Education Tablet that has been designed by VVDN Technologies in partnership with MediaTek India and CoRover.ai. The device

comes with a host of features and is promoted as a device that is repairable and upgradable to counter concerns related to the digital divide and mounting e-waste.

- The company aims to manufacture up to three lakh tablets targeted for supply to state governments. The devices are yet to be commercially manufactured, but the company has already signed an MoU for over 12,000 units with entities like IRIS Global and Vedavaag Systems Ltd.

SC judgment in Electoral Bonds Scheme case upholds rule of law

- The scheme amended several other laws such as the Representation of the People Act, the Companies Act, the Income Tax Act, and the Reserve Bank of India Act, making it impossible for citizens to know which corporate was donating how much to which political party.
- In two separate but concurring judgments, a five-judge constitution bench of the SCI declared not only the electoral bonds scheme but also all the corresponding amendments unconstitutional. It also directed the SBI to communicate details of all the electoral bonds sold, including who purchased the bonds and which party they donated to, to the ECI within three weeks of the date of the judgment. It further directed the ECI to post these details on their website within a week of receiving them from the SBI.

First helicopter emergency medical service to be launched from U'khand

- A helicopter will be stationed under the service at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) from where it will be sent anywhere within a radius of 150 km to airlift anyone who has met with an accident to the medical facility.

DoT unveils an unparalleled venture 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative

- Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has unveiled the 'Sangam: Digital Twin' initiative, an unparalleled venture inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI) from industry pioneers, startups, MSMEs, academia, innovators and forward-thinkers. Digital Twin technology offers a solution by creating virtual replicas of physical assets, allowing for real-time monitoring, simulation and analysis for experimental iterations and feedback loop to adapt to the changes for achieving the best outcomes.
- Sangam: Digital Twin is a PoC distributed in two stages to be conducted in one of the major cities of

India. First stage is Exploratory for clarity of horizon and creative Exploration to unleash potential. Second stage is for practical demonstration of specific use cases generating a future blueprint that may serve as a roadmap to scale and replicate successful strategies in future infrastructure projects through collaboration.

- The initiative comes in the backdrop of past decade's breakthroughs in communication, computation and sensing in the era of techade striving for the vision 2047. India has witnessed advancements in computational technologies, platforms, services and high-speed connectivity.
- 'Sangam: Digital Twin' symbolizes a collaborative leap towards reshaping infrastructure planning and design, combining the prowess of 5G, IoT, AI, AR/VR, AI native 6G, Digital Twin and next-gen computational technologies with the collective intelligence of public entities, infrastructure planners, tech giants, startups, and academia to break the silos and engage in a whole-of-nation approach.

India chairs the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development

- Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, chaired the 62nd session of the Commission for Social Development, marking a historic moment for India. India's election as the Chair was a significant milestone, as it was the first time since 1975 that the country has held this esteemed position within the Commission for Social Development. This Commission is a functional body of the Economic and Social Council that serves as a vital intergovernmental platform to discuss and enhance international cooperation on social development matters.

PM Modi virtually inaugurates Mahabharata theme-based Jyotisar Anubhav Kendra, museum in Kurukshetra

- The Jyotisar Anubhav Kendra is located in Jyotisar, the revered site where, according to Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna imparted the Bhagavad Gita's teachings to Arjuna, igniting the inception of the Mahabharata war. This center aims to offer visitors a profound understanding and experience of this pivotal moment in Indian mythology through state-of-the-art galleries and exhibits.

Assam govt invites PM Modi to unveil 125-foot statue of Bir Lachit Borphukan in March

- The statue of Bir Lachit Borphukan, a celebrated general who is best known for his leadership in the 1671 Battle of Saraighat where he thwarted the Mughal invasion, is a project that symbolizes the valor and spirit of the Assamese people. The unveiling of this imposing statue not only pays homage to a historical figure but also serves as an inspiration for generations to come.

Aadi Mahotsav - National Tribal Festival Concludes

- The annual "Aadi Mahotsav - National Tribal Festival," inaugurated by Hon'ble President, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, concluded on 18th February 2024.
- Held at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi, from February 10 to February 18, the 9-day festival organized by TRIFED (Tribal Co-operative Marketing Federation of India) showcased a vibrant tapestry of Tribal Entrepreneurship, Crafts, Culture, Cuisine, and Commerce.

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal launches 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for Indian Port Performance Index

- Ministry draws action plan for swift implementation of MoUs at GMIS worth ₹1 Lakh Crore
- Stakeholders meet aimed to accelerate the conversion of MoUs signed during GMIS 2023 into actionable plans
- Sagar Aankalan guidelines to transform the performance assessment of Indian ports
- "Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 announced by the Prime Minister is a continuation of the country's strategic initiatives for sustainable growth"
- Shri Sonowal urges the stakeholders to work together to turn these agreements into reality and propel the Indian maritime sector to new heights
- GMIS 2023 Report and Launch of M. Tech in Dredging Technology at IIT Chennai

India Opens Space Sector to 100% Foreign Investment

- Under the amended FDI policy, various sub-sectors and activities within the space sector now have liberalized FDI thresholds:

- Satellite-related activities such as manufacturing, operation, and data products can receive FDI up to 74% under the automatic route, with government approval required beyond this threshold.
- Sub-sectors including launch vehicles, associated systems, and spaceports can attract FDI up to 49% through automatic routes, with government approval needed beyond this limit.
- Manufacturing of components and systems/sub-systems for satellites, ground segment, and user segment is eligible for 100% FDI under the automatic route.

PM to lay foundation stone for redevelopment of 28 stations in 3 states

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the foundation stone laying ceremony for 550 Amrit Bharat stations on February 26.
- The initiative aims to improve railway station facilities by developing rooftop plazas and city centers, with an investment of Rs 40,000 crore. Additionally, the Prime Minister will lay foundation stones for about 1,500 road overbridges and underbridges across different states.

India's First Gati Shakti Research Chair established at IIM Shillong

- The Chair will spearhead high-quality academic research on multimodal logistics with a North-East focus: building knowledge on multimodal logistics development strategies and practice in the North-Eastern region, facilitate knowledge and innovation for logistical capacity building in the region.
- The chair also aims to foster collaboration with global experts in creating and developing knowledge & expertise while strengthening the links between the multimodal logistics research and capacity-building activities with key stakeholders such as the logistics industry, government bodies, local authorities, and other partners and associations.
- The chair will also support the multimodal logistics research activities, capacity building and outputs to enable PM Gati Shakti Masterplan to power the East and North-East Region's logistical capacity.

First Solar Project of NTPC Renewable Energy Limited begins operations

- The first solar project of NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd. (NTPC-REL) at Chhattargarh in Rajasthan has declared commencement of commercial operations of 70 MW capacity on 21st February, 2024. With this, the installed capacity of NTPC Group has reached 73,958 MW.
- At present, NTPC-REL has 17 projects under execution, with a total capacity exceeding 6,000 MW. With this, the total renewable energy operational capacity of NTPC Group stands at 3,448 MW.
- The slated full capacity of Chhattargarh Solar project is 150 MW and is expected to be commissioned by March 2024. The capacity was won under SECI-Tranche:III and the beneficiary of this project is the state of Rajasthan.
- The project is designed to generate 370 million units of energy per year, sufficient for 60,000 households, while also saving 3 lakhs tons of CO2 emissions every year and conserving 1,000 MMTPA of water. This is adequate for over 5,000 households in a year.

Reliance launches animal welfare initiative 'Vantara'.

- Vantara (Star of the Forest) programme, an umbrella initiative to focus on rescue, treatment, care and rehabilitation of injured, abused and threatened animals, both in India and abroad. Spread over 3,000 acres within the Green Belt of Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery Complex, Vantara aims to be one of the leading contributors to conservation efforts globally.
- By working with leading experts in animal care and welfare, Vantara has converted the space into a jungle-like environment that mimics the natural, enriching, lush and verdant habitat for the rescued species to thrive in.

Government Launches 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye' Campaign in Higher Educational Institutions

- The government will organise 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye' in Higher Educational institutions across the country from tomorrow to ensure universal enlightened participation of youth in elections. The main objective of the initiative is to engage and encourage young voters to come out and vote and to convey the importance of voting for the larger good of the nation. The programme will be continued till 6th of March.
- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has urged the youth of the nation to make their voices heard. He highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call to the country's

youth and first-time voters to exercise their franchise in large numbers.

India to have its own space station by 2035, announces PM Modi

- PM Modi highlighted India's rapid progress in space exploration and technology, envisioning a future where Indian astronauts will explore the moon's surface using indigenous rocket technology.
- "By 2035, India will have its own space station in space that will help us study the unknown expanses of space. In this period of Amrit Kaal, Indian astronauts will land on the surface of the moon on our own rocket," PM Modi said.
- He highlighted India's progress in space technology, pointing out the significant increase in satellite launches over the past decade.

SECI unveils India's largest solar-battery project, pioneering renewable energy innovation in Chhattisgarh

- The Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI), under the aegis of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has successfully commissioned India's largest Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), which stores energy using solar energy.

- The 40 megawatts (MW) / 120MWh BESS with a solar photovoltaic (PV) plant which has an installed capacity of 152.325 megawatt hour (MWh) and dispatchable capacity of 100MW AC (155.02 MW peak DC) is located in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh.
- The energy would be purchased by the state of Chhattisgarh, thus contributing to meeting the peak energy demand of the state using green electrons and also towards its renewable purchase obligations.

Rashtrapati Bhavan hosts 'Purple Fest'

- Various activities like 'Know your disabilities', 'Purple Cafe', 'Purple Kaleidoscope', 'Purple Live Experience Zone', 'Purple Sports' were organised during the day for the visitors. More than 14000 people participated in the Fest.
- The 'Purple Fest', organised by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, aims to raise awareness about different disabilities and their impact on people's lives and to promote understanding, acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities within society.



INTERNATIONAL

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia officially joined the BRICS group

- Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia officially joined the BRICS group, doubling its members. Originally slated for August 2023 in Johannesburg, the expansion aims to bolster the group's global influence.
- The newly enlarged BRICS now boasts a combined population of 3.5 billion and an economy exceeding \$28.5tn, constituting around 28% of the global economy. While this growth signals a potential geopolitical shift, analysts express uncertainty over its impact on decision-making and overall group dynamics.

India has paid USD 32.89 million to the United Nations Regular Budget for 2024, joining the "honour roll" of 36 Member States who have paid

their regular budget dues in full to the UN on time.

- India contributed USD 32.895 million to the 2024 United Nations Regular Budget and made the payment on January 31, 2024. This places India among the "honour roll" of 36 Member States that have paid their regular budget assessments to the UN in full and within the 30 day due period.

India Launches UPI Payments at Eiffel Tower in Paris

- This initiative follows the digital payments sector agreement signed between India and France in July of the previous year, making France the first European country to adopt India's UPI for retail transactions.
- NPCI International Payments (NIPL) has partnered with French e-commerce and proximity payments company, Lyra, to facilitate the acceptance of UPI payments in France. The strategic tie-up ensures a seamless integration of the UPI payment mechanism, starting with the Eiffel Tower.

A deadly fungal infection called *Candida auris* is spreading rapidly in the United States.

- *Candida auris* (C. auris) is a fungal pathogen that can cause serious infections in the bloodstream and other parts of the body. It's considered a serious global health threat. C. auris is often resistant to antifungal medications, making it difficult to treat.
- In some cases, multiple antifungal medications at high doses may be needed to treat the infection. C. auris is spread in health care facilities through contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment, or from physical contact with a person who has C. auris.
- It can live on surfaces for several weeks. C. auris mostly affects patients with severe underlying medical conditions and requiring complex medical care. Patients with invasive medical devices such as breathing tubes, feeding tubes, catheters in a vein, or urinary catheters tend to be at increased risk. More than 1 in 3 patients with invasive C. auris infection die, thus it has very high mortality rate.

Northern Ireland's parliament makes history, appointing an Irish nationalist as First Minister for the first time, challenging a century-old pro-British unionist dominance.

- This historic moment holds profound symbolic significance for Northern Ireland, representing a departure from historical divisions and a step towards reconciliation. As the region navigates its post-Brexit future, O'Neill's appointment offers hope for a more united and peaceful Northern Ireland.

As of January 1, 2024, France has pioneered the issuance of Digital Schengen visas, marking a significant leap in streamlining visa processes within the European Union.

- This groundbreaking initiative precedes the broader digitalization of Schengen visa procedures scheduled for full implementation in 2026. The move is strategically aligned with the preparations for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris, with French authorities aiming to distribute around 70,000 digital visas.

The United States, Canada, and Mexico are co-hosting this global spectacle, with MetLife Stadium in

New York selected as the venue for the FIFA World Cup 2026 final.

- The 2026 FIFA World Cup will kick off on June 11 at Mexico City's iconic Azteca Stadium. With an expanded format of 48 teams, the competition promises an additional 24 matches, totaling 104 games across 16 venues in the host countries.
- The tournament's schedule includes a round-of-16 match in Philadelphia on July 4, coinciding with Independence Day and paying homage to the historic signing of the US Declaration of Independence. The competition will kick off at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles on June 12, and the Canadian team's first game will take place in Toronto.

'Widow Year' in China

- In Chinese culture, certain years are known as "Widow Years." A Widow Year is a lunar year that does not contain the traditional solar term "Spring Commences" (Lichun), which marks the beginning of spring.
- The upcoming Year of the Dragon is considered a Widow Year because it lacks the Spring Commences solar term. Widow Years occur due to the misalignment between the lunar and solar calendars that make up the traditional Chinese lunisolar calendar.
- The term "Widow Year" (gua fu nian in Chinese) originates from a misunderstanding of gua nian, meaning "the year lacking Spring Commences." Spring Commences symbolized a blessed and lucky year in ancient Chinese culture, as it marked the coming of spring and renewal. The absence of Spring Commences was seen as inauspicious. Over time, gua nian transitioned into the term Widow Year.

Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, in a significant move, appointed Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak as the country's new Prime Minister.

- The ongoing conflict in Yemen, exacerbated by the recent wave of attacks and retaliatory strikes, poses significant challenges not only to regional stability but also to international shipping and security.
- The appointment of Bin Mubarak as Prime Minister is seen as a critical step towards addressing these challenges, given his extensive diplomatic experience and firm stance against the Houthi rebels.

Iran has recently become yet another country to launch visa-waiver programme allowing Indian citizens visa-free entry for up to 15 days. The decision was taken earlier, and the new rules provide welcomed access for Indian tourists.

- Iran has outlined four key conditions Indian tourists must meet to enter without a traditional tourist visa:
- Hold an Ordinary (not diplomatic) Passport
- Arrive in Iran by Air Transportation
- Stay for Tourism Purposes Only
- Limit Visit to 15 Days, Once Every 6 Months
- Those looking to enter Iran more than once in a 6-month span or remain longer than 15 days must obtain the appropriate visa in advance through an Iranian consulate.
- However, this visa exemption does not extend to those traveling for other reasons, such as work or study.

Israeli scientists at the Geological Institute uncover a massive underwater canyon near Cyprus, named Eratosthenes, in a groundbreaking discovery.

- Eratosthenes Canyon is a relic of the past, dating back approximately 5.5 million years to the Messinian Event. This pivotal period in Earth's history marked a significant geological transformation, known as the Messinian salinity crisis.
- Stretching across approximately 10 kilometers in width and plunging to depths of 500 meters, Eratosthenes Canyon's sheer magnitude is awe-inspiring. Yet, its existence remained hidden until now, buried beneath the seabed since the dawn of the Messinian period.

The 7th IOC was held in Perth, Australia on February 9-10, 2024.

- The theme was "Towards a Stable and Sustainable Indian Ocean." It was organized by the India Foundation, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (Singapore) and Perth-US Asia Centre (Australia).
- The Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) is an annual international event focused on the Indian Ocean region. It convenes policymakers, scholars, business leaders and civil society to discuss security, trade and cooperation in the region. The first IOC was

held in Singapore in 2016. The sixth edition took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2023. It is organized by the India Foundation and partners.

Sri Lanka aims to finalize FTAs with India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and China by 2024 to spur economic growth.

- Sri Lanka aims to finalize an FTA with India by the end of 2024, alongside similar agreements with Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and China.
- These agreements are intended to open new markets for Sri Lankan businesses, contributing directly to economic growth.

India launched UPI payment services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius during a virtual ceremony attended by PM Modi and the top leadership of the two nations.

- The availability of UPI in Sri Lanka and Mauritius will enable Indian citizens traveling to these countries to conveniently use the interface for their transactions. At the same time, Mauritian citizens visiting India can also utilize UPI for payments.
- The launch of RuPay cards in Mauritius will allow banks there to issue RuPay debit and credit cards. Citizens can then use these cards for both domestic transactions as well as payments in India.

China has officially opened the Qinling Station in Antarctica. This significant development marks a new chapter in China's scientific exploration and research in the Antarctic region.

- The strategic importance of the Qinling Station cannot be overstated. Located in the Antarctic, it serves as a critical point for conducting a wide range of scientific investigations—from glaciology and meteorology to marine biology and atmospheric sciences.
- The station is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities that enable scientists to conduct comprehensive research on the Antarctic ice sheet, marine ecosystems, and the atmospheric conditions that influence global climate patterns.

Trinidad and Tobago Declares National Emergency Due to Offshore Oil Spill: Prime Minister Rowley

declares a national emergency following an oil spill off Tobago.

- The cause of the oil spill is currently under investigation, with authorities working to determine the circumstances surrounding the vessel's overturning.
- The vessel, whose origins and purpose remain unknown, did not issue any distress calls, and there are no signs of its crew, raising suspicions about potential illicit activities.
- The spill, originating from an overturned vessel near Tobago, has led to widespread environmental damage along the coastline, prompting concerns about the impact on the nation's economy, particularly its tourism sector.

The US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has banned AI-generated robocalls amid a rise in voice cloning scams that have affected thousands of citizens.

- AI voice cloning technology can mimic voices accurately, tricking listeners into believing they are hearing a real person. Scammers have used cloned voices of celebrities and family members to manipulate vulnerable people into sending money or sharing sensitive information. The FCC warns that voice cloning in robocalls can convince people to take actions they normally wouldn't. A turning point was a fake robocall imitating President Biden to discourage voting for him in a primary election.

In February 2024, Dubai entered agreements at the World Government Summit greenlighting the development of a city-wide eVTOL air taxi system.

- The Dubai Air Taxi Service is a planned aerial transportation network set to revolutionize urban mobility in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Scheduled to commence operations in 2026, it will be the world's first city-wide air taxi service when launched.
- The air taxi service will use the Joby Aviation S4, a four-seater electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft capable of a 161 km range and 321 km/hr top speed. The taxi fleet and accompanying vertiport infrastructure will enable on-demand aerial rides across Dubai.

Key features of the air taxi service include:

- ✓ Zero operating emissions from the all-electric S4 aircraft

- ✓ Minimal noise relative to conventional aircraft like helicopters
- ✓ Vertiport stations requiring less space than traditional airports
- ✓ High-speed connectivity surpassing ground transport
- ✓ Enhanced accessibility and passenger convenience

Saudi Arabia is set to debut its first luxury train, the Dream of the Desert. It marks the first luxury train in the Middle East, offering travelers a journey through the kingdom.

- The 800-mile journey will begin in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, and wind its way northwest toward the border with Jordan. Along the way, passengers will be treated to vistas of the Saudi desert, punctuated by stops at UNESCO World Heritage archaeological sites and cultural landmarks. From the city of Ha'il to the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Royal Natural Reserve, each destination offers a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Saudi culture and history.

Japan Loses Spot As Third Largest Economy to Germany

- Germany overtakes Japan as the world's third-largest economy due to the yen's depreciation and Japan's recession. Both face labor shortages and aging populations.
- Reasons for Germany's Overtaking: Currency Depreciation as the yen depreciated by over 18% against the dollar in 2022 and 2023, facilitating Germany's ascendancy due to the stability of the euro against the dollar.
- Japan's technical recession, marked by two consecutive quarters of economic contraction, contributed to its fall behind Germany in GDP rankings.

Greece has made history by legalizing same-sex marriage and granting equal parental rights to same-sex couples, marking a significant shift in the country's societal and legal landscape

- The newly passed legislation not only recognizes same-sex marriages but also ensures equal parental rights for same-sex couples. This includes granting both parents in a same-sex union the same legal status as guardians, allowing them to make crucial decisions for their children and participate fully in their upbringing.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 'Bharat Mart', a warehousing facility for Indian MSMEs, in Dubai.

- Bharat Mart, which is expected to be operational by 2025, is a warehousing facility enabling Indian companies to trade in Dubai.
- Bharat Mart is a joint initiative of DP World, a Dubai-based multinational that specialises in logistics, port terminal operations and maritime services, and India's commerce ministry that is aimed at boosting exports by Indian small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Sominsai festival, an ancient tradition deeply rooted in Japanese culture, has recently concluded its final celebration after a millennium-long legacy.

- The bizarre annual 'naked festival' of Japan called 'Sominsai' has been impacted, as rural towns hosting it grapple with demographic challenges posed by the country's rapid population ageing. Held every February, the cold weather festival involves scores of men wearing just loincloths ostensibly to invoke gods for a bountiful harvest.

U Tirot Sing's Bust Unveiled In Dhaka, Bangladesh

- U Tirot Sing Syiem's legacy is marked by his pivotal role in the fight against colonial oppression. On April 4, 1829, he initiated a daring attack on the British Garrison at Nongkhlaw, signaling a relentless resistance against foreign rule.
- This act sparked a fierce four-year-long conflict between the resolute Khasi soldiers, led by U Tirot Sing Syiem, and the British forces, ultimately leading to his martyrdom in Dhaka.

Malta Becomes 119th Country to Join International Solar Alliance

- Christopher Cutajar, the Permanent Secretary at the Maltese Foreign Ministry, signed the ISA Framework Agreement. This formal endorsement highlights Malta's intent to actively participate in promoting solar energy initiatives on the international stage.
- The International Solar Alliance originated from a joint effort by India and France. It aims to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels by promoting the widespread adoption of solar energy. The alliance prioritizes the development of cost-effective solar

solutions to facilitate sustainable growth, particularly in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Multinational military exercise kicks off in Nepal

- Multinational military exercise - 'Shanti Prayas IV' - kicked off in Nepal at the Army headquarters with the participation of 19 countries, including India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to enhance the interoperability and peacekeeping skills of the forces.
- Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" inaugurated the two-week-long military drill amidst a special ceremony.

India and Greece aim to double bilateral trade by 2030: Strengthening economic co-operation.

- During a two-day visit to India, Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis engaged in extensive discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bolster cooperation between the two nations. The visit marks the first by a Greek head of state to India in 15 years. The talks primarily focused on expanding strategic collaboration in various sectors, including trade, defense, and counter-terrorism efforts, with an emphasis on doubling bilateral trade by 2030.

Turkey's 5th-generation fighter jet Kaan makes maiden flight

- The jet, known as Kaan and developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries with help from the UK's BAE Systems, took off from an airstrip in capital Ankara for a flight that lasted just over 10 minutes.
- The flight marks a landmark moment for Turkey, where authorities have made modernizing the country's aging air force a top priority. That's gained urgency since the country's expulsion from the program to procure and support Lockheed Martin Corp.'s advanced F-35 fighter jets in 2019, following Ankara's acquisition of Russian S-400 air defense missiles.

Gita Mahotsav in Sri Lanka from March 1

- The three-day fifth edition of the International Gita Mahotsav (IGM) on the foreign soil will be organised in Sri Lanka from March 1 to 3.
- A three-member team comprising the Chief Executive Officer of the Kurukshetra Development Board (KDB), Honorary Secretary of the Board and the Chairman of the 48-Kos Tirtha Monitoring

Committee will reach Sri Lanka on February 28 to oversee preparedness for the event.

Philippines becomes the first Asian country to ratify C190 on violence and harassment at work: ILO

- The Philippines has deposited the instrument of ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), becoming the 38th country in the world - and the first Asian country - to ratify Convention No. 190, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- Convention No. 190 marks the first international labour standard to address violence and harassment at work. In conjunction with Recommendation No. 206, it establishes a definition and framework for action. Together, these instruments align with the objectives outlined in the ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work, emphasising a workplace free from violence and harassment.
- As such, the Convention aims to introduce the first globally recognised definition of workplace violence and harassment. This is meant to offer protection to all individuals in the workforce, including interns, apprentices, and those with employer duties or authority. The protection extends across various sectors, including public and private, formal and informal economies, and urban and rural areas.

Mobile World Congress 2024 Begins On February 26

- The Mobile World Congress 2024 will be hosted by GSMA, the global association representing the interests of mobile network operators worldwide.
- The event will take place in the vibrant city of Barcelona, Spain, known for its rich cultural heritage and innovative spirit.

Vietnam aims to produce 100,000-500,000 tonnes of hydrogen per year by 2030 under recently approved plans.

- The country's hydrogen energy development strategy hopes to set Vietnam on course to produce 10-20 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) by 2050, utilising both renewable energy and carbon capture.
- Unveiled in Hanoi on February 22, the ambitious hydrogen output is expected to displace some natural gas and coal used in power plants by 2030, with views for the energy carrier to be used for transport, fertiliser, steel and cement.

- By 2050 however, the government expects hydrogen will account for 10% of the country's electricity generation, as it strives to meet Net Zero by the mid-century.

UAE dropped from financial crime watch list in win for nation

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a body that groups countries from the United States to China to tackle financial crime, on Friday dropped the UAE from its 'grey list' of around two-dozen nations considered risky.
- The Gulf country, a magnet for millionaires, bankers and hedge funds, was placed under closer scrutiny in 2022, when the FATF highlighted the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing involving banks, precious metals and stones as well as property.
- The delisting is a coup for the one-time regional pearl and fish trading hub which is now one of the world's wealthiest nations after the discovery of oil in Abu Dhabi in the late 1950s.

Algeria inaugurates world's third-largest mosque ahead of Ramadan

- Known locally as the Djamaa El-Djazair, it features the world's tallest minaret at 265 metres (869 feet), can accommodate 120,000 people, and is the world's largest mosque only after Islam's holiest sites in Saudi Arabia's Mecca and Medina.
- It was built over seven years in the form of a modernist structure extending across 27.75 hectares (almost 70 acres), decorated in wood and marble and containing Arab and North African flourishes. It reportedly has a helicopter landing pad and a library capable of housing up to one million books.

New Zealand set to scrap world-first tobacco ban

- New Zealand will repeal a world-first law banning tobacco sales for future generations, the government said, even while researchers and campaigners warned of the risk that people could die as a result.
- Set to take effect from July, the toughest anti-tobacco rules in the world would have banned sales to those born after Jan. 1, 2009, cut nicotine content in smoked tobacco products and reduced the number of tobacco retailers by more than 90%.

Lord Buddha's Holy Relics From India Arrive In Thailand For Public Display

- The holy relics of Lord Buddha and his two disciples, which were ferried from India to Thailand, were enshrined for public veneration at the specially built mandapam at Sanam Luang pavilion in Bangkok with great reverence and amidst holy chanting.
- Bihar Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar handed over the Lord Buddha relics to Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, while those of Arahants Sariputra and Maha Maudgalayana were handed over by Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar to Thai Deputy Prime Minister Somsak Thepsutin and Thai Culture Minister for enshrining in the mandapam, according to a press release issued by India's culture ministry.

Peru Declares Health Emergency in Most Provinces as Dengue Cases Soar.

- Peru declared a health emergency in most of its provinces on Monday due to a growing number of dengue cases that are occurring at a time of higher than usual temperatures caused by the El Nino weather pattern.
- According to the nation's health ministry, the number of dengue cases registered during the first seven weeks of this year is twice as high as during the same period in 2023 - with more than 31,000 cases recorded.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launches the theme for National Science Day 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh today released the theme for the "National Science Day 2024", titled "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat".
- The NSD Theme for this year's celebration reflects a strategic focus on promoting public appreciation for Science, Technology and Innovation and accomplishments of Indian scientists to address challenges through home-grown technologies for over-all well-being.
- The Theme not only marks a new era but also presents an opportunity for public and scientific fraternity, both domestically and internationally, to collaborate, work together, and contribute to the well-being of India and humanity as a whole. While emphasizing the importance of making India Atmanirbhar through science, it underscores the need to address subjects that hold significance for humanity as a whole.
- The National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on 28 February to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect'. Government of India designated 28 February as National Science Day (NSD) in 1986. On this day Sir C.V. Raman announced the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930. On this occasion, theme-based science communication activities are carried out all over the country. The theme launch will trigger celebrations of NSD

specially in schools & colleges throughout the country.

- In the wake of recent scientific achievements, it may be underscored that the rising trajectory of India over past 10 years is being witnessed globally. We are globally among the top five countries in scientific research publications, 40th in Global Innovation Index (GII) showcasing remarkable climb from 81st rank in 2015 and our patent filing has crossed 90,000 which is highest in two decades.
- All this is due to strengthening of S&T ecosystem in the nation in fields such as Artificial Intelligence, Astronomy, Solar & Wind Energy, Semiconductors, Climate Research, Space Research and Biotechnology. Indian scientific breakthroughs have reached from the lab to moon; with the successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 on south pole of moon, India became the first country to achieve this feat.
- India is also acknowledged for robust vaccine development capacity, and it has been proved during COVID pandemic. India is now ready to match the global stride in Quantum Technology. The impact of Indian scientific breakthroughs is significantly enhancing the 'Ease of Living' for the common man.

Provisions of ANRF Act comes into force

- The provisions of the Anusandhan Research Foundation (ANRF) Act have been brought into force on February 5, 2024 in line with the commitment of the Government to boost Research and Innovation as the fulcrum of growth and development of the country.



- It establishes the ANRF, that will seed, grow and promote Research and Development (R&D) and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.
- The Government has appointed Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST) as the interim Chief Executive Officer of ANRF.
- ANRF is a government's strong move to provide a high-level strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture and have long-term effect, long term outcomes for each citizen.

Cervical cancer

- Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer affecting women in India. Each year, over 120,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and over 75,000 die from the disease. Cervical cancer ranks as the second most frequent cancer among women in India.
- Cervical cancer is often caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infections. HPV is a sexually transmitted infection. If HPV persists in the body for years, it can cause changes in the cervical cells that may lead to cancer. Women with compromised immune systems, such as those with HIV, are at higher risk of cervical cancer.
- India has over 500 million women aged 15 and above who are at risk of cervical cancer. Vaccination against HPV can help prevent cervical cancer. The National Technical Advisory Group for Immunization (NTAGI) recommended HPV vaccination for girls aged 9-14 under the Universal Immunization Programme in 2022.
- Currently, Merck's HPV vaccine Gardasil and Serum Institute of India's indigenous vaccine CERVAVAC are available in the Indian market. Gardasil is priced at around Rs. 10,850 per dose while CERVAVAC costs around Rs. 2,000 per dose. In 2023, India rolled out CERVAVAC nationally in partnership with DBT and BIRAC.
- In the 2024 budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced an initiative to promote HPV vaccination for girls aged 9-14 years. The aim is to vaccinate this age group against cervical cancer and save over 125,000 lives annually. The budget signals the government's intent to strengthen the cervical cancer immunization program across the country.

India's First Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility-- a major step in the Government's path towards Atmanirbharata

- A crucial step in the country's journey towards Atmanirbhar Bharat has been achieved with India's first Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility successfully established and tested by Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IITK). This is a major achievement that puts India amongst a handful of countries with this advanced hypersonic testing capability.
- The development of the facility was supported by the Fund for Improvement in S&T Infrastructure (FIST) of the Department of Science & Technology (DST) with a sum of Rs 4.5 Crores in 2018.
- The facility was developed by the Hypersonic Experimental Aerodynamics Laboratory at the Department of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Kanpur and is capable of generating flight speeds between 3-10 km/s, simulating the hypersonic condition. Named S2, it was indigenously designed and developed and is a valuable test facility for ongoing missions of ISRO and DRDO including Gaganyaan, RLV and hypersonic cruise missiles.
- The facility consists of 4 major sections--free piston driver, compression tube, shock /acceleration tube and test section with high vacuum system for generating and sustaining the hypersonic flow. The complete instrumentation of the facility; pressure sensors and associated equipment/instruments for acquiring and processing the data and the vacuum system with test section and associated instrumentation was acquired through the DST- FIST program.
- Hypersonic research activities are fast growing in India and the implementation of Hypersonic Test Facility in India will enable more aerospace engineers and researchers to pursue hypersonic research. The research activities and data generated in the facility will serve as an input for optimization of existing vehicles as well as futuristic defense and Space Missions.
- Establishment of such facility will position India globally for advanced experimental hypersonic research. It is a major capacity boost for India's space and defense sectors and puts India in a better position to develop advanced hypersonic technologies and systems fast-forwarding the Hon'ble PM's dream of a scientifically advanced nation.

NASA has recently announced that its Mars robot helicopter Ingenuity, the first vehicle to achieve powered, controlled flight on another world, has been grounded for good after flying dozens of times over three years

- Ingenuity buzzed over the Martian terrain 14 times farther than originally planned, logging more than two hours, eight minutes of flight time and covering a distance of 10.5 miles (17 km) through all 72 flights. Its peak altitude was measured at 78.7 feet (24 meters).
- Ingenuity was carried to the Red Planet strapped to the belly of NASA's Perseverance rover, which landed three years ago on the floor of a vast Martian basin called Jezero Crater on a separate mission aimed primarily at collecting surface samples for eventual return to Earth.

SWATI' (Science for Women-A Technology & Innovation) Portal launched in New Delhi to create a single online portal representing Indian Women and Girls in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine)

- Launching the Portal on the occasion of International Day of Women and Girls in Science at Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi, Prof Sood said, the database of SWATI Portal will serve in policy making to address the challenges of Gender-gap
- The Portal is a complete interactive database; and the first-of-its-kind in India which is developed, hosted and maintained by the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), New Delhi
- This is a dynamically growing portal and the endeavour is to have data of all women scientists of the country included: Dr Subhra Chakraborty
- In 21st Century, we still have way to go to address Gender Parity in all sectors of life: Prof. Quarraisha Abdool Karim
- This is the initiative of Inter Academy Panel (IAP) on Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine (STEMM)

A new method for sodium catalyzed synthesis of carbon nanotubes could be useful for rechargeable batteries & flexible electronics

- A novel method for directly synthesizing Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) on glass substrates at a temperature of 750 °C could help energy research, biomedical fields, and optoelectronics.
- Carbon nanotubes (CNTs) are pivotal in advancing modern technology by showcasing extraordinary properties.
- They have found applications in diverse fields, including rechargeable batteries, flexible electronics, aerospace, transparent electrodes, touch screens, supercapacitors, and medicine. However, conventional CNT synthesis methods require high temperatures (~1000 °C) and metal catalysts (Fe, Co, and Ni).
- These catalysts pose biocompatibility concerns for potential biomedical applications. The challenge of removing these catalysts from CNTs adds a significant cost, highlighting the urgent need for cleaner, more sustainable CNT synthesis methods - an exciting frontier in the realm of nanotechnology.
- Researchers at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), an autonomous institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, have pioneered a novel method for directly synthesizing CNTs on glass substrates at a temperature of 750 °C.
- The experiment is performed using the Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapour Deposition Technique (PECVD), where plasma is generated using a specially designed spiral-shaped fused hollow cathode source. This innovative process circumvents the need for elevated temperatures and eliminates the necessity for a transition metal catalyst. Furthermore, this synthesis is executed under atmospheric pressure, adding commendable cost-effectiveness to its advantages compared to counterparts in the field.
- Several factors, including the plasma characteristics, substrate composition, substrate temperature, and plasma pre-treatment of the substrate, significantly influence the CNT growth.
- Optimally, the pre-plasma treatment of the glass substrate at an elevated temperature enhances the surface area, exposing a more significant amount of its constituent elements directly to the surface.
- Among all the elements within the glass, sodium (Na) emerges as the primary catalyst for initiating CNT growth, and analysis evidences the same. It has also been observed that the Na present in the as-grown CNTs can be easily removed by washing the Na-containing CNTs with deionized water.
- In essence, this study unveils a novel atmospheric pressure PECVD process for synthesizing CNTs, enabling the production of clean CNTs suitable for

applications in energy research, biomedical fields, and optoelectronics. The finding marks a significant stride towards addressing challenges in CNT synthesis and advancing their application in diverse technological fields.

Nearly 13,000 remote area patients have been attended so far in the far-flung regions of Udampur-Kathua-Doda Lok Sabha constituency by "Doctor on Wheels", the first-of-its-kind, state-of-the-art, Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven free Mobile Telemedicine Clinic, says Dr Jitendra Singh

- Majority of beneficiaries are women
- This novel experiment makes use of the latest technology tools whereby the patient attended by the Mobile Telemedicine Clinic is screened, thoroughly investigated and then the consultation is obtained from the concerned super-specialist doctors in one of the leading hospitals in metros like Hyderabad and Bengaluru with whom an arrangement has been tied up for the purpose
- "Aarogya-Doctor on Wheels" functions on the latest methodology wherein a patient can narrate his illness or complaint in his native language and the AI Doctor understands the language and responds to the patient in the same language
- This hi-tech clinic is presently being conducted in Dudu Basantgarh in the upper reaches of Ramnagar block of Udampur under the 4th phase since 17th January 2024, informs Dr Jitendra Singh

India is making a major push to establish itself as a global leader in deep tech

- Advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and quantum computing that have the potential to drive economic growth. With a vast talent pool and growing tech industry, India sees an opportunity to contribute to developing these cutting-edge technologies and benefit from associated economic gains.
- Recognizing deep tech's importance, India has undertaken several efforts to promote it. This includes creating specialized missions for transformative mobility and battery storage and for quantum technologies.
- In 2022, India finalized a National Deep Tech Startup Policy to nurture deep tech companies by addressing their unique challenges. This policy

aims to incentivize deep tech innovation through long-term funding, stronger intellectual property rights, tax benefits, and fostering talent. Over 10,000 Indian startups working on deep technologies were identified.

- Deep tech refers to pioneering technologies that are still under development but have potential for transformative impact. It encompasses research in fields like nanotechnology, biotechnology, quantum technologies, semiconductors, data science, and 3D printing.

ISRO Announces Young Scientist Programme 2024 (YUVIKA)

- Children and youth have fascination for space and universe. They are very curious and wish to know everything about all the celestial phenomenon. To address this staunch curiosity of young minds, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is organising a special programme for School Children called "Young Scientist Programme" "YUva VIGyani KARYakram" (YUVIKA).
- The key objective of this initiative is to impart basic knowledge on Space Science, Space Technology and Space Applications to the younger students in emerging trends in space science and technology. ISRO has chalked out this programme to "Catch them young". As we all are aware that the youngsters can involve and excel in space science and technology if they get an opportunity because they are the future building blocks of our nation.
- Young Scientist Programme - YUVIKA was conceived to impart basic knowledge on Space Science, Space Technology and Space Applications to the younger students with a preference to rural areas of the country. The programme is thus aimed at creating awareness about the emerging trends in science and technology amongst the school going students. The programme envisages two weeks' class room training, practical demonstration of experiments, hands on CANSAT, Robotic kit, Model rocketry interactions with ISRO scientists and field visits.

India is planning for a manned space mission Gaganyaan in 2025.

- Before human astronauts launch, a space-bound "robot friend" named Vyommitra will fly to space later this year to test critical systems. This female humanoid robot is equipped to simulate human functions within the spacecraft's orbit.
- The name Vyommitra (Vyom - Space, Mitra - Friend) is a half-humanoid robot weighing 40 kg developed by ISRO. By simulating human

activities aboard the spacecraft, Vyommित्रा will allow ISRO engineers to fully test the Gaganyaan module's habitability and safety prior to crewed flights.

- Vyommित्रा can operate several control panels within the orbital module. It can monitor parameters within the spacecraft module, alert ground control of issues, and perform essential life support operations during the mission. It can also respond to queries and conversations during the mission using artificial intelligence capabilities. Her deployment will pave the way for future Gaganyaan flights to space.

New study tracking pollen from soil of Kaziranga National Park can interpret climate & vegetation change & help inform National Biodiversity Mission

- New research has developed a modern analogue for pollen and non-pollen palynomorphs (NPPs) of Kaziranga National Park that can help in the interpretation of the past vegetation and climate in a region.
- Climate change is a dynamic process for the periodic vegetation shifts in a region. Nevertheless, the national parks are highly protected areas for the biodiversity conservation.
- The extreme and unpredictable weather, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, is one of the prime drivers for the biodiversity loss in National Parks. In these circumstances, the precision in future climatic assessment is important and requires rigorous climate models which are built utilizing modern and past climatic data inputs which emerged from well-dated proxy based palaeo-reconstructions.
- The Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in Assam, a corridor for immigration of members of the Indo-Malayan fauna into the Indian sub-region, is a critical reserve for tropical species, having served as a gene reservoir for these taxa during glacial periods.
- With this in mind scientists from Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), an autonomous institution of DST have developed a modern analogue dataset based on pollen and non-pollen palynomorphs (NPPs) from different vegetation settings across the Kaziranga National Park of Assam for the interpretation of the past vegetation and climate in a region.
- This study evaluates both the strength and weaknesses of the biotic proxy and assesses how reliably modern pollen and NPP analogue can identify different ecological environments and

could be used as a baseline in interpreting Late Quaternary palaeo-environmental and ecological changes more accurately in this region.

- Modern pollen analogue being a prerequisite in this high precipitation tropical region for deciphering the past and future climatic scenario, the palaeo-ecological data would assist in better understanding the sustainable future projections in and around the national park.
- Compared to single-proxy interpretation, the combination of pollen and NPP can reveal more detailed information and strengthen subsequent palaeo-environmental reconstructions. The research is the first holistic approach towards developing modern pollen and NPP analogue that would be an accurate reference tool for the past herbivory and ecological studies in the tropical region of northeast India.
- The study published in the journal *Holocene* for the first time helps in identifying marker pollen taxa recovered from the surface soil samples in relation to the different vegetation and land-use from Kaziranga National Park. It could help public and wildlife management agencies to understand the association of flora and fauna especially herbivores in National Parks to conserve it for the current and future prospect, thus informing the National Biodiversity Mission.

The Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT) and IIT Kharagpur recently signed an agreement to create 10-Gigabit XGS-PON (10 Gbps Symmetric Passive Optical Network) components, funded by the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) scheme.

- This partnership seeks developing and demonstrating indigenous expertise in futuristic fiber-optic internet hardware meeting burgeoning connectivity demands.
- XGS-PON signifies a symmetric network supporting equal 10 Gbps upload and download links unlike traditional asymmetric digital subscriber lines.
- The project entails creating robust, field-deployable prototypes for Optical Line Terminal (OLT) and Optical Network Unit (ONU) adhering to XGS-PON optical transmission protocols and architecture standards internationally.
- C-DOT contributes rich intellectual property and productization experience while IIT Kharagpur facilitates cutting-edge academic rigor exploring

complex broadband technologies' commercial viability in Indian contexts.

American space agency NASA has discovered a "super-Earth" planet, dubbed TOI-715 b, that could potentially support life.

- It is located 137 light-years away and was found by NASA's planet-hunting Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) mission. The super-Earth is around one and a half times as wide as Earth and orbits a smaller, cooler red dwarf star. It completes a full orbit in just 19 days.
- The planet TOI-715 b resides within the star's "conservative habitable zone," meaning liquid water could potentially exist on its surface given the right atmospheric conditions. While several factors must align for surface water, including a suitable atmosphere, the conservative habitable zone makes conditions ripe for further investigation. NASA notes the planet could be slightly larger than Earth and may be a "water world," making its atmosphere more prominent.

India's 1st septic tank cleaning robot strengthening Swatch Bharat campaign

- India's first septic tank/manhole cleaning robot, offering an end-to-end solution to eliminate manual scavenging, is strengthening the swachhata abhiyan in different corners of the country.
- The technology called Homosep Atom developed by the startup incubated in the Department of Science and Technology (DST)-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of IIT Madras, solves manual cleaning methods and transforms it to robotic cleaning methods. It has reached 16 cities in different parts of India and empowers extensive blade cleanings, solid waste desilting, suction and storage at one device; thereby reducing the cost of owning multiple assets and promotes robotic cleaning in sewers.
- DST-Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) are established in Academic /Technical /R&D Institutions as part of NIDHI programme to support and nurture knowledge driven innovative start-ups into successful enterprises.
- The startup called Solinas, which developed this affordable robotic solution integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) to inspect, clean, and manage confined space for sanitation purposes. It helped clean up manhole blockages and reduced sewer overflows in Madurai.

- The application of Homosep Atom was also extended to the intricate lanes of Chennai's densely populated areas. Targeting septic tanks associated with large apartments, housing boards, and individual houses, this process enabled Municipalities to promptly and efficiently clean, clear, and transport waste to treatment plants. Besides, sanitary workers were empowered with manhole cleaning robots that helped them clean the manholes from outside and avoid going inside the toxic environment, thus providing dignity to the sanitary workers.
- Solinas is a deep-tech and climate tech startup born out of IIT Madras, founded with the intent to solve the challenges that revolutionizes the water and sanitation sector and improves the climatic conditions. The IIT Madras DST-TBI was also instrumental in advancing the product development of Solinas in the early stages.
- The startup specialises in developing miniature robots, including India's 1st 90mm water robot and 120mm sewer robot, capable of navigating through pipelines below 100mm to address contamination challenges in water-sewer pipelines. The exposure it received through support from DST ensured that the solutions were both sustainable and scalable.
- Besides this flagship product, Solinas's technologies solved some of the existing climatic challenges like water wastages, groundwater pollution, climate change and day-to-day human challenges like manual scavenging, drinking contaminated water, combined sewer overflows, etc.
- Technologies like Endobot and Swasth AI served as pipeline diagnostic tools capable of detecting and mitigating water contamination, wastages, and sewer overflows, often unnoticed due to underground issues like leaks, blockages, and tree roots in cities like Coimbatore.
- Solinas's AI-based pipeline defect identification and assessment services helped save costs, reduce resolution time, and improve drinking water supply to the entire Hubbali city which provided drinking water supply to more than 1000 households. Identification of flaws in the sewage pipeline for The Sewerage and Infrastructural Development Corporation of Goa (SIDGCL), led to quicker and more cost-effective solutions. Partnering with Chennai metro it helped identify key challenges of cross-contamination and illegal tappings, thus improving pipeline integrity & water access.

Krutrim, an Artificial Intelligence start-up launched by Ola founder

Bhavish Aggarwal, has rolled out an AI chatbot in public beta, similar to OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini.

- The launch comes a month after Krutrim disclosed a \$50-million financing at \$1-billion valuation, to become the country's first start-up unicorn in 2024. The company mentioned that it is the first AI unicorn in the country.
- The chatbot, which has the same name as the company (Krutrim), was announced in December. It is the firm's first product, which will be powered by its multilingual large language models (LLM), also called Krutrim.

Recently, researchers at Stanford University discovered a new virus-like entity called obelisks. These obelisks have been found in large numbers within the human mouth and gut.

- Obelisks are microscopic entities that contain one or two genes and self-organise into a rod-like shape. They are circular bits of genetic material that have been found hiding inside the human body.
- While the exact species that host these elements are unknown, it is believed that bacteria or fungi could be probable hosts. The obelisks likely rely on these microbial host cells for replication.

India-specific model developed to determine the age of a foetus in a pregnant woman in the second and third trimesters precisely

- BRIC-THSTI Faridabad and IIT Madras researchers have developed an India-specific model to determine the age of a foetus in a pregnant woman in the second and third trimesters precisely.
- Currently, the age of a foetus (gestational age, GA) is determined using a formula developed for Western populations and are likely to be erroneous when applied in the later part of pregnancy due to variations in the growth of the foetus in Indian population.

- The newly developed second and third-trimester GA formula, Garbhini-GA2, accurately estimates the age of a foetus for the Indian population, reducing error by almost three times. Accurate GA is necessary for the appropriate care of pregnant women and for determining precise delivery dates.

Recently, the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) successfully tested an unmanned High Altitude Pseudo Satellite (HAPS) in Karnataka.

- This 5-meter-long drone with 11-meter wingspan flew at an altitude of 3 kilometers for 8 hours. It represents a milestone in India's development of HAPS platforms for strategic communication and observation roles.
- Conceptualized in the 1990s, HAPS are advanced uncrewed aircraft designed to operate in the stratosphere about 20 kilometers above ground. HAPS essentially function as aerial base stations providing connectivity and other services at lower costs compared to satellites.
- They are powered by solar energy and use rechargeable batteries to stay perpetually airborne for months through electrodynamic tethering and dynamic lifting. HAPS allow coverage of very large areas (around 500 km diameter) from a single platform. The stratospheric vantage gives HAPS more powerful line-of-sight signals than ground-based towers.

'ANUVADINI'- AI Tool

- Anuvadini', an Artificial Intelligence-based multilingual translation application developed indigenously, will facilitate swift conversion of existing English materials into multiple languages through machine learning as the bedrock, followed by expert manual reviews for accuracy.
- The Government of India has directed all school and higher education institutions across the country to make available digital study material in Indian languages for every academic course within 3 years. This policy aims to enable students to learn in their native tongues aligned to India's linguistic diversity.



DEFENCE & SECURITY

Indian navy declares 2024 as 'YEAR OF NAVAL CIVILIANS'

- Indian Navy has declared 2024 as 'Year of Naval Civilians' to improve administration, efficiency

and well-being of Naval Civilians by addressing all facets of Civilian HR Management in a time bound manner. Major focus areas towards maximising administrative efficiency, digital initiatives, generic and specific training programmes and welfare activities have been identified for implementation in 2024.

- Naval Civilian Personnel constitute about a third of the Indian Navy's total workforce and contribute significantly to its operational effectiveness across all domains. Civilian personnel impact the overall performance of Naval formations such as Command Headquarters, Dockyards, Material Organisations, Naval Armament Depots, Naval Armament Inspectorates, Training Establishments and several other types of support units.
- A number of initiatives have been conceived and implemented in the past in order to enhance organisational efficiency and satisfaction levels amongst civilian personnel. However, it is imperative that impetus be provided to their administration, training, welfare etc. so that they effectively contribute towards ensuring that the Indian Navy always remains a combat ready, credible, cohesive and future proof force. Declaring 2024 as a year dedicated to them is a step in this direction.

The Indian Navy commissioned its latest Survey Vessel Sandhayak, at Naval Dockyard, Vizag on 03 Feb 24

- The event marks the formal induction into the Navy of the first of four Survey Vessel (Large) ships under construction at M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. The project has been steered by the Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy.
- Sandhayak was delivered to the Indian Navy on 04 Dec 2023 after completing a rigorous and comprehensive trial programme both in the harbour and at sea.
- The primary role of the ship is to carry out full scale hydrographic surveys of ports, harbours, navigational channels/ routes, coastal areas and deep seas, towards enabling safe marine navigation. In its secondary role, the ship will be capable of undertaking a range of naval operations.
- A significant addition to the naval fleet, Sandhayak is equipped with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment including Deep & Shallow Water Multi-Beam Echo-Sounders, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, Side Scan Sonars, Data

Acquisition and Processing System, satellite-based positioning systems and terrestrial survey equipment.

- The ship, re-incarnated in its present avatar from erstwhile Sandhayak which was decommissioned on 04 Jun 21, is propelled by two Diesel Engines and is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 18 knots. Measuring 110 meters in length, displacing 3400 tons and with 80% indigenous content, Sandhayak is a true testament of India's growing shipbuilding prowess in pursuit of the national vision of AatmaNirbharBharat. Sandhayak is also a true harbinger of a developed India, in tune with the national vision for Amrit Kaal.

Exercise Vayushakti-2024

- The Indian Air Force conducted Exercise Vayu Shakti-24 on 17 February 2024 at the Pokhran Air to Ground Range, near Jaisalmer. The last edition of exercise Vayu Shakti was held on 16 February 2019. As always, Ex Vayu Shakti will be a riveting demonstration of the offensive and defensive capabilities of the IAF, spanning across day and night. The exercise was showed joint operations with the Indian Army.
- This year's exercise participated by 121 aircraft, including the indigenous Tejas, Prachand and Dhruv. Other participating aircraft would include the Rafale, Mirage-2000, Sukhoi-30 MKI, Jaguar, Hawk, C-130J, Chinook, Apache and Mi-17. Indigenous Surface to Air Weapon systems Akash and Samar will demonstrate their capability to track and shoot down an intruding aircraft.
- Exercise Vayu Shakti is a demonstration of the IAF's capability to deliver weapons with long range, precision capability as well as conventional weapon accurately, on time and with devastating effect, while operating from multiple air bases. Special operations by the IAF transport and helicopter fleets, involving the Garuds and Indian Army elements displayed.

Delivery of 25t Bollard Pull Tug, Mahabali

- 25T Bollard Pull (BP) Tug, Mahabali has been delivered to Indian Navy on 02 Feb 24 in presence of Rear Admiral Subir Mukherjee, NM, ASY(Kochi). This Tug is a proud flag bearer of "Make in India" initiative of Govt of India.
- Contract for construction and delivery of three 25T BP Tugs was concluded with M/s Shoft Shipyard Pvt Ltd (M/s SSPL), an MSME, in consonance with "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative of the Government of India.

- These Tugs are being built under the classification rules of Indian Register of Shipping (IRS). The availability of Tugs will provide impetus to Operational commitments of IN by facilitating assistance to Naval ships and submarines during berthing and un-berthing, turning and maneuvering in confined waters.
- The Tugs will also provide afloat firefighting assistance to ships alongside, at anchorage and will also have capability to conduct limited Search and Rescue Operations.

NS Sandhayak, first Survey Vessel Large ship, commissioned into Indian Navy.

- INS Sandhayak (Yard 3025), the first Survey Vessel Large (SVL) ship, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh at an impressive ceremony held at the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam on February 03, 2024.
- The primary role of the ship is to carry out full scale hydrographic surveys of ports, harbours, navigational channels/routes, coastal areas and deep seas, towards enabling safe marine navigation. In its secondary role, the ship will be capable of undertaking a range of naval operations.

DRDO carries out successful flight trials of High-speed Expendable Aerial Target 'ABHYAS' from Integrated Test Range, Chandipur.

- Four flight trials of High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) - ABHYAS were successfully carried out by Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur in Odisha during January 30 to February 02, 2024. The trials were conducted with four different mission objectives in a revised robust configuration using a single booster designed by Advanced Systems Laboratory, Hyderabad to provide reduced launch acceleration.
- The objectives like safe release of booster, launcher clearance and attaining the required end of launch velocity were achieved. During the flight trials, various parameters like required endurance, speed, manoeuvrability, altitude and range were successfully validated.
- Designed by DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), ABHYAS offers a realistic threat scenario for practice of weapon systems. It is

designed for autonomous flying with the help of an auto pilot indigenously made by the ADE.

- It has Radar Cross Section, Visual and Infrared augmentation system required for weapon practice. It has a laptop-based Ground Control System with which the aircraft can be integrated and pre-flight checks, data recording during the flight, replay after the flight and post-flight analysis can be carried out. ABHYAS requires minimum logistics and is cost effective compared to imported equivalents.
- The systems tested recently were realised through Production Agencies - Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Defence. With identified production agencies, ABHYAS is ready for production. The system has export potential and can be offered to friendly countries.
- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has congratulated the DRDO, the Armed Forces and the Industry for the successful flight trial of ABHYAS. The development of this system will meet the requirements of aerial targets for the Armed Forces, he said.

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt on a visit to Riyadh for World Defence Show 2024

- Bearing testimony to the growing defence ties between India and Saudi Arabia, Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt is on a visit to Riyadh as head of the Indian delegation for the ongoing World Defence Show (WDS) 2024.
- The five-day show, which commenced on February 04, 2024, is showcasing the latest advancements in defence technology serving as a vital platform for international collaboration amongst the participating companies. On behalf of the Government of India, the Raksha Rajya Mantri extended his greetings to the leadership of Saudi Arabia for hosting the impressive event which culminates on February 08, 2024.
- India's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and Saudi Arabia's 'Vision 2030' are national programmes that can be mutually beneficial to both sides. Both initiatives prioritise technological advancements, indigenous capabilities and knowledge sharing.
- As highlighted by both sides, there is an immense potential for collaboration in these areas particularly in co-development and joint production of defence technologies. The visit has reaffirmed the inherent strength of bilateral ties, opened new avenues for cooperation and solidified shared commitments towards a safer and prosperous future.

India and Rwanda hold their maiden Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting

- India and Rwanda held the first edition of Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting in Kigali, Rwanda on February 8, 2024 to discuss a wide range of opportunities to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries.
- Detailed discussions were held in areas like training cooperation, joint military exercises, defence industrial cooperation etc. The Indian delegation highlighted the growing prowess of Indian defence manufacturers to export to friendly countries.
- The Rwandan side evinced keen interest in augmenting training cooperation, expressing confidence in the growing capabilities of the Indian defence industry. The Rwandan side highlighted areas where the Indian Armed Forces and industry could collaborate with their Defence Forces under the aegis of the Defence MoU signed between the two countries during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Rwanda in 2018.
- Earlier the Indian delegation called on Defence Minister of Rwanda, Mr. Marizamunda Juvenal and conveyed the warm greetings of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh. The Indian delegation was led by Joint Secretary Shri Amitabh Prasad and included senior officials from the Ministry of Defence and the Indian Armed Forces. The Charge d'Affaires in the Indian mission in Kigali, Shri Nilratan Mridha also attended the meeting.
- Bilateral relations between India and Rwanda have been cordial and have grown steadily over the years. The visit of the Indian delegation for the JDCC meeting is likely to further strengthen defence relations with Rwanda.

Raksha Mantri unveils the statue of India's first Chief of Defence Staff late General Bipin Rawat in Dehradun

- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh unveiled a life-size statue of late General Bipin Rawat - the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) - at TonsBridge School, Dehradun in the presence of Uttarakhand Chief Minister Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami on February 12, 2024. He paid floral tributes to General Rawat at the statue, terming him as a courageous soldier and a good human being, who will always be an inspiration to the future generations.

- Appreciating the idea of installing the statue inside the school premises, the Raksha Mantri stated that the objective is to take the stories of valour of the Armed Forces to the children and instil patriotism & dedication in them.
- "Statues hold a significant importance in our society & culture. It is a part of our rich heritage, which also serves as an inspiration for the future. Schools not only provide education but also shape the personality of students. Every child can learn from personalities such as Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, former President APJ Abdul Kalam & General Bipin Rawat and contribute to nation building," he added.

Hawk 132 Aircraft

- One Hawk aircraft of the Indian Air Force met with an accident at Kalaikunda, West Bengal.
- The Hawk serves as a vital component of the IAF's training and operational capabilities.
- In India, the Hawk Mk 132 variant, featuring tandem seating for a trainee and a pilot, has been instrumental in bridging the training gap between basic piston-engine trainers and advanced fighter aircraft within the IAF ranks.
- Trainees undergo Stage-III training with the Hawk before progressing to supersonic jets like Jaguars, MiG-21s, and Mirage 2000s.

Indian Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Varaha makes a port call at Maputo Port, Mozambique as part of strategic overseas deployment to East Africa

- Indian Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) ICGS Varaha made a significant port call at Maputo Port, Mozambique on 14 February, 2024 as a part of ongoing strategic overseas deployment to East Africa, marking a pivotal milestone in the ongoing diplomatic maritime engagements.
- During its three-day visit, the crew of ICGS Varaha will participate in a series of professional interactions in the field of Marine Pollution Response (MPR), Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR) and Maritime Law Enforcement including cross-deck training, call on to various Mozambique Naval and maritime agencies officials, sports fixtures, joint yoga sessions, tabletop exercises and Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Mozambique Naval Forces.
- The visit of ICGS Varaha, an indigenously built Offshore Patrol Vessel to East African countries also aims to showcase Indian shipbuilding industry prowess and capabilities furthering the concept of "Aatmnirbhar Bharat".

A two-day INDUS-X Summit to be held in New Delhi

- The much-anticipated INDUS-X Summit is scheduled to be held on February 20-21, 2024 in New Delhi, marking a significant milestone in the collaborative efforts between India and the United States in defence innovation.
- Organised by Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) under the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, and Department of Defence (DoD), United States, in conjunction with the U.S.-India Business Council and Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM), the summit aims to be a pivotal event driving strategic technology partnerships and defence industrial cooperation between India and the USA.
- Since its launch in June 2023 during the State Visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to the US, the India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) has been at the forefront of expanding bilateral ties in defence innovation. Now, with the INDUS-X Summit, stakeholders from both nations will converge in New Delhi to explore and capitalise on emerging opportunities.
- The INDUS-X Summit represents a pivotal moment for advancing defence innovation and collaboration between India and the United States, setting the stage for future technological advancements and strategic partnerships, stimulating cross-national science and technology networks, and building the connective issue between domestic entrepreneurs, markets, skilling institutions, government labs, and investment capital, which is critical to building successful innovation ecosystems.

Sarang Helicopter Display Team All Set For Singapore Airshow 2024

- After arriving at Singapore on 12 February 2024, the Sarang Helicopter Display Team of the Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted its first practice display on 18 February 2024. The team is operating from the Changi airbase of the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF).
- The Singapore Airshow is scheduled to commence on 20 February 2024. The airshow features a variety of display teams from all across the globe. The show also features leading aircraft and system manufacturers and operators showcasing their products.
- The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), manufactured Advanced Light Helicopter (Dhruv), which the Sarang team operates, is featuring in the show for the very first time. However, the first international display for the

Sarang team also happened to be at Singapore for the Asian Aerospace Airshow at Changi Exhibition Center in 2004.

- The Sarang team is performing a four helicopter display for the audience at the Singapore Airshow this year. The display is designed to highlight the ALH Dhruv's agility and manoeuvrability, as well as the high degree of skills of the IAF pilots flying these machines. The indigenously manufactured ALH and its advanced variants are operated by all the military services of India. The successful induction and operational utilisation of this platform is one of the glowing success stories of self-reliance (Aatmanirbharta) in the defence sector.

Digital Flight Control Computer for Tejas Mk1A Flown successfully

- In a significant development towards Tejas Mk1A programme, the Digital Fly by Wire Flight Control Computer (DFCC) was integrated in prototype LSP7 and successfully flown on 19th Feb 2024. DFCC has been indigenously developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), Bengaluru for the Tejas - Mk1A.
- Digital Fly by Wire Flight Control Computer features Quadraplex Power PC based Processor, high speed autonomous state machine based I/O controller, enhanced computational throughput and complex on-board software complied to DO178C level- A safety requirements. All critical parameters and performance of the flight controls were found satisfactory. The maiden flight was piloted by Wg Cdr Siddarth Singh KMJ (Retd) of National Flight Test Centre.

International Maritime Seminar

- Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, the Hon'ble Vice President of India inaugurated the International Maritime Seminar, conducted today as part of MILAN 2024.
- The International Maritime Seminar, which was a pivotal component of MILAN 2024, proved to be a convergence of global maritime excellence. The seminar served as a platform for collaboration, synergy, and growth among nations across the oceans.
- Themed "Partners across Oceans: Collaboration, Synergy, Growth," the seminar featured an illuminating array of presentations and discussions. Papers presented by esteemed speakers from twelve nations delved into critical areas such as economic growth, maritime security, capacity building, climate change mitigation, blue

economy initiatives, and sustainable development of maritime infrastructure.

- The International Maritime Seminar, as part of MILAN 2024, stood as a testament to the enduring importance of international cooperation in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the global maritime community. Through meaningful dialogue and partnership, participants strived to pave the way for a more secure, sustainable, and prosperous maritime realm.

India-Japan Joint Exercise 'Dharma Guardian' Commences In Rajasthan

- The 5th edition of Joint Military Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self Defence Force commenced today at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 25th February to 9th March 2024.
- Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' is an annual exercise and conducted alternatively in India and Japan. The contingent of both sides comprises of 40 personnel each. The Japanese contingent is being represented by troops from the 34th Infantry Regiment and Indian Army contingent is being represented by a Battalion from the Rajputana Rifles.
- Aim of the Exercise is to foster Military Cooperation and enhance combined capabilities to execute joint operations in semi-urban environment under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter. The Exercise would focus on high degree

of physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical drills and basics of special arms skills.

- Tactical drills to be practiced during the Exercise will include establishing of Temporary Operating Base, creating an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Grid, setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Post, executing Cordon and Search Operations in a hostile village, Heliborne operations and House Intervention Drills. A Weapon and Equipment Display will also be organised showcasing 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative and the growing defence industrial capability of the country.
- Lieutenant General TOGASHI Yuichi, Commanding General, Eastern Army, Japan Ground Self Defence Force is also scheduled to visit India on the sidelines of "Exercise DHARMA GUARDIAN". The General officer will visit Mahajan Field Firing Ranges on 3rd March 2024 and witness Combat Shooting demonstration, Special Heliborne Operation (SHBO) & House Intervention Drills.
- Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' will enable the two sides to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures of conducting tactical operations. The Exercise will also facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between troops of both the sides. This will enhance the level of defence cooperation, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.



APPOINTMENTS

Bhutanese voters re-elected Tshering Tobgay for a second term as Prime Minister. The People's Democratic Party (PDP), led by Tobgay, secured nearly two-thirds of the seats in the recent election.

- Tshering Tobgay, a former Prime Minister who previously held office from 2013 to 2018, has promised to strengthen ties with India, Bhutan's key trading partner.
- Tobgay, head of the People's Democratic Party, served as the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly from March 2008 to April 2013. He co-founded the party, the first registered political party in Bhutan. On December 17, 2014, the King awarded Tobgay the Lungmar Scarf for his contributions to the nation's well-being during his tenure as Prime Minister.

The RuPay Prime Volleyball League (PVL) has taken a significant stride in its marketing and promotion efforts by appointing the acclaimed Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan as the brand ambassador.

- Hrithik Roshan, renowned for his commitment to fitness and athleticism, has been chosen to represent the RuPay Prime Volleyball League in its upcoming season. Roshan's passion for sports and his prominence in fitness make him an ideal fit for the role.

Jay Shah was unanimously appointed for a third consecutive term as the



President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

- One of the defining aspects of Jay Shah's tenure has been the successful organization of major cricketing events in the Asian subcontinent. The ACC, under his leadership, orchestrated the Asia Cup in T20 format in 2022 and seamlessly transitioned to the ODI format in 2023. These events not only showcased the cricketing talent in the region but also demonstrated the organizational prowess and efficiency brought in by Shah.

The Ministry of Law and Justice has formally designated Justice Pradeep Kumar Srivastava as a permanent judge at Jharkhand High Court, in accordance with Article 217(1) of the Indian Constitution.

- The appointment process for the Chief Justice and Judges of High Courts is governed by Article 217(1) of the Indian Constitution.
- The President's consultation with the Chief Justice of India and the Governor of the respective state is integral to appointing the Chief Justice, while the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court is also consulted for other judicial appointments.
- In cases where a High Court serves multiple states, consultations with the governors of all relevant states are mandatory.

Bollywood superstar Ranveer Singh has recently invested in the popular lifestyle brand boAt, becoming not only a stakeholder but also the official face of the brand's audio products.

- With Ranveer Singh on board, boAt's lineup of brand ambassadors now includes some of the most influential names in the entertainment and sports industry, such as Kiara Advani, Rashmika Mandanna, and cricket stars Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, KL Rahul, and Jemimah Rodrigues. This ensemble of ambassadors reflects boAt's commitment to building a brand that resonates with the youth and the young at heart.

Justice Vijay Bishnoi has recently been sworn in as the Chief Justice of the esteemed Gauhati High Court,

marking a significant milestone in his illustrious legal career.

- Justice Bishnoi's journey to the helm of the Gauhati High Court is marked by his years of dedication and expertise in the legal profession. Prior to his elevation as a Judge of the Rajasthan High Court, he excelled in various legal domains, including civil, criminal, Constitutional, service, and election cases. His profound knowledge and commitment to justice have earned him respect and admiration within the legal fraternity.

Fit India Movement broke the mold by appointing Narendra Kumar Yadav, an IRS officer, as its new brand ambassador.

- Mr. Yadav, who made history as one of the youngest Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officers in 2009, embodies a unique story. He has excelled in his demanding civil service career while simultaneously fostering a deep-rooted passion for health and fitness. He actively champions holistic wellness practices, emphasizing nutrition, mindful living, and a balanced approach to fitness.

Lebanese Judge Nawaf Salam was elected as the new president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a three-year term.

- Salam's journey with the ICJ began in 2018, and he currently holds the highest judicial position globally. His appointment highlights his remarkable trajectory within the field of international law.
- As the principal judicial body of the United Nations, the ICJ is responsible for adjudicating legal disputes between states and providing advisory opinions on legal questions referred to by UN organs and specialized agencies.

Punjab Chief Electoral Officer's office has announced Indian cricketer Shubman Gill as the new "state icon" for Punjab.

- Under the ambitious target of "Is Vaar 70 Paar", the electoral office aims to surpass a 70 per cent voter turnout in the forthcoming polls. This initiative follows the previous voter turnout of 65.96 per cent during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections across the 13 seats in Punjab. By engaging a figure like Shubman Gill, who holds considerable influence among the younger population, the

electoral office is optimistic about achieving and even exceeding this target.

Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin etched his name in cricketing history, surpassing legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble to become the leading wicket-taker in Test matches played on Indian soil.

- Ashwin continued his stellar performance in the second innings, claiming three more wickets to secure his 35th career five-wicket haul, tying Kumble's record in India. He also surpassed Kumble in terms of five-wicket hauls overall, currently holding 27 compared to Kumble's 25. However, Kumble remains ahead in ten-wicket hauls in a match, with seven compared to Ashwin's six.

Anil Kumar Lahoti, former Railway Board Chief, assumes the role of TRAI Chairman, filling the vacancy left by PD Vaghela.

- Lahoti, an Indian Railway Service of Engineer (IRSE) with a background in Civil Engineering and a Master of Engineering degree, brings extensive leadership experience and expertise in Strategic Management to his new role.

Justice Ritu Bahri has become the new Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court.

- She takes over from the previous Chief Justice, Vipin Sanghi, who retired. Before this, she was the Acting Chief Justice in Punjab and Haryana.

Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi is set to assume the role of Army Vice Chief from February 15, marking a smooth transition and succeeding Lt Gen MV Suchindra Kumar.

- Lt Gen. Dwivedi boasts a distinguished career within the Indian Army, having previously served in key positions including Deputy Chief and Director General of Infantry at the Army Headquarters. His operational experience in the Northern Command, particularly during the ongoing India-China military standoff, positions

him well for his new role as Army Vice Chief. With expertise in command and strategic roles, Lt Gen. Dwivedi brings a wealth of experience to his appointment.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced the appointment of Mio Oka as its new Country Director for India, succeeding Takeo Konishi.

- As the new Country Director, Ms. Oka will be responsible for steering ADB's operations in India and fostering relations with the government and other development partners. She will lead the implementation of ADB's country partnership strategy for India, designed to catalyze robust, climate-resilient, and inclusive private sector-led growth.

Amid boycotts and delays, PML-N's Maryam Nawaz is elected as Pakistan's first woman chief minister. She secured an overwhelming victory with 220 votes, defeating rival Rana Aftab Ahmed Khan.

- Maryam Nawaz, aged 50 and holding the position of senior vice president within the PML-N, officially took the oath as the Chief Minister of Punjab, marking a groundbreaking moment in Pakistan's political history.

Geeta Batra, a distinguished Indian economist, has been appointed as the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF).

- Batra's selection for the directorship was the outcome of a unanimous recommendation at the 66th GEF Council Meeting, which convened in Washington on February 9.
- Batra's appointment is not just a personal achievement but also a moment of pride for developing nations. It underscores the increasing recognition of the role of women in leadership within global institutions and signals a progressive shift towards more inclusive and diverse representation.

 **IMPORTANT DAYS**

Important Days in February 2024	
Dates	Important Days
February 1, 2024	Indian Coast Guard Day
February 2, 2024	World Wetlands Day
February 4, 2024	World Cancer Day
February 4, 2024	International Day of Human Fraternity 2024
February 6, 2024	International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation
February 6, 2024	Safer Internet Day
February 7, 2024	National Black HIV/ AIDS Awareness Day 2024
February 9, 2024	Baba Amte’s Death Anniversary
February 10, 2024	International Day of the Arabian Leopard 2024, Significance & Objectives
February 10, 2024	World Pulses Day
February 11, 2024	International Day of Women and Girls in Science
February 12, 2024	200th Birth Anniversary of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati
February 12, 2024	National Productivity Day
February 13, 2024	World Radio Day
February 13, 2024	Sarojini Naidu Birth Anniversary
February 13, 2024	International Epilepsy Day
February 14, 2024	Saint Valentine’s Day
February 14, 2024	World Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day
February 16, 2024	World Anthropology Day
February 20, 2024	Arunachal Pradesh Foundation Day
February 20, 2024	Mizoram Foundation Day
February 20, 2024	World Day of Social Justice
February 21, 2024	International Mother Language Day
February 22, 2024	World Thinking Day
February 23, 2024	World Peace and Understanding Day
February 24, 2024	Central Excise Day
February 27, 2024	World NGO Day
February 28, 2024	National Science Day
February 28, 2024	Rare Disease Day

 **OBITUARIES**

Samajwadi Party MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq, the oldest MP in Parliament, passes away at 94 in Moradabad after a prolonged illness.

- Shafiqur Rahman Barq (11 July 1930 – 27 February 2024) was an Indian politician belonging to the Samajwadi Party. He was elected to the Lok Sabha at various times from Moradabad as the Samajwadi Party candidate and Sambhal, most recently in 2019.

Padma Shri recipient and Ghazal maestro Pankaj Udhas passed away

on February 26 at the age of 72 after battling a prolonged illness.

- Udhas was a prominent Indian Ghazal singer. He was widely recognized for popularizing a distinctive singing style that involves setting Urdu poetry to music. He played a crucial role, alongside fellow musicians such as Jagjit Singh and Talat Aziz, in introducing this art form to a widespread audience throughout the country.

Ameen Sayani, renowned radio presenter and voice of Geetmala, passes away at 91

- Ameen Sayani, the legendary voice that defined radio for generations of Indians, passed away at

the age of 91. Known for his iconic program Binaca Geetmala, Sayani's voice was a staple in Indian households, bridging the gap between music and its lovers across the nation.

Rituraj Singh of 'Anumpama' fame passes away at 59.

- Singh, recently seen portraying the character of Yashpal in the TV serial 'Anupamaa', had a distinguished career spanning both television and film. He gained prominence through his roles in popular TV series like 'Banegi Apni Baat', 'Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai', and 'Diya Aur Baati Hum', alongside appearances in films like 'Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania'.

Acharya Vidhyasagar Maharaj passes away after undertaking 'sallekhna'

- Sallekhna is a Jain religious practice involving voluntary fasting unto death for spiritual purification. According to an official statement by teerth, "Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj attained Samadhi through 'Sallekhna' at Chandragiri teerth at 2:35 am".

'Udaan' actor Kavita Chaudhary dies of cardiac arrest at 67

- Kavita Chaudhary, famous for her portrayal of an IPS officer in the popular TV series 'Udaan' from 1989 and her role as Lalita-ji in iconic Surf advertisements of the '90s, has passed away due to cardiac arrest

Legendary chef Imtiaz Qureshi, who was known for having revived the old-Lucknowi tradition of dum pukht style of cooking, died of age-related ailments.

- "Dum pukht", Nawabi Lucknow's slow cooking style, owes as much to Imtiaz Qureshi, the grand old man of Indian culinary arts, as vice-versa.
- Qureshi, who became the first practising member of his fraternity to get a Padma Shri, in 2016.

Dattajirao Gaekwad, Nation's Oldest Test Cricketer, Passes Away At 95

- Gaekwad's Test debut for India came during the team's tour of England in 1952. Over the years, he became a mainstay in the Indian batting lineup,

known for his technical proficiency and graceful stroke play.

- Gaekwad's tenure as the captain of the Indian cricket team highlighted his leadership qualities and his ability to inspire his teammates. Under his captaincy, India achieved significant milestones, including notable performances against formidable international teams

Renowned litterateur and Padma Shri awardee Usha Kiran Khan passes away in Patna.

- Khan's literary contributions earned her widespread recognition, including prestigious honours such as the Padma Shri in 2015, the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Mahadevi Verma Award, the Dinakar National Award, and the Bharat-Bharati, among others.
- Born at Laheriasarai in Darbhanga district in October 1945, her notable works include her Maithili novel 'Bhamati: Ek Avismaraniya Premkatha', for which she received the Sahitya Akademi Award, and her Hindi novel 'Sirjanhaar', which earned her the Kusumanjali Sahitya Samman from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations in 2012.

Veteran artist A Ramachandran Passes Away in Delhi.

- Ramachandran's artistic oeuvre is a testament to his belief in the intrinsic value of Indian art traditions and the rich tapestry of its cultural narratives. His work stands as a bridge between the past and the present, embodying a fusion of traditional aesthetics with contemporary sensibilities. Through his paintings, murals, and illustrations, Ramachandran offered a glimpse into a world where myth and reality intertwine, where nature and humanity coexist in harmony.

Farooq Nazki, poet and Sahitya Akademi Winner, Passes Away at 83

- Farooq Nazki's body of work spans several decades, during which he explored themes of love, loss, and the human condition. His contributions to Kashmiri literature were not limited to his poetry. He was instrumental in promoting the language and its literary heritage, working tirelessly to ensure that Kashmiri voices were heard and appreciated on national and international platforms.



GEOGRAPHY and ENVIRONMENT

Mahmudia Wetland

- The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has proposed that the Romanian government grant the Mahmudia wetland the status of a “national interest ecological restoration area” to protect it.
- The Mahmudia wetland is part of the vital Danube Delta ecosystem in Romania. Eight years ago, it was restored into a thriving wetland habitat using EU funds, transforming the area and providing livelihoods and climate resilience for locals.
- However, recent flooding in 2023 submerged nearly 1,000 hectares of nearby farmland, reverting it back to a wetland area. While 97% of residents support preserving the current wetland, agricultural leaseholders have secured a court ruling to revert the land back to cropland, posing a threat to the entire restored wetland.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) released its inaugural State of the World’s Migratory Species report during the CMS COP14, a significant UN wildlife conservation conference.

Findings of the Report

- **Population Decline:** Nearly half of the migratory species listed under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) are facing a decline in their populations.
- **Extinction Risk:** The report reveals that over one-fifth of the species listed by CMS are at risk of extinction, with fish species particularly vulnerable, with 97% facing the risk of extinction.
- **Lack of Protection:** More than half of the key biodiversity areas critical for the survival of migratory animals, as identified by CMS, lack adequate protection. Additionally, a significant portion of monitored sites for these species is experiencing unsustainable human pressure.
- **Identified Threats:** Human activities such as overexploitation and habitat loss emerge as the most significant threats to migratory species.
- **Inadequate CMS Coverage:** Despite being listed by CMS, a considerable number of threatened species remain outside the purview of conservation efforts.

Recommendations

- **Address Illegal and Unsustainable Practices:** Urgent action is needed to combat illegal wildlife trade, unsustainable hunting, fishing, and

habitat destruction, which pose significant threats to migratory species.

- **Safeguard Critical Sites:** Efforts must be intensified to protect key biodiversity areas critical for the survival of migratory animals. This includes establishing and enforcing protected areas and implementing conservation measures to mitigate human-induced pressures.
- **Focus on Most Threatened Species:** Priority should be given to species facing the highest risk of extinction, with targeted conservation actions tailored to their specific needs and habitats.
- **Intensify Actions Against Climate Change and Pollution:** Mitigating the impacts of climate change and reducing pollution are essential for safeguarding migratory species and their habitats.
- **Expand CMS Listings:** Efforts should be made to broaden the scope of CMS listings to include more endangered species that are currently not covered.

The Shimoga district of Karnataka state in India reported two deaths in 2024 due to Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) - a viral hemorrhagic fever with a high fatality rate.

- Caused by Kyasanur Forest Disease Virus (KFDV), an orthopox variant like monkeypox.
- Identified in 1957 in sick monkeys from Karnataka’s Kyasanur Forest. Regarded as first Zoonotic isolation of a Biosafety Level 4 pathogen.
- Outbreaks documented since 1958 with 500+ confirmed deaths so far. Peaks in winter-to-summer seasons.
- Natural hosts seem rodents and small mammals. Hard ticks like Haemaphysalis spinigera likely vectors.
- Humans contract infection from ticks residing on infected animals or their carcasses. Documented occupational hazard in forested areas.

Shri Bhupender Yadav releases report on Status of Leopards in India

Key Findings:

- India's leopard population is estimated at 13,874 (Range: 12,616 – 15,132) individuals, representing stable population in comparison to the similar area being sampled in 2018 with 12852 (12,172-13,535) individuals. This estimate represent population of 70% of leopard habitat, the Himalayas and semi

arid parts of country which are not tiger habitat were not sampled.

- Central India shows a stable or slightly growing population of leopards (2018: 8071, 2022: 8820), Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains experienced decline (2018: 1253, 2022: 1109). If we look at the area which was sampled both in 2018 and 2022 across India, there is a 1.08% per annum growth. In Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains, there is a -3.4% decline per annum, while the largest growth rate was in Central India and Eastern Ghats of 1.5%.
- Madhya Pradesh houses the largest population of leopards in the country - 3907 (2018: 3421), followed by Maharashtra (2022: 1985; 2018: 1,690), Karnataka (2022: 1,879 ; 2018: 1,783) and Tamil Nadu (2022: 1,070; 2018: 868). Tiger Reserves or sites with highest leopard population are, Nagarajunasagar Srisailem (Andhra Pradesh), followed by Panna (Madhya Pradesh), and Satpura (Madhya Pradesh).

New species of Amazon anaconda, world's largest snake, discovered

- Researchers in the Amazon have discovered the world's largest snake species - an enormous green anaconda - in Ecuador's rainforest that split off from its closest relatives 10 million years ago though they still nearly look identical to this day.
- Green anacondas are the world's heaviest snakes, and among the longest. Predominantly found in rivers and wetlands in South America, they are renowned for their lightning speed and ability to asphyxiate huge prey then swallow them whole.

Permafrost in the Arctic could release radon, a radioactive gas that has the potential to cause cancer, scientists have warned.

- Radon is a radioactive gas that forms naturally when uranium, thorium, or radium, which are radioactive metals, break down in rocks, soil, and groundwater.
- It is an inert, colourless, and odourless gas.
- Radon gas usually exists at very low levels outdoors, but the gas can accumulate in areas without adequate ventilation, such as underground mines.

Permafrost:

- Permafrost is any ground—from soil to sediment to rock—that has been frozen continuously for a minimum of two years and as many as hundreds of thousands of years.
- It can extend down beneath the earth's surface from a few feet to more than a mile, covering

entire regions, such as the Arctic tundra, or a single, isolated spot, such as a mountaintop of alpine permafrost.

The reason behind the mountains' disproportional contribution to global species diversity is not understood and has been dubbed "Humboldt's enigma."

- Humboldt's enigma has garnered increased attention in the field of ecology as researchers seek to understand the unexpected biodiversity found in mountain ecosystems, challenging traditional beliefs.
- Sparked by Alexander von Humboldt's observations, it questions the conventional notion that tropical regions, fueled by ample sunlight, are the primary centres of biodiversity on Earth.
- It contends that despite receiving less sunlight and enduring colder temperatures, mountain ecosystems defy this notion by showcasing exceptional biodiversity, thereby challenging traditional ecological theories and prompting investigation into this anomaly.
- Humboldt suggested there was a relationship between temperature, altitude, and humidity on one hand and the occurrence patterns of species or their biodiversity on the other.

The Prime Minister in 'Mann Ki Baat' recently cited crocodiles in Ken River to hail how technology is being used extensively for the conservation of wildlife in different parts of the country.

- It flows through two states, namely Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. It is a tributary of the Yamuna River.
- The river originates near the village of Ahirgawan on the northwest slopes of the Kaimur Range in the district of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
- Crossing the Bijawar-Panna hills, the river cuts a 60 km long, and 150- 180 m deep gorge. It is joined by several streams in this gorge, making waterfalls.
- It travels a distance of 427 km and then merges with the Yamuna at Chilla village, near Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh.
- It is known for its rare Sajhar or Dendritic Agate stone.
- The major tributaries of the Ken River are Bawas, Dewar, Kaith, Bank, Kopra, and Bearma.

Shahpur Kandi Dam Project

- It is located on the Ravi River in Pathankot district, Punjab, downstream from the existing Ranjit Sagar Dam.
- The water released by Ranjit Sagar Dam is utilized for generating power from this project.
- The main purpose behind the construction of this dam is power generation and irrigation in Punjab and J&K States.
- It is constructed by the irrigation department of the Government of Punjab.
- The project consists of a 55.5 m high concrete gravity dam, a 7.70 km long hydel channel, two head regulators, and two powerhouses.
- The total output capacity of the project is 206 MW.

Spain expected to declare drought emergency, with big fines for breaking water rules.

La Baells reservoir

- This reservoir was inaugurated in 1976 and its objective was to collect the waters of the Llobregat river to supply Barcelona and its metropolitan area.
- The banks of the swamp are considered of interest for their flora and fauna. Carp, pike, trout can be caught in its waters ..
- It has become an important work of hydraulic engineering, with its extension of more than 300 hectares and its capacity for more than 100 cubic hectometers.

Los Angeles faces rare 'high risk' of flash flooding as atmospheric river takes aim at Southern California.

- Atmospheric rivers are **narrow regions** in the atmosphere that transport large amounts of water vapour, similar to rivers in the sky.
- Atmospheric rivers typically form over tropical regions due to warm temperatures causing ocean water to evaporate and rise into the atmosphere. Strong winds then carry the water vapour through the atmosphere.
- As atmospheric rivers move over land, the water **vapour rises higher**, cools into water droplets, and falls as precipitation.
- They are most common in the **extratropical North Pacific/Atlantic**, southeastern Pacific, and **South Atlantic oceans**, often making landfall on the west coasts of North and South America.

Major 'magnetic anomaly' discovered deep below New Zealand's Lake Rotorua.

- Lake Rotorua is the second largest lake in the North Island of New Zealand by surface area, and covers 79.8 km². With a mean depth of only 10 metres it is considerably smaller than nearby Lake Tarawera in terms of volume of water. It is located within the Rotorua Caldera in the Bay of Plenty Region.

The Geological Institute of Israel uncovered a never before known about underwater canyon near Cyprus.

- The canyon, known as **Eratosthenes** for the underwater mountain it is near, dates back to the **Messinian Event** that transpired about 5.5 million years ago.
- The canyon is about 10 km wide and 500 m deep and was buried at the beginning of the **Messinian period** before the deposition of the salt layer.
- It was **created** when the level of the **Mediterranean Sea** decreased at the same time there was a rise in the **salinity** of the water, which apparently created gravity currents or dense solutions that caused the destabilization of the submarine slopes and subsidence of the seabed.

Indian Tent Turtles

- Indian tent turtle is now listed in Schedule -I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and is thereby provided the highest degree of protection.
- The Indian tent turtle (*Pangshura tentoria*) is a species of turtle in the family Geoemydidae. The species is endemic to India and Bangladesh.
- Its habitats include still water pools on river side and slow running water near the river banks. These are active swimmers and are mainly herbivorous.
- Due to the attractive appearance of the species, they are illegally traded in the pet market.

National Wildlife Board defers decision on Karnataka's Kalasa-Bhanduri project.

- The **Kalasa-Banduri Project** of the Karnataka government proposes to divert Mahadayi river water into the Malaprabha river in the state to enhance drinking water supply to Dharwad, Belagavi, Bagalkote, and Gadag districts.

- The project was first proposed in the 1980s, but it has yet to be implemented due to a dispute between Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra.

A worrying trend has emerged in the Arctic Ocean, with marine heatwaves occurring for six consecutive years from 2015 through 2021, according to a new study published in the journal.

- A marine heat wave is an extreme weather event. A marine heatwave occurs when surface water temperatures are higher than 95 per cent (3 or 4 degree Celsius) of the values from the past 30 years for at least five consecutive days. MHWs can last for weeks, months or even years.
- Although an increase of 3 or 4 degrees Celsius in average temperatures may not be much for humans, it can be catastrophic for marine life.

Gulf Stream Could Collapse As Early As 2025, Mini Ice Age On The Way: Study

- The Gulf Stream is a significant ocean current with profound impacts on climate, weather, and marine ecosystems. Originating in the **Gulf of Mexico**, it traverses the **Atlantic Ocean**, influencing regions along its path from **North America to Europe**.
- The Gulf Stream plays a crucial role **in moderating the climate** of regions it passes through.
- Along the eastern coast of the United States, it contributes to milder winters compared to regions at similar latitudes.
- In Europe, particularly in countries like the United Kingdom, the Gulf Stream's influence helps keep temperatures relatively mild, especially during winter.

India's president has made a whistle stop tour of an island earmarked for multi-billion dollar development that experts warn could wipe out the indigenous tribe which calls it home.

- The Shompen - who number between 100 and 400 people - are nomadic hunter gatherers who live in the island's rainforest.
- They are one of five "**particularly vulnerable**" tribes across the Nicobar and Andaman islands chain, but the only one on Great Nicobar.
- Though according to the Census (2011), the estimated population of Shompen is 229, the exact population of Shompen is unknown till today.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) conducted raids at 30 locations on Thursday (February 22) at three places linked to former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik. The agency is investigating alleged corruption in the award of a contract for the Kiru Hydel Project, in J&K's Kishtwar district.

Kiru Hydel Power Project

- It is being constructed between the existing **Kirthai II (upstream) and Kwar (downstream)** hydel power projects, at an estimated cost of Rs 4,287 crore.
- It will be developed near the convergence point of river Chenab and the Singad and Bela streams, near the Patharnakki and Kiru villages in **Kishtwar district**. The deadline for initiating commercial operations is July 2025.
- It will have a 123-m tall dam from **the Chenab's river bed level**. Its reservoir will have a storage capacity of 41.5 million m³ of water.



AWARDS

3 Indian-origin young scientists recognised in UK

- Three Indian-origin researchers are among nine scientists named recipients of a prestigious award for young scientists in the UK who are pushing the boundaries of science and working to make the world a better place. The Blavatnik Awards For Young Scientists in the UK recognise research that is transforming medicine, technology, and our understanding of the world across three categories: Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Life Sciences.
- The recipients, including Professors Rahul R Nair, Mehul Malik, and Tanmay Bharat will be honoured at a black-tie gala dinner and award ceremony in London on February 27 and will receive grants totalling 480,000 pounds.

The Indian government has announced that LK Advani, one of the most prominent figures in Indian politics, will be conferred with the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian award.

- Advani's political career is marked by his visionary leadership and strategic acumen. His Rath Yatra in 1990 was a turning point in Indian politics, significantly impacting the national discourse and contributing to the BJP's rise as a major political force. As a seasoned parliamentarian and a government official, Advani has held several key positions, including that of the Deputy Prime Minister of India.

Grammy Awards 2024

Category	Winner
Song of the Year	Billie Eilish – What Was I Made For? from Barbie
Best Pop Vocal Album	Taylor Swift – Midnights
Best R&B Song	SZA – Snooze
Best Country Album	Lainey Wilson – Bell Bottom Country
Best Música Urbana Album	Karol G – Mañana Será Bonito
Best Pop Solo Performance	Miley Cyrus – Flowers
Best Progressive R&B Album	SZA – SOS
Best R&B Performance	Coco Jones – ICU
Best Folk Album	Joni Mitchell – Joni Mitchell at Newport (Live)
Producer of the Year, Non-Classical	Jack Antonoff
Songwriter of the Year, Non-Classical	Theron Thomas
Best Pop Duo/Group Performance	SZA featuring Phoebe Bridgers – Ghost in the Machine
Best Dance/Electronic Recording	Skrillex, Fred again.. and Flowdan – Rumble
Best Pop Dance Recording	Kylie Minogue – Padam Padam
Best Dance/Electronic Music Album	Fred again.. – Actual Life 3 (January 1 – September 9 2022)
Best Traditional R&B Performance	PJ Morton featuring Susan Carol – Good Morning
Best R&B Album	Victoria Monét – Jaguar II
Best Rap Performance	Killer Mike featuring André 3000, Future and Eryn Allen Kane – Scientists & Engineers
Best Melodic Rap Performance	Lil Durk featuring J Cole – All My Life
Best Rap Song	Killer Mike featuring André 3000, Future and Eryn Allen Kane – Scientists & Engineers
Best Rap Album	Killer Mike – Michael
Best Country Solo Performance	Chris Stapleton – White Horse
Best Country Song	Chris Stapleton – White Horse
Best Song Written for Visual Media	Billie Eilish – What Was I Made For? from Barbie
Best Comedy Album	Dave Chappelle – What's in a Name?
Best Global Music Album	Indian musicians Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain's fusion band 'Shakti'
Best African Music Performance	Tyla – Water
Best Musical Theater Album	Some Like It Hot
Best Alternative Music Album	boygenius – The Record
Best Alternative Music Performance	Paramore – This Is Why
Best Rock Album	Paramore – This Is Why
Best Rock Song	boygenius – Not Strong Enough
Best Metal Performance	Metallica – 72 Seasons
Best Rock Performance	boygenius – Not Strong Enough
Best Country Duo/Group Performance	Zach Bryan featuring Kacey Musgraves – I Remember Everything

Legendary sprinter and current President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), PT Usha, was honoured with the prestigious 'Lifetime Achievement' award.

- PT Usha, often hailed as the “Queen of Indian track and field,” was presented with a medallion, a citation, and a memento, signifying the high esteem in which she is held for her stellar sporting career. This event not only celebrated her achievements but also highlighted the legacy she has built over the years, inspiring countless athletes across the nation.

REC Limited, a top NBFC and Maharatna CPSU under the Ministry of Power, receives the esteemed Best Green Bond - Corporate Award at The Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable Finance.

- In April 2023, REC issued USD Green Bonds worth \$750 million, marking a milestone as the first from India post its assumption of G20 Presidency. This issuance, the largest Senior Green Bond Tranche by a South or South-East Asian issuer, received widespread acclaim.

Dr. Bina Modi is the 'Outstanding Business Woman of the Year - 2023'

- Dr. Bina Modi, Chairperson of Modi Enterprises, was honoured with the 'Outstanding Business Woman of the Year - 2023' Award by Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India. The award, presented to her at a prestigious conference by the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) on 'Strengthening Indo-US Relationship in Amritkal-Aatmanirbhar Bharat', on Tuesday, 30th January, 2024, at Hotel The Leela Palace, Chanakyapuri in New Delhi recognizes her remarkable contributions to the industry that place her among the distinguished few women chairpersons of Fortune500 and ET500 India companies.

Sportstar Aces Awards 2024

Category	Winner
Sportsman of the Year (Track and Field)	Men's Relay Team
Sportswoman of the Year (Track and Field)	Parul Chaudhary
Sportsman of the Year (Team Sports)	Hardik Singh, Mohammed Shami
Sportswoman of the Year (Team Sports)	Vandana Katariya
Sportsman of the Year (Individual)	Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty
Sportswoman of the Year (Individual)	Rameshbabu Vaishali, Sift Kaur Samra
Sportsman of the Year (Parasports)	Sumit Antil
Sportswoman of the Year (Parasports)	Thulasimathi Murugesan
Coach of the Year	Rahul Dravid
Young Achiever of the Year (Male)	Prathamesh Samadhan Jawkar
Young Achiever of the Year (Female)	Tilottama Sen
Lifetime Achievement Award	Chandu Borde, Karnam Malleswari
Sportstar of the Year (Male)	Neeraj Chopra
Sportstar of the Year (Female)	Sheetal Devi
National Team of the Year	India Men's Cricket Team
Club/State Team of the Year	Saurashtra Cricket Team
Moment of the Year	Sheetal Devi Hits the Bullseye
International Icon	Muttiah Muralitharan
Best State for the Promotion of Sport	Tamil Nadu
Best PSU for the Promotion of Sport	NTPC Ltd
Best Corporate for the Promotion of Sport	Tata Steel Ltd
Best University for the Promotion of Sport	SRM Institute of Science and Technology
Sport for Social Good	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board
Ace of Aces Award	Rohan Bopanna

Bharat Ratna 2024 Award Winners List (1954-2024)

Year	Recipients	About
1954	C. Rajagopalachari	Activist, statesman, and lawyer
	Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan	India's first Vice-President and second President
	C. V. Raman	Physicists, mathematicians, and scientists
1955	Bhagwan Das	Activist, philosopher, and educationist
	M. Visvesvaraya	Civil engineer, statesman, and Diwan of Mysore
	Jawaharlal Nehru	Activist and author served as the Prime Minister of India
1957	Govind Ballabh Pant	Activist and first Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh
1958	Dhondo Keshav Karve	Social reformer and educator
1961	Bidhan Chandra Roy	Physician, political leader, philanthropist, educationist, and social worker
	Purushottam Das Tandon	Activist and speaker of the United Provinces Legislative Assembly
1962	Rajendra Prasad	Activist, lawyer, statesman, and scholar
1963	Zakir Husain	Activist, economist, and education philosopher served as a Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and the Governor of Bihar
	Pandurang Vaman Kane	Indologist and Sanskrit scholar, known for his five-volume literary work
1966	Lal Bahadur Shastri	Activist and served as the second Prime Minister of India
1971	Indira Gandhi	First women Prime Minister of India
1975	V. V. Giri	Trade Unionist
1976	K. Kamaraj	Independence activist and statesman, former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
1980	Mother Teresa	Catholic nun and the founder of the Missionaries of Charity.
1983	Vinoba Bhave	Activist, social reformer, and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi
1987	Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan	First noncitizen, independence activist
1988	M. G. Ramachandran	Actor turned politician, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu
1990	B.R. Ambedkar	Social reformer and leader of the Dalits
	Nelson Mandela	Leader of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa, President of South Africa
1991	Rajiv Gandhi	Gandhi was the ninth Prime Minister of India serving from 1984 to 1989.
	Vallabhbhai Patel	Activist and first Deputy Prime Minister of India
	Morarji Desai	Activist, and Prime Minister of India
1992	Abul Kalam Azad	Activist and first Minister of education
	J. R. D. Tata	Industrialist, philanthropist, and aviation pioneer
	Satyajit Ray	Director, filmmaker, writer, novelist
1997	Gulzarilal Nanda	Activist, and interim Prime Minister of India.
	Aruna Asaf Ali	Activist
	A.P.J Abdul Kalam	Aerospace and defense scientist
1998	M. S. Subbulakshmi	Carnatic classical vocalist
	Chidambaram Subramaniam	Activist and former Minister of Agriculture of India
1999	Jayaprakash Narayan	Activist, and social reformer
	Amartya Sen	Economist
	Gopinath Bordoloi	Activist
	Ravi Shankar	Musician, sitar player
2001	Lata Mangeshkar	Singer
	Bismillah Khan	Hindustani classical shehnai player
2009	Bhimsen Joshi	Hindustani classical vocalist
2014	C. N. R. Rao	Chemist and professor, author
	Sachin Tendulkar	Cricketer
2015	Madan Mohan Malaviya	Scholar and educational reformer.

	Atal Bihari Bajpayee	Elected nine times to the Lok Sabha, twice to the Rajya Sabha, and served as the Prime Minister of India for three terms.
2019	Pranab Mukherjee	Indian politician, and senior leader in the Indian National Congress.
	Nanaji Deshmukh	A social activist from India, education, health, and rural self-reliance.
	Bhupen Hazarika	Indian playback singer, lyricist, musician, singer, poet, and filmmaker from Assam.
2024 (Posthumously)	Karpoori Thakur	A renowned socialist leader and former Chief Minister of Bihar
2024	Lal Krishna Advani	A Veteran Bhartiya Janta Party Leader
2024	PV Narsimha Rao	Former Prime Minister
2024	Chaudhary Charan Singh	Former Prime Minister who supported the agricultural sector and upheld the rights of the farmers.
2024	MS Swaminathan	Father of Green Revolution

Pyarelal Sharma Honored with Lakshminarayana International Award

- Music composer Pyarelal Sharma conferred with Lakshminarayana International Award. Pyarelal Sharma receives recognition for his significant contribution to art through the prestigious Lakshminarayana International Award, underscoring his impact on the global music landscape.

Neeraj Chopra honoured at Jungfrau's Ice Palace in Switzerland

- Neeraj Chopra, the celebrated Olympic and world champion in javelin, received a distinguished honor at Jungfrauoch, renowned as the 'Top of Europe.' Acknowledged for his outstanding contributions to the world of sports, Chopra was commemorated with a plaque unveiling at the Ice Palace, adding his name to the prestigious Wall of Fame alongside esteemed athletes. This recognition marks a testament to his remarkable achievements and enduring legacy.

Noida, a city in the National Capital Region, has garnered recognition for its efforts in water conservation and management. The Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation, under the Union Water Ministry, has honored Noida with the title of "Water Warrior" city.

- In a ceremony held in Delhi, Noida was applauded for its achievements in two categories at the World Water Award 2023-24.

- The city clinched the title of the best sewage treatment plant (STP) and also received accolades for its water reuse project of the year.
- Satish Pal, the additional chief executive officer of the Noida Authority, along with RP Singh, the deputy general manager of the authority's water department, received these awards on behalf of the city.

India Wins the 9th GovTech Prize for AI-Powered Road Safety Initiative

- The Ministry for Road Transport & Highways of the Government of India has been recognized for its groundbreaking project, iRASTE (Intelligent Solutions for Road Safety through Technology and Engineering). This initiative stands out as a pioneering endeavor that integrates AI technology to tackle the challenges of road safety, marking a significant evolution from traditional methods. iRASTE is a collaborative effort that brings together the government, industry, and academia to leverage the predictive capabilities of AI for preemptive road safety measures.

Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya Awarded Prestigious Jnanpith Award 2023

- The Jnanpith Award, India's most prestigious literary accolade, has announced its recipients for the year 2023, marking a momentous occasion in the annals of Indian literature. This year, the honour is bestowed upon two luminaries from the world of letters: celebrated Urdu poet and Bollywood personality Gulzar, and the distinguished Sanskrit scholar and spiritual leader Jagadguru Rambhadracharya. Their selection for the 58th edition of the award underscores the rich diversity and depth of Indian literary traditions, spanning the classical to the contemporary.

Bengali Translation Wins Prestigious Romain Rolland Book Prize 2024

- The recipient of this year's Romain Rolland Book Prize is Pankaj Kumar Chatterjee for his remarkable translation of Jean-Daniel Baltassat's "Le Divan de Staline" into Bengali, titled "Staliner

Divan." Published by New Bharat Sahitya Kutir, Kolkata, Chatterjee's translation stood out for its linguistic prowess and fidelity to the original text. This marks the second time that a Bengali translation has been honoured with this prestigious award.

SPORTS

Khelo India Youth Games 2024, Full Medal Tally

Rank	State	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total medals
1	Maharashtra	57	48	53	158
2	Tamil Nadu	38	21	39	98
3	Haryana	35	22	46	103
4	Delhi	13	18	25	56
5	Rajasthan	13	17	17	47
6	Telangana	13	4	7	24
7	Uttar Pradesh	11	13	18	42
8	Punjab	11	13	15	39
9	Kerala	11	9	15	35
10	Manipur	10	11	10	31
11	Karnataka	9	19	19	47
12	West Bengal	9	8	11	28
13	Andhra Pradesh	7	9	11	27
14	Madhya Pradesh	6	12	12	30
15	Gujarat	6	7	12	25
16	Odisha	6	7	8	21
17	Assam	5	8	11	24
18	Chandigarh	5	5	7	17
19	Uttarakhand	5	3	8	16
20	Jharkhand	3	3	5	11
21	Bihar	2	2	1	5
22	Himachal Pradesh	1	5	8	14
23	Jammu and Kashmir	1	4	2	7
24	Meghalaya	1	0	0	1
25	Chhattisgarh	0	6	2	8
26	Tripura	0	1	2	3
27	Mizoram	0	1	1	2
27	Nagaland	0	1	1	2
27	Puducherry	0	1	1	2
30	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	2	2
31	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	0	0	1	1

Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medalist and an IOC Athletes' Commission member, is among the 11,000

torchbearers chosen to carry the iconic symbol.

- The ancient tradition of the Olympic Torch Relay continues its journey towards Paris 2024, with the

flame set to cross the Mediterranean and embark on a 68-day adventure across France.

- On May 8, the flame arrives in Marseille, marking the start of the French Torch Relay. Over the next 68 days, it will travel across 65 territories, carried by 11,000 torchbearers representing diverse backgrounds and communities. This nationwide celebration aims to connect the entire country with the spirit of the Games.

The Telangana Football Association (TFA) has gained approval to host the FIFA World Cup qualifiers for India vs. Kuwait. Hyderabad is hosting of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers between India and Kuwait.

- Hosting the FIFA World Cup qualifiers marks a historic moment for Telangana, as it prepares to welcome top-tier international football to its soil for the first time.
- The approval to host the FIFA World Cup qualifiers in Hyderabad reflects the growing prominence of football in Telangana and underscores the state's commitment to promoting sports at the national and international levels.

U19 World Cup 2024 Final, Australia beats India by 79 runs

- Australia U19 win the U19 World Cup 2024 Final by 79 runs. With the massive win over India, Australia has secured its fourth World Cup title in U-19 cricket. Australia added to their triumphs in 2002, 2010, and 2020. Their consistent performance throughout the tournament showcased their depth and talent, making them deserving champions. India, aiming for a record-extending sixth title, was left heartbroken but can hold their heads high for a commendable campaign.

Shamar Joseph and Amy Hunter Crowned ICC Players of the Month for January 2024

- International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced the winners of the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month for January 2024. West Indies' Shamar Joseph and Ireland's Amy Hunter have been bestowed with this honour, marking their remarkable contributions to their respective teams in the past month.

Army Clinches Khelo India Winter Games 2024 Title on Final Day

- Alpine skier Bobby Pandey's gold medal in the parallel slalom event proved decisive, propelling Army to the top of the medal table with 10 gold medals. This narrow margin placed them one gold ahead of Karnataka (9 gold) and three ahead of Maharashtra (7 gold), who had led after the first round in Ladakh.

Jacinta Kalyan Makes History as India's First Female Pitch Curator

- In a groundbreaking move for Indian cricket, Jacinta Kalyan has etched her name in the annals of sports history as the country's first female pitch curator. With the highly anticipated 2nd edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL) just around the corner, the excitement among fans, players, and tournament organizers is palpable.

Bhopal Athletes Conquer the World's Highest Frozen Lake Marathon

- In a remarkable display of endurance and determination, Bhagwan Singh and Mahesh Khurana from Bhopal have completed the Pangong Frozen Lake Marathon 2024, held in Leh-Ladakh. Known for its extreme conditions, this marathon is celebrated as the 'World's Highest Frozen Lake Marathon.' The event unfolded on February 20, amidst heavy snowfall, at an altitude of 18,680 feet with temperatures plunging to -15°C, posing an ultimate challenge to the participants.



OPSC MCQ

1. The first-ever 'Maharashtra MSME Defence Expo' was inaugurated in ____ on 23 February.
 - A. Pune
 - B. Mumbai
 - C. Nagpur
 - D. Ratnagiri
2. The first solar project of NTPC Renewable Energy has been started operation in _____ of Rajasthan.
 - A. Barsingsar
 - B. Chhattargarh
 - C. Himtasar
 - D. Ramsar
3. Who was recently appointed as the Chairperson of Lokpal by President Draupadi Murmu?
 - A. Pinaki Chandra Ghosh
 - B. Kapil Sibal
 - C. Ajay Manikrao Khanvilkar
 - D. Prashant Bhushan
4. Which of the following and the Indian Air Force have signed an agreement for the integration of futuristic weapons and sensors into light combat aircraft Tejas?
 - A. Aeronautical Development Agency
 - B. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited
 - C. Defence Research & Development Organisation
 - D. Honeywell Technology Solutions
5. Which of the following statements is correct regarding the National Livelihood Mission?
 1. There would be a fifty percent capital subsidy up to ₹50 lakhs for setting up fodder seed processing infrastructure.
 2. There will now be additional activities under the National Livelihood Mission (NLM).Select the correct code:
 - A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. 1 and 2
 - D. None of the above
6. Who has inaugurated the Bharat Tex 2024 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi?
 - A. President Droupadi Murmu
 - B. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar
 - C. Prime Minister Narendra Modi
 - D. Home Minister Amit Shah
7. When and till when is the 'Annual Financial Literacy' week being organized by RBI?
 - A. 26 February to 29 February
 - B. 26 February to 1 March
 - C. 27 February to 2 March

- D. 28 February to 3 March
8. Defence Security Corps has celebrated its _____ Raising Day on 25 February 2024.
 - A. 75th
 - B. 76th
 - C. 77th
 - D. 78th
9. Which of the following statements is correct regarding the latest National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data on household consumption expenditure?
 1. The per capita monthly household expenditure has become doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12.
 2. Consumption in rural areas is growing faster than in urban areas.Select the correct code:
 - A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. 1 and 2
 - D. None of the above
10. Aditya-L1 mission detected solar wind impact of Coronal Mass Ejections. It has been detected by which payload on the Aditya-L1 mission?
 - A. Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya
 - B. Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope
 - C. Aditya Solar Wind Particle Experiment
 - D. Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope
11. PM Modi unveiled Indian Railways projects worth Rs 41000 crore. The redevelopment of _____ has been launched under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.
 - A. 523
 - B. 432
 - C. 553
 - D. 340
12. In which of the following states did PM Modi inaugurate "Sudarshan Setu", the nation's longest cable-stayed bridge?
 - A. Gujarat
 - B. Kerala
 - C. Tamil Nadu
 - D. West Bengal
13. With which ministry has the Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched a joint initiative on the health of tribal students?
 - A. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
 - B. Ministry of AYUSH
 - C. Ministry of Education
 - D. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

14. Which player made the record of the fastest century in T20 International cricket history?
- A. Kushal Malla
B. Jan Nicole Lofty-Eaton
C. David Miller
D. Rohit Sharma
15. With which of the following organisation the Goa State Government partnered for Climate Finance Facility?
- A. International Monetary Fund
B. World Bank
C. Asian Development Bank
D. United Nations Development Programme
16. Who has been appointed as the new CEO for India by the World Gold Council?
- A. Sachin Jain
B. Ajay Sinha
C. Atul Anand
D. Rajeev Kumar
17. Where is the 4th Khelo India Winter Games being organized?
- A. Srinagar
B. Shimla
C. Gulmarg
D. Manali
18. In which city is the 'International Tourism Expo' being organized in Uttar Pradesh?
- A. Lucknow
B. Noida
C. Greater Noida
D. Agra
19. Who has been appointed as a part-time non-official director of Bank of India?
- A. M R Kumar
B. Srinivasan Sridhar
C. Aravamudan Krishna Kumar
D. DY Chandrachud
20. Where will India's largest green hydrogen production plant be established?
- A. Mumbai
B. Chennai
C. Visakhapatnam
D. Bengaluru
21. Where did Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud inaugurate the Ayush Holistic Wellness Center?
- A. New Delhi
B. Mumbai
C. Kolkata
D. Supreme Court Complex
22. Who was appointed as a part-time non-official director of the board of Indian Overseas Bank (IOB)?
- A. M R Kumar
B. Srinivasan Sridhar
C. Aravamudan Krishna Kumar
D. DY Chandrachud
23. In which state was the foundation stone of ISRO's second spaceport laid?
- A. Kerala
B. Odisha
C. Karnataka
D. Tamil Nadu
24. Who was appointed as a part-time non-official director of the board of UCO Bank?
- A. M R Kumar
B. Srinivasan Sridhar
C. Aravamudan Krishna Kumar
D. DY Chandrachud
25. India's first indigenous green hydrogen inland waterway ship was launched in which state?
- A. Tamil Nadu
B. Odisha
C. Gujarat
D. Maharashtra
26. Recently, which country contributed \$1 million to the IBSA fund for poverty and hunger alleviation?
- A. Brazil
B. India
C. South Africa
D. Russia
27. India's first 'Gati Shakti Research Chair' has been established at which institute?
- A. IIM Ahmedabad
B. IIM Shillong
C. IIT Kanpur
D. IIT Bombay
28. Which Indian was awarded honorary knighthood by Britain's King Charles III?
- A. Mukesh Ambani
B. Uday Kotak
C. Gautam Adani
D. Sunil Bharti Mittal
29. In which of the following country is the Mobile World Congress 2024 being organized?
- A. Italy

- B. France
C. Spain
D. India
30. Recently, which country aims to produce 1-5 lakh tonnes of hydrogen a year by 2030?
A. Iran
B. Malaysia
C. Vietnam
D. Iraq
31. Recently, Indian Gharial, a critically endangered crocodile species, has been sighted in which National Park?
A. Namdapha National Park
B. Kaziranga National Park
C. Manas National Park
D. Nokrek National Park
32. Which one of the following recently introduced a 5 year multiple entry visa for Indian tourists to enhance travel and economic ties?
A. Oman
B. Dubai
C. Paris
D. Iraq
33. Recently, which country has withdrawn its participation from Russia-led security bloc Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)?
A. Armenia
B. Belarus
C. Tajikistan
D. Kazakhstan
34. Ayutthaya city, recently seen in the news, is located in which country?
A. Thailand
B. Vietnam
C. Egypt
D. Sudan
35. How many crores of rupees have been approved for 'PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana'?
A. 75,000 crores
B. 40,000 crores
C. 80,000 crores
D. 1 lakh crores
36. Which country has decided to amend the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India?
A. Mauritius
B. Maldives
C. Australia
D. Singapore
37. Who has been appointed as the Chairman and Independent Director of PayU Payments Private Limited?
A. Sikhar Kumar
B. Saroj Rawat
C. Rajesh Sharma
D. Renu Sood Karnad
38. What is the IUCN status of North Atlantic right whales, recently seen in the news?
A. Endangered
B. Critically endangered
C. Vulnerable
D. Least concern
39. Which South American country has recently declared a health emergency due to rapidly increasing cases of dengue fever?
A. Peru
B. Chile
C. Argentina
D. Bolivia
40. When is National Science Day celebrated every year?
A. 26 February
B. 27 February
C. 28 February
D. 29 February
41. Fast bowler Neil Wagner retired from international cricket, he is a player of which country?
A. England
B. South Africa
C. New Zealand
D. Ireland
42. Recently, the first herpetofaunal survey was conducted in the Core Area of which tiger reserve?
A. Mudumalai Tiger Reserve
B. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve
C. Dudhwa Tiger Reserve
D. Pilibhit Tiger Reserve
43. With which of the following ministry, the Election Commission started the 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye' campaign?
A. Ministry of Rural Development.
B. Ministry of Education.
C. Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
D. Ministry of External Affairs.

44. How many astronauts have been nominated for the Gaganyaan mission?
- A. 4
B. 5
C. 6
D. 7
45. With which of the following country has the Ministry of AYUSH signed an agreement to promote Ayurveda?
- A. Myanmar
B. Thailand
C. Sri Lanka
D. Cambodia
46. In which of the following state has the world's first Vedic clock been installed?
- A. Uttarakhand
B. Madhya Pradesh
C. Karnataka
D. Maharashtra
47. Where will a new regional office of the Central Board of Film Certification be established?
- A. Mumbai

- B. Chandigarh
C. Gandhinagar
D. Hyderabad
48. On which of the following date World NGO Day celebrated every year?
- A. 26 February
B. 27 February
C. 28 February
D. 29 February
49. Which day is celebrated as Global Tourism Resilience Day?
- A. 17 February
B. 18 February
C. 19 February
D. 20 February
50. World Sustainable Development (WSDS) Summit, recently seen in the news, is annually organized by which institute?
- A. The Energy and Resources Institute
B. World Bank
C. Environmental Assessment Institute
D. Centre for Environment Education

ANSWERS

1. Answer: Option A

- The first-ever 'Maharashtra MSME Defence Expo' inaugurated in Pune on 23 February.
- The three-day Expo is being organized at the International Exhibition and Convention Center of Moshi in Pune from February 24 to 26.

2. Answer: Option B

- The first solar project of NTPC Renewable Energy started operation in Rajasthan.
- On 21 February, NTPC Renewable Energy Limited's (NTPC-REL) first solar project in Chhattargarh, Rajasthan, announced the commencement of commercial operations of 70 MW capacity.

3. Answer: C

- President Draupadi Murmu has appointed former SC judge Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar as the Chairperson of Lokpal. This post was vacant for the last two years. The previous Chairman Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghosh completed his tenure on May 27, 2022. Justice Khanwilkar served as a judge of the Supreme Court from 13 May 2016 to 29 July 2022.

4. Answer: Option A

- Aeronautical Development Agency Signs MoU With Indian Air Force.
- The Aeronautical Development Agency and the Indian Air Force have signed an agreement for the integration of futuristic weapons and sensors into light combat aircraft Tejas.
- The MoU was signed by Shri Prabhulla Chandran VK, Technology Director (Avionics and Weapon Systems) of ADA and Air Vice Marshal KN Santosh of the IAF.

5. Answer: Option C

- Union cabinet amended the National Livelihood Mission.
- There will now be additional activities under the National Livelihood Mission (NLM).
- There will be a 50% capital subsidy provision. To individuals, FPO, SHG, JLG, FCO, and Section 8 corporations, up to ₹50 lakhs would be given.
- They will receive this money to start their own horse, donkey, mule, and camel businesses.
- The state government will support camel, donkey, and horse breed conservation.
- The semen stations and nucleus breeding farms for horses, donkeys, and camels will be established with ₹10 crore to be provided by the Central Government.
- There would be a fifty percent capital subsidy up to ₹50 lakhs for setting up fodder seed processing infrastructure.

6. Answer: Option C

- PM Modi inaugurated the Bharat Tex 2024 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- Bharat Tex 2024 is considered one of the largest-ever global textile events to be organised in India.

7. Answer: B

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is promoting financial literacy among the youth through its annual Financial Literacy Week (FLW) campaign held from February 26 to March 1, 2024. This year's theme is "Make a Right Start - Become Financially Smart". Presently the Governor of RBI is Shaktikanta Das.

8. Answer: Option C

- Defence Security Corps celebrated its 77th Raising Day on 25 February 2024.
- It was raised on 25 February 1947 as 'Defence Department Constabulary'.

9. Answer: Option C

- Poverty has come down to below 5% in India: NITI Aayog CEO
- NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam said that People are becoming prosperous in rural and urban areas.
- He said that as per the latest consumer expenditure survey, poverty has come down to 5%.
- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) released data on household consumption expenditure for the year 2022-2.
- According to this data, the per capita monthly household expenditure has become doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12.
- This survey has kept people in 20 different categories and the average per capita monthly expenditure for all categories stood at Rs 3,773 in rural areas and Rs 6,459 in urban areas.
- If the trend continues then it might become possible that urban and rural consumption become the same in the coming years.
- Consumption in rural areas is growing faster than in urban areas. The gap was 84 per cent in 2011-12 and has come down to 71 per cent in 2022-23.

10. Answer: Option A

- Aditya-L1 mission detected solar wind impact of Coronal Mass Ejections.
- The Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) payload on Aditya-L1 has detected the impact of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) on solar wind.
- PAPA is an energy and mass analyzer designed for in-situ measurements of solar wind electrons and ions in the low energy range.

11. Answer: Option C

- PM Modi unveiled Indian Railways projects worth Rs 41000 crore.
- On 26 February, PM Modi laid foundation stones and inaugurated around 2,000 railway infrastructure projects worth more than ₹41,000 crore.
- The redevelopment of 553 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme has been started by PM Modi. These railway stations will be redeveloped for Rs 19000 crore.
- These stations will be developed as 'City Centres'. These stations will have modern passenger amenities such as roof plazas, landscaping, inter modal connectivity, improved modern façades, and kids play areas.

12. Answer: Option A

- "Sudarshan Setu", the nation's longest cable-stayed bridge, inaugurated by PM Modi in Gujarat.
- He dedicated to the nation "Sudarshan Setu," the nation's longest signature-stayed bridge, which is approximately 2.32 km long.
- The bridge at Dwarka, Gujarat, connects the mainland of Okha with the island of Beyt Dwarka.

13. Answer: B

- The Ministry of Ayush through its research council CCRAS has taken this health Initiative for Tribal Students with the joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and ICMR-NIRTH Jabalpur. During the announcement, Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Arjun Munda was also present.

14. Answer B

- Namibian cricketer John Nicol Loftie-Eaton has created cricket history by scoring the fastest century in T20 International cricket history in just 33 balls, breaking the previous record held by Nepal's Kushal Malla. Eaton achieved this feat in a T20 match played against Nepal.

15. Answer: B

- The Government of Goa is setting up the sub-national Blended Finance Facility in partnership with the World Bank, aiming to foster low-carbon, climate-resilient development.

16. Answer: A

- The World Gold Council has recently appointed Sachin Jain as the new CEO for India. He will assume charge in March 2024. He will replace Somasundaram PR. The World Gold Council serves as an association of the world's leading gold mining companies.

17. Answer: C

- In Jammu and Kashmir, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha formally inaugurated the 4th edition of Khelo India winter games in Gulmarg.

18. Answer: C

- An international tourism expo will take place in Greater Noida. Organizers announced that the three-day event will feature more than 1,500 exhibitors, along with 800 international and domestic buyers hosted, and travel agents from over 120 cities across India.

19. Answer: A

- M R Kumar was appointed as part-time non-official director and non-executive chairman of Bank of India (BoI) ACC has appointed former LIC chairman M R Kumar as an indefinite non-official director of Bank of India (BOI), as well as non-executive chairman of BoI.

20. Answer: C

- (TSSEZL) to establish a green hydrogen and green ammonia project at the Gopalpur Industrial Park (GIP) in Odisha. This project will be India's largest manufacturing facility for green hydrogen and its derivatives in the country, according to TSSEZL.

21. Answer: D

- State-of-the-art Ayush Holistic Wellness Centre providing holistic care for physical, mental and emotional well-being to promote the overall health of the judges and staff was inaugurated at the Supreme Court.

22. Answer: B

- Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) said the Government has appointed Srinivasan Sridhar as part-time non-official director as well as non-executive chairman of the public sector lender for a period of three years with effect from February 21.

23. Answer D

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently laid the foundation stone of the second spaceport of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) in Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu. Rs 950 crore will be spent on this project. It is being built on approximately 2,233 acres and is expected to be operational in two years.

24. Answer: C

- In another appointment, Aravamudan Krishna Kumar has been made part-time non-official director of UCO Bank.

25. Answer: A

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched India's first indigenous green hydrogen fuel cell inland waterway vessel in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. It has been designed and developed by Cochin Shipyard. The length of this ship is 24 meters and it

has seating space for 50 passengers. Chidambaranar Port has become the country's first green hydrogen hub port.

26. Answer: B

- India contributed \$1 million to the India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA) Fund for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation. India has been a regular contributor to the fund since its inception, contributing a total of \$15.1 million. The IBSA Fund's projects aim to help partner countries in the Global South achieve their national priorities and other internationally agreed development goals.

27. Answer: B

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) and IIM Shillong have joined forces to establish India's inaugural 'Gati Shakti Research Chair.' This collaborative effort aims to boost academic research in multimodal logistics, with a specific focus on the North-East region. The initiative aims to empower students in logistics-related fields by fostering skill development and creating career opportunities.

28. Answer : D

- Bharti Enterprises founder and chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal has become the first Indian to be awarded an honorary knighthood by Britain's King Charles III. This prestigious honor was given to him "for strengthening trade relations between the UK and India." Before this, Ratan Tata, Ravi Shankar and Jamshed Irani have also received this honour.

29. Answer C

- Mobile World Congress 2024 is being organized in Barcelona, Spain from 26 to 29 February. Mobile World Congress 2024 is being hosted by GSMA. The GSMA is a global association representing the interests of mobile network operators around the world.

30. Answer: C

- Vietnam targets annual hydrogen production of 100,000-500,000 metric tonnes by 2030, a key element in its energy transition. The nation plans to scale up output to 10-20 million tonnes by 2050, incorporating green hydrogen, showcasing a strong commitment to sustainable energy initiatives and contributing to global decarbonization efforts.

31. Answer: B

- The Indian Gharial, or *Gavialis gangeticus*, is a critically endangered crocodile species that has been sighted in Kaziranga National Park. The first evidence of the endangered gharial was recorded in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (DSNP) in 2022. The Gharial is one of the largest river-dwelling crocodile species in the world and is on the verge of extinction. The Gharial can be found in tributaries of the Ganges river system, including the Girwa, Son, Ramganga, Gandak, Chambal, and Mahanadi rivers.

32. Answer: B

- Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism introduces a five-year multiple-entry visa to boost travel between India and the UAE. In response to a surge in Indian visitors, India is the leading source market for tourists in the region. The visa, processed in 2-5 days, allows a 90-day stay, extendable for another 90 days, totaling a maximum of 180 days within a year. This initiative aims to facilitate and encourage increased tourism between the two countries.

33. Answer: A

- Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that Armenia had "suspended" its participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). According to a Russian expert, Pashinyan's remarks are a result of recent agreements with France and a move to work with Western nations for military cooperation. The CSTO is a Russian-led regional military bloc established on May 14, 2002.

34. Answer: A

- The Bihar Governor visited Thailand's Ancient City of Ayutthaya, named after Lord Ram's birth city in Ayodhya, India. Founded in 1350, it served as the Siamese Kingdom's second capital. Flourishing from the 14th to the 18th centuries, it was a global diplomatic and commercial hub on an island strategically located above tidal bores, protecting it from sea attacks. Burmese forces razed it in 1767, leaving an extensive archaeological site with advanced water management and monumental structures.

35. Answer: A

- The Union Cabinet under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi has approved Rs 75,000 crore for 'PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana'. Under this scheme, one crore families will get 300 units of free electricity. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced this scheme during the interim budget of 2024-25. This scheme has been started to promote roof top solar systems in the country.

36. Answer: A

- The Mauritius Government is set to amend its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India to align with OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting proposal. The DTAA is a treaty preventing non-residents from paying double taxes. India has signed DTAA with 85 nations, aiming to prevent double taxation for non-resident Indians. The historic India-Mauritius DTAA, signed in 1983, has facilitated over \$160 billion in foreign investments. The amendment's primary objective is to curb tax avoidance, elevating the treaty to a covered tax agreement under BEPS MLI.

37. Answer : D

- PayU Payments Pvt Ltd (PayU), the fintech arm of global consumer internet group Prosus, has appointed HDFC Bank director Renu Sud Karnad as chairman and independent director of the company.

38. Answer: B

- Recently, scientists found North Atlantic right whales are diminishing in size, impacting their breeding. Migratory, they winter in warm waters and migrate to polar regions in late summer. Inhabiting temperate and subpolar waters of the North Atlantic and North Pacific, their distribution is mainly along the East Coast of the United States and Canada. There are three recognized species globally. Critically endangered, North Atlantic right whales skim-feed on plankton, facing threats like habitat loss, making conservation crucial (IUCN: Critically endangered, CITES: Appendix I).

39. Answer: A

- South American country Peru has declared a health emergency in view of the rapidly increasing cases of dengue fever. A health emergency has been declared in 20 of Peru's 25 regions. Peru is a country in western South America. Its capital is 'Lima'.

40. Answer : C

- National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28 February in India. This day is celebrated all over India to give importance to

the remarkable work done by Indian scientist Chandrashekhar Venkata Raman in the field of science. The theme of National Science Day 2024 is 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'. The first National Science Day was celebrated on 28 February 1987.

41. Answer c

- New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner has announced his retirement from international cricket. Wagner made his debut in the year 2012. Wagner played 64 test matches in his career and took 260 wickets. He retired as the fifth highest wicket taker of all time for New Zealand in Tests.

42. Answer: A

- The inaugural herpetofaunal survey in the Core Area of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve uncovered 82 reptile and amphibian species, aiding the forest department in tailoring conservation strategies. Notable findings include the near-threatened Indian rock python and the vulnerable mugger crocodile. The survey informs targeted efforts for safeguarding diverse species within the reserve.

43. Answer B

- In view of the Lok Sabha elections, to increase the inclination towards voting among the youth who are voting for the first time, the Election Commission in collaboration with the Education Ministry has started the campaign 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye'. Under this, a campaign is being run in higher educational institutions between 28 February and 6 March.

44. Answer A

- The names of 4 astronauts have been announced for India's ambitious space mission Gaganyaan Mission. This includes Group Captain Prashant Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla. The Prime Minister also presented astronaut wings to the astronauts.

45. Answer: B

- The National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur under the Ministry of AYUSH and the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine of Thailand have signed an MoU for cooperation in Ayurveda and Thai traditional medicine. This agreement was reached during the 10th meeting of the India-Thailand Joint Commission held at Hyderabad House, New Delhi.

46. Answer B

- The world's first Vedic clock has been installed in Ujjain district of Madhya Pradesh, which will be unveiled on March 1. This watch will display time as per Indian traditional calendar. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate this clock installed on the 85 feet high tower at Jantar Mantar in the city on March 1.

47. Answer B

- Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur announced that a regional office of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) will be opened in Chandigarh. He made this announcement on the occasion of the closing ceremony of 'Chitra Bharati Film Festival' in Chandigarh. CBFC is a statutory film-certification body under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

48. Answer: B

- Every year on 27 February, we celebrate World NGO Day to give importance to the important work done by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Celebrating World NGO Day was first initiated by the Baltic Sea NGO Forum in 2010.

49. Answer: A

- Global Tourism Resilience Day (GTRD) is celebrated on February 17th every year. The day was designated by the United Nations in 2023 to highlight the need for tourism development to be more resilient to shocks and emergencies. The initiative focuses on bolstering the tourism sector against various challenges, supporting sustainable development, and promoting economic stability, particularly in developing nations.

50. Answer: A

- The Vice-President inaugurated the 23rd World Sustainable Development Summit in New Delhi, hosted by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Established in 2001, the annual summit focuses on fostering global commitment to sustainable development. WSDS 2024 centers on the theme 'Leadership for the Sustainable Development and Climate Justice,' bringing together influential leaders to address long-term solutions for global communities. As the only independently convened international summit in the Global South, WSDS plays a vital role in advancing environmental goals.