

THE OAS GAZETTE

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APTI PLUS

Academy for Civil Services Pvt. Ltd.
CREATING CIVIL SERVANTS FOR THE NATION



JIBAN BINDU

Jeevan Bindu
Programme



Sulia Jatra began
in Khairguda and Kumuria
villages



'Biswa Odia Bhasa
Sammilani'



Odisha ranked fourth
in Swachh Survekshan
2023



Lower Suktel
Irrigation Project

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COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE OF CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR ODISHA STATE CIVIL SERVICES EXAMS



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SUCHISMITA PANIGRAHI
RANK 2



And many more...

Odisha Current Affairs

Students in Odisha will now have to sign anti-drug declaration forms during admission to higher educational institutions (HEIs) – public universities, government and non-government aided colleges (both technical and general)

- The declaration prohibits the students from carrying, selling and consuming not just drugs but also tobacco products and alcohol within their campuses.
- Besides, students are expected to report to the HEI authorities of any instances of drug/alcohol/tobacco consumption and sale by any student or staff on the premises or nearby.

5T and Nabin Odisha Chairman visited Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, and Koraput districts to interact with the locals and review the progress of various developmental projects

- In Malkangiri the review for the progress of Govindapalli Integrated Irrigation Project on Saptadhara and Garia rivers which will provide irrigation to 92,815 acre of land in Malkangiri, Mathili, Khairput and Korkunda blocks.
- Similarly, in Nabarangpur, Pandian reviewed the progress of Parbati Giri Mega Lift Project being built for Rs 1,272 crore, which will provide irrigation to an area of 48,500 acre, and Turi-Gunthat Irrigation Project being built at an estimated cost of Rs 577 crore, which will provide irrigation to an area of 22,500 acre
- In Koraput, the review was done on the progress of Gupteswar temple development, Boipariguda being built at Rs 20.20 crore and Jhanjabati River Barrage Project being built for Rs 100 crore with irrigation potential for an area of 4,720 acre.

The Lingaraj Temple Trust Board is all set to implement stricter norms of banning the use of Paan and tobacco products inside the centuries-old Shiva temple in Bhubaneswar

- Lingaraj Temple, built in 11th century AD, is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is considered as the largest temple of the city Bhubaneswar (Odisha). Lingaraj is referred to as 'Swayambhu' – self-originated Shivling.
- It is believed to have been built by the Somvanshi King Yayati I.

- It is built in red stone and is a classic example of Kalinga style of architecture.
- Another important aspect of the temple is that it signifies the syncretisation of Shaivism and Vaishnavism sects in Odisha.
- The presiding deity in the Temple is known as Hari-Hara; Hari denotes Lord Vishnu and Hara meaning Lord Shiva.

Odisha is one of the 17 states with a high prevalence of sickle cell disease.

- As many as 20 districts in Odisha were included in the 278 districts of 17 states for implementation of the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination.
- The districts where the programme is being implemented are Angul, Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Bargarh, Balangir, Boudh, Deogarh, Gajapati, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Sambalpur, Subarnapur and Rayagada.

Odisha-Mo Parivar has collected as many as 1 lakh units of blood under the Jeevan Bindu Programme

- The outfit had launched the Jeevan Bindu programme on August 9, 2020 to collect blood through organizing donation camps in the state.
- The prime objective of this programme is to arrange blood for the blood banks in Odisha to save the lives of the needy people.

Seven more products from Odisha have been granted the coveted geographical indication (GI) tag, recognising them as products unique to the state and safeguarding the interests of local growers, producers and artisans

- They include Gajapati Date Palm Jaggery, Dhenkanal Magji, Similipal Kai Chutney of Odisha, Nayagarh Kanteimundi brinjal, Kapadaganda: Dongria Kondh Embroidery Shawl, Koraput Kala Jeera Rice, and Painting of Lanjia Saura (Idital).

Odisha Cabinet Approves Upper Age Relaxation for Government Jobs

- The relaxation in upper age limit for government jobs in Odisha will continue for the calendar year 2024.
- The state government had earlier announced relaxation in the upper age limit for Odisha Civil

Services examinations and other government jobs for 2021, 2022 and 2023 calendar years in Odisha.

- The upper age limit was enhanced from 32 years to 38 years for government services for the three calendar years.

Odisha Chief Minister launched Lower Suktel Irrigation Project in Balangir district

- The project is worth Rs 2,723 crore
- It is considered to be a major leap of development for the agrarian community in the drought-prone district.
- It is expected to facilitate irrigation in over one lakh acre farmland in 203 villages of Balangir and Sonepur districts while benefiting around 80,000 farmers. It will also provide drinking water facility in the area to over 70,000 people.

The Odisha Government has issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for registration and verification of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Nabin Card.

- Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) is a health insurance scheme that the Government of Odisha launched in India in 2018.
- The scheme aims to provide affordable and accessible healthcare to the people of Odisha, especially to those who are economically disadvantaged or belong to vulnerable sections of society.
- Under the BSKY scheme, eligible beneficiaries can avail of cashless treatment at empanelled hospitals for various medical conditions, including hospitalisation, surgery, and pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- The scheme also covers the cost of diagnostic tests, medicines, and other medical supplies.

Chief Minister will inaugurate the newly constructed Malkangiri Airport

- In the first phase, nine-seater aircraft will operate from the airport while larger aircraft will be pressed into services later.
- The airport's runway is 1,500 meter long and 30 meter wide.
- The airport has been constructed on over 94.5 hectares of land at an expenditure of around Rs 33 crore.

The famous Lanjia Saura painting, also widely regarded as IDITAL, from Odisha received a geographical indication (GI) tag from the Centre.

- The Idital art form belongs to the Lanjia Saura or Lanjia Sabara tribe, one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Rayagada district.
- These paintings were originally in the form of exterior murals (wall paintings) of the tribal homes.
- The original pattern was white paintings over a crimson maroon background.

Odisha has consolidated fourth rank in Swachh Survekshan 2023 ranking

- It is the fourth best state in terms of cleanliness
- The focus on rural sanitation, with many villages achieving Open Defecation Free Plus (ODF+) status, played a crucial role in the uplift.

After a gap of three years Odisha's tableau got selected for the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi this year

- It got selected by the Ministry of Defence
- It is showcasing Pattachitra of heritage craft of Raghurajpur village.

Odia film "Dear Purusha" has become the first Odia film to grace the prominent Times Square billboard in New York City.

- It is directed by renowned director Jit Chakraborty and produced by Jhilik Motion Pictures.
- "Dear Purusha" intricately delves into the intricacies of the lives of six couples, offering a compelling portrayal of men as they navigate the intricate web of societal expectations and familial challenges.

The three-day-long, first-of-its-kind 'Biswa Odia Bhasa Sammilani' will be held in Bhubaneswar

- This conference aims to promote the Odia language in the state and outside, including foreign countries.

The Coal India Limited (CIL) aims to produce 780 million tonne (MT) of coal in the current financial year

- Out of this, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) shares 204 MT.
- Increased coal production translates to a steady supply of electricity, essential for powering industries and driving economic activity.

Odisha Mining Corporation Ltd (OMC) will be conferred with Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2023 for 'Encouragement to sports through Corporate Social Responsibility'

- Jain Deemed to be University, Bengaluru, is the other recipient of the award in 'Identification and nurturing of budding/young talent' category.
- The award is given to corporate entities (both in private and public sector), sports control boards, NGOs, including sports bodies at the state and national level, who have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.

As part of the OdishaNet Phase 1.0, the state government has planned to provide internet protocol multiprotocol label switching (IPMPLS) connectivity to all districts for G2G services by utilising the optical ground wire (OPGW) network of Odisha Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (OPTCL).

- The fibre-based network OdishaNet will connect the state headquarters with the districts in the first phase and expand to villages subsequently to connect all government institutions, including schools and hospitals.
- It will offer 'enter anywhere, exit anywhere' facilities for service providers with points of presence at district level.

Chief Minister launched sports projects worth more than Rs 120 crore for Odisha's Sambalpur.

- He inaugurated Burla indoor stadium and laid foundation stone of Sambalpur Football Academy and Sambalpur University sports complex, which will include a hockey stadium.
- Sambalpur Football Academy is being established to provide top quality coaching and competition facilities for the local talents, considering its popularity in the district.

The Odisha government has approved 14 industrial projects that would involve investments of Rs 1,713.65 crore

- It will also create employment opportunities for more than 5,000 people
- The projects include metal downstream and ancillaries, power, pharmaceuticals, plastics, food processing and tourism.

The Odisha state government requested the Centre to impose a complete ban on the manufacturing, distribution, sale and use of paraquat, a toxic chemical that is widely used as a herbicide by farmers of the state.

- As per a report of the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), paraquat and its derivatives are highly toxic chemicals and their effect on the human body is lethal.

Chief Minister Naveen Pattnaik launched the District SDG Indicator Framework Odisha and the SDG Odisha website.

- This is done to facilitate localisation of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** and better monitoring of the process for inclusive and equitable development at district level.
- The SDG has set 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 for developing a perfectly equitable society.
- The district framework will help achieve the goals with better monitoring process supported by standardised data

The Centre launched the fourth phase of training under 'Amrit Dharohar' capacity-building scheme for people residing close to Bhitarkanika National Park

- The initiative is being implemented jointly by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to enhance livelihood opportunities for local communities by harnessing the nature-tourism potential of Ramsar sites across the country.

The Jeypore Municipality is set to breathe new life into the century-old Nilakanth Sagar pond

- Rs 9.58 crore was allocated for the rejuvenation of the pond which included complete cleanup of the water body, accompanied by the establishment of parks, plantations, and construction of guard walls.

11.37 lakh winged creatures were sighted during the annual census in the Chilika lagoon

- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds in the Indian Subcontinent.
- The Pallas's fish eagle was found in the Nalabana bird sanctuary area in the lake after a gap of around ten years.

The Gangadhar National Award for Poetry-2022 was presented to renowned Assamese poet Anis Uz Zaman by Sambalpur University during its 57th foundation day celebration.

- Zaman, expressing joy and pride, highlighted the significance of the award for the Assamese community.
- In his address, he emphasized the role of poetry in preserving language but cautioned against the negative impact of the current political situation on literature and tradition.
- Born in 1947, Zaman has made notable contributions to poetry and translation, with a focus on children's literature.
- He received the Amulya Chakraborty Translation Award (2023) for translating Japanese Haikus. Zaman's global literary reach includes translations into English, Bengali, Hindi, Odia, Tamil, French, and Spanish.

Odisha has emerged as a 'top performer' in Startup Ranking-2022, showing significant growth in the startup ecosystem and initiatives to nurture entrepreneurs.

- The state was evaluated across seven reform areas divided into 25 action points ranging from institutional support, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, access to market, incubation support and funding support to capacity building of enablers and a roadmap to a sustainable future.

Project UANAT, the acronym for Utkal's Action for Agricultural Transformation, has been implemented in Rengansahil village of Kashipur block of Rayagada.

- It pushes for the use of organic pesticide and manure to ensure sustainable farming and stem the environmental damage caused by chemical pesticides.
- It is a flagship livelihood initiative by Utkal Alumina, in collaboration with Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundations (BRLF) and Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD).

Historical play 'Ahe Nilashaila' of Choklate Productions will be staged at Odisha's Puri town during the inauguration of Jagannath Temple Heritage Corridor project.

- The play is dedicated to Lord Jagannath
- It will be staged in front of the Nakachana Gate of Srigundicha temple.

The Railway Minister inaugurated the Daspalla station in Odisha's Nayagarh district and the Nuagaon Road-Daspalla line.

- He flagged off four trains that have been extended till Daspalla.
- These trains are Bhubaneswar-Nayagarh Town Express, Bhubaneswar-Nuagaon Road Passenger Special, Puri-Nuagaon Road Passenger Special and the Bhadrak-Nayagarh Town MEMU.

The Fisheries and ARD department of Odisha government signed an MoU with National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)

- It was for setting up a GMP facility for production of anthrax and ENT vaccines at Satellite Unit of Odisha Biological Products Institute (OBPI) in Berhampur.
- Establishment of this unit will make Odisha self-sufficient in production of anthrax and Enterotoxaemia vaccine.

In order to extend the KALIA Scholarship to more students, Odisha government has made some modifications in its guidelines.

- As per the new norms, the scholarship will be given to those who are undertaking professional/technical courses like **Engineering, Medical, Agriculture & Allied, Nursing, Diploma and different trades**
- The government had launched the scheme to provide financial assistance to the children of KALIA beneficiaries for undertaking professional/technical education in the government institutions in the state.

The Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) took stringent measures to address the ongoing pollution in the Brahmani and Koel rivers

- OSPCB discovered that untreated sewage water is being discharged into the rivers from various sources, including the prestigious National Institute of Technology-Rourkela (NIT-R)

Suresh Chandra Mahapatra, the advisor to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced the launch of the Jagannath Bus Service to cater to the needs of devotees.

- Jagannath buses would operate from various locations to Bhubaneswar and Puri, providing devotees with a unique experience

Even as Odisha has managed to improve its position significantly in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 ranking, waste management remains grim in urban areas of the state with just 50 percent or less garbage being processed in 86 percent of the civic bodies

- As per the latest cleanliness ranking report released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Odisha is the fourth state in the country in terms of cleanliness
- The state has over 93.17 percent door-to-door waste collection and around 74 percent source segregation in urban areas.

The Odisha government has asked all doctors to write prescriptions in legible handwriting

- As per guidelines of National Medical Commission, all registered medical practitioners/medical officers of government peripheral health care facilities, medical colleges, private clinics and private medical colleges are to write prescriptions in proper legible handwriting or in typed form.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated 389 schools in five districts under the state government's transformational programme

- These schools were located in Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara and Bargarh districts.
- The schools across the state were transforming under the '5T' initiative.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will flag off a MEMU train from Nilagiri to Balasore.

- The train will run up and down from Nilagiri to Balasore thrice a day.
- The train services from Nilagiri will be expanded to Bhubaneswar and Kolkata in coming years.

The state government is planning to introduce Sambar and Gaur (bison) in the Chandaka-Dampara wildlife sanctuary.

- It is an Elephant Sanctuary located in Khurdha and Cuttack districts.
- It is bounded on the north by Mahanadi River.
- The Mahanadi River separates it from Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary.

A total of 102.78 lakh people in Odisha moved out of multidimensional poverty bracket in the last nine years, according to a discussion paper released by NITI Aayog

- Odisha was among five states that recorded the sharpest decline in the number of people classified as poor based on Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)
- MPI considers twelve different indicators of poverty included under three broad dimensions, namely health, education, and standard of living.

- The other states are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- Odisha saw a significant decline from 34.28 per cent share of MPI poor in 2013-14 to 11.07 per cent in 2022-23.

Sulia Jatra, one of the major tribal festivals of western Odisha, began in Khaireguda and Kumuria villages of Odisha's Balangir district with mass sacrifice of animals.

- This 500-year-old tradition is held on the second Tuesday of Pousa month every year.
- Predominantly a festival of animal sacrifice, the villagers believe that spilling of blood of animals and birds at the altar of Goddess Sulia brings good harvest and prosperity.

Artist Arun Kumar Sahu from Odisha's Ganjam district has made a book on Hanuman Chalisa and a portrait of Lord Ram on carved wood for "Pran Pratistha" in Ram temple at Ayodhya

- The book measuring 8×12 inches contains seven pages along with a portrait of Lord Ram of 12×15 inches.
- He has also made a board of 5 feet and 7 inches in height, 30 inches in width containing the Hanuman Chalisa.

Odisha government has issued guidelines for statewide awareness programme "Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha (Sahari)" to sensitise people on schemes and programmes under 5T Initiative

- It aims at ensuring that the benefits of the welfare schemes reach the eligible and deserving people.
- The programme also seeks to ensure transparency and accountability in distribution of benefits as well as empower the people by providing information on the government scheme.

Hindalco plans to set up a manufacturing unit for specialised aluminum foil for lithium-ion batteries at Lapanga in Odisha's Sambalpur district.

- The unit to be set up with an investment of Rs 803 crore would help the aluminum conglomerate lead in the electric vehicle (EV) market with its new facility.

The Odisha government will roll out Ama Odisha Nabin Odisha (Sahari) drive to make citizens aware of different people-centric schemes and ensure their benefits reach those in need at the grassroots.

- The scheme is a state government initiative to boost rural infrastructure and promote Jagannath culture.
- The scheme has a budget of Rs. 3,397 crore for the financial year 2023-24.
- Under the scheme, 90,723 projects will be implemented in 6,794 panchayats across the state.
- Each panchayat will receive Rs. 50 lakh for the implementation of projects under the scheme.
- The projects will be selected by local people, community organizations, public representatives, and other stakeholders.

The Odisha government signed MoUs for different projects to the tune of Rs23,389 crore with 11 companies

- The projects will be set up in the districts of Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Sundargarh
- The agreements include pacts with Epsilon Carbon Private Ltd, which has proposed an investment of Rs10,000 crore in the state over 10 years, and Ind Barath Energy Utkal Ltd, which will set up an 800-MW ultra supercritical coal-based thermal power plant at Jharsuguda for Rs6,012.46 crore.

The annual census of dolphins began in Odisha

- The counting process started in Puri district.
- It has 173 dolphins including 154 Irrawaddy and 19 bottle-nose dolphins were found in brackish water bodies of Chilika.

The state Cabinet gave its approval to the Odisha Biotechnology Policy-2024

- It has an objective of harnessing the potential of biotechnology towards the sustainable socio-economic development and giving boost to the Biotechnology ecosystem in the state
- Recognizing Biotechnology as a sunrise sector for Odisha, this Biotechnology Policy seeks to attract

and bring investors and stakeholders together and empower them to create a flourishing biotechnology ecosystem in the state.

The Odisha government has sought assistance of Tamil Nadu for making kumki elephants and mahouts available in the wake of worsening human-elephant conflict in the eastern State

- In Odisha, there have been 230 encounters between humans and elephants in the financial year 2023-24.
- Kumki elephants can be deployed strategically to help us to manage and drive wild elephants thereby reducing damage to crops, human habitations and the potential loss of both human and elephant lives.
- These elephants can also be deployed for forest patrolling and rescue operations.

Droupadi Girls' High School in Nishaposi locality under Thakurmunda block of Odisha's

Mayurbhanj district won the 1st prize in the pipe band category in National Inter-school Band Competition 2024

- The school was nominated for the national level competition after winning at the east zone level.

The child sex ratio has shown a declining trend in Odisha while the dip is quite alarming in seven districts, as per the report of the Health department

- The report says there are 925 girl children at birth for every 1,000 boys in the state while the sex ratio has been abysmally low at put at 8:10 in Nayagarh, Ganjam, Cuttack, Subarnapur, Jagatsinghpur, Dhenkanal and Jharsuguda.
- While the country is celebrating National Girl Child Day 24th January, such a disconcerting sex ratio in Odisha has raised concerns.
- The districts which have reported more than 900 girl children at birth against every 1000 male children as per the 2022 survey of the Health department were awarded on the occasion



OPSC Current Affairs

**NATIONAL**

Government of India constitutes Sixteenth Finance Commission with Dr. Arvind Panagariya as its Chairman

- The Government of India, with the approval of the President of India, has constituted the Sixteenth Finance Commission, in pursuance to Article 280(1) of the Constitution.
- Dr Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, and Professor, Columbia University will be the Chairman. Members of the Sixteenth Finance Commission would be notified separately.
- Shri Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey has been appointed as Secretary to the Commission. Detailed terms of reference for Sixteenth Finance Commission have also been spelt out in the notification issued today.
- The Sixteenth Finance Commission shall make recommendations as to the following matters, namely: –
 - ✓ The distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;
 - ✓ The principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues under article 275 of the Constitution for the purposes other than those specified in the provisos to clause (1) of that article; and
 - ✓ The measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State.
- The Sixteenth Finance Commission may review the present arrangements on financing Disaster Management initiatives, with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (53 of 2005), and make appropriate recommendations thereon.
- The Sixteenth Finance Commission has been requested to make its report available by 31st day of October, 2025 covering a period of five years commencing on the 1st day of April, 2026.

10th Edition of Sagar Parikrama

- India's Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala inaugurated the 10th edition of Sagar Parikrama – a coastal yatra spreading awareness about government welfare schemes among fishermen.
- The 15-day journey spans fishing harbors and villages across Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry. Interactions center on:
 - ✓ Familiarizing beneficiaries with existing initiatives
 - ✓ Distributing assets provisioned under fisheries development schemes
 - ✓ Facilitating credit access through fisher Kisan Credit Cards
 - ✓ Addressing grievances and ground realities
- It also explores sustainable fishing opportunities while recognizing exemplary efforts.
- Sagar Parikrama signifies the government's hands-on approach to further empower the fishing community.
 - The coast-to-coast outreach drive promotes participatory last-mile delivery across the fisheries value chain.
 - Officials hope that translating training and assets into enhanced, sustainable marine productivity will unlock the sector's immense growth potential.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the first all-girl Sainik School in Vrindavan, Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh.

- The Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School, with a capacity of nearly 870 students, is part of a broader initiative to establish 100 new Sainik Schools across India in partnership with NGOs, private entities, and state governments. This initiative aligns with the objective of increasing educational opportunities for girls aspiring to join the armed forces.

Cabinet approves overarching scheme "PRITHvi Vlgyan (PRITHVI)" of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

- PRITHVI Scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) to enhance the understanding of the Earth and its vital signs.
- This overarching initiative, with an allocation of Rs 4,797 crore for the period 2021-26, aims to significantly enhance research, modelling, and



- service delivery across crucial areas like weather, climate, oceans, and the polar regions.
- The Prithvi scheme integrates five existing sub-schemes:
 - ✓ Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems and Services (ACROSS)
 - ✓ Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)
 - ✓ Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER)
 - ✓ Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE)
 - ✓ Research, Education, Training, and Outreach (REACHOUT).
 - The major Objectives of the overarching Prithvi Scheme are:
 - ✓ Augmentation and sustainance of long-term observations of the atmosphere, ocean, geosphere, cryosphere and solid earth to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change
 - ✓ Development of modelling systems for understanding and predicting weather, ocean and climate hazards and understanding the science of climate change
 - ✓ Exploration polar and high seas regions of the Earth towards discovery of new phenomena and resources;
 - ✓ Development of technology for exploration and sustainable harnessing of oceanic resources for societal applications
 - ✓ Translation of knowledge and insights from Earth systems science into services for societal, environmental and economic benefit.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate another significant temple on February 14 in Abu Dhabi.

- During PM Modi's first visit to the UAE in 2015, the country allocated land in Abu Dhabi for the construction of a Hindu temple. This visit held diplomatic importance, making Modi the first Indian Prime Minister in 34 years to visit the strategic Gulf nation. The temple project was inaugurated by the PM in February 2018, and construction commenced in December 2019.

The Secretary (CPV & OIA) recently addressed the Valedictory Session of the 70th edition of the Know India Programme (KIP) at a function held at the Ministry of External Affairs.

- KIP is a flagship programme of the Ministry of External Affairs for engagement with Indian origin youth (between 18 and 30 years old).

- It is a three-week orientation programme for diaspora youth conducted with a view to promoting awareness of different facets of life in contemporary India.
- The programme has been in existence since 2003.
- As a part of the programme, the applicants finalized through the selection process visit India for a 21-day schedule.
- 90% of the cost of international airfare for KIP participants visiting India is borne by the Ministry, while the remaining 10% is borne by the applicants themselves.
- During the period of their stay in India, the Ministry provides for their accommodation, meals, and domestic transportation by road/air.
- During the period of their stay in India, the KIP participants are given insights into their understanding of India's political system, economy, society, and developments in various key sectors.
- Further, they are also provided exposure to India's history and heritage by visiting places of historical and cultural significance.
- The Ministry also facilitates their interactions with students and professionals from various fields, along with arranging for meetings and call on visits with senior officials and leadership.

Shri Bhupender Yadav launches National Transit Pass System (NTPS)- 'One Nation-One Pass' to facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across the country.

- National Transit Pass System is to facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across the country.
- The transit permits are issued for transport of timber and forest produce based on state specific transit rules.
- The NTPS is envisioned as a "One Nation-One Pass" regime, which will enable seamless transit across the country.
- This initiative will streamline the issuance of timber transit permits by providing a unified, online mode for tree growers and farmers involved in agroforestry across the country, contributing to the ease of doing business.
- It offers seamless transit permits, managing records for both inter-state and intra-state transportation of timber, bamboo and other forest produce obtained from various sources like private lands, government owned forest and private depots.

- The QR coded transit permits generated under NTPS will allow check gates across various states to verify the validity of the permits and allow seamless transit.
- It is designed for user convenience, featuring desktop and mobile applications for easy registration and permit applications.
- Transit permits will be issued for tree species which are regulated, while the users can self-generate No Objection Certificates for exempted species.
- Presently, 25 States and Union Territories have embraced the unified permit system, streamlining interstate business operations for producers, farmers, and transporters.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Tur Dal Procurement Portal

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah launched the portal for registration, purchase and payment of tur producing farmers of India in New Delhi.
- This farmer-centric initiative aims to empower tur dal producers with better prices through procurement, streamlined processes and direct bank transfers by NAFED and NCCF, thereby boosting domestic pulses production and reducing import dependence.
- Under this, the buffer stock of pulses will be purchased from the farmers registered on the portals of NAFED and NCCF as per the guidelines of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India and MSP or market price, whichever is higher, will be paid to the farmers.
- This initiative complements the “Atmanirbhar Bharat” campaign. The portal will streamline the entire process for tur dal growers in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka and Jharkhand, simplifying the registration, procurement and payment processes.
- It aims to reduce dependence on imports by purchasing 80% of the buffer stock directly from farmers. This will not only secure food production but will also ensure the future food security of the nation. The multilingual electronic portal <https://esamridhi.in> will connect farmers, NAFED and concerned government departments, streamlining processes for better accessibility.

Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Health Minister, inaugurated 'Prasadam,' India's initial hygienic food street, in a grand event at

Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.

- Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya recently inaugurated 'Prasadam,' the nation's first healthy and hygienic food street, in a grand ceremony at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.
- Addressing the gathering, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya expressed his enthusiasm for the initiative. He stated, 'This street will provide pure and clean food to the devotees.' Dr Mandaviya emphasized that the 'PRASADAM' initiative aims to connect common citizens across the nation with pure and safe local and traditional food. He believes that this effort will align people, both residents and tourists, to adopt safe and healthy eating habits.

The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education has launched 'Prerana: An Experiential Learning program'

- PRERANA program aims to offer a meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to all participants, thereby empowering them with leadership qualities.
- It is driven by a strong commitment to integrate principles of the Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education which is a cornerstone of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- It is a week-long residential program for selected students of class IX to XII.
- A batch of 20 selected students (10 boys and 10 girls) will attend the program, every week from various parts of the country.
- It will run from a Vernacular School, established in 1888, in one of the oldest living cities of India, Vadnagar, district Mehsana, Gujarat.
- The curriculum of Prerana School prepared by IIT Gandhi Nagar is rooted in nine value-based themes: Swabhiman and Vinay, Shaurya and Sahas, Parishram and Samarpan, Karuna and Sewa, Vividhta and Ekta, Satyanishtha and Shuchita, Navachar and Jigyasa, Shraddha aur Vishwas, and Swatantrata and Kartavya.

The Prime Minister of India in Kavaratti, Lakshadweep, inaugurated Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection (KLI-SOFC) project.

- Kochi-Lakshadweep islands submarine optical fiber connection project is the submarine cable connectivity project from Mainland (Kochi) to eleven Lakshadweep Islands namely, Kavaratti, Agatti, Amini, Kadmat, Chetlet, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Androth, Kiltan, Bangaram and Bitra has been extended.
- The project is funded by Universal Services Obligation Fund (USOF), Department of Telecommunication.
- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) was the Project Executing Agency and the work was awarded to M/s NEC Corporation India Pvt Ltd through Global Open Tendering process.
- The major activities related to the project include Marine Route Survey, Submarine Cable laying, Civil Construction of CLS stations, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of End Terminals (SLTE).
- The KLI-SOFC project will lead to an increase in internet speed unlocking new possibilities & opportunities.

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) along with National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) has launched 'SMART 2.0' program.

- Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research among Teaching professionals (SMART) program promotes robust clinical studies in priority areas of Ayurveda with Ayurveda academic institutions/hospitals across the country through mutual collaboration.
- The objective of 'SMART 2.0' is to generate a tangible evidence to demonstrate efficacy and safety of Ayurveda interventions using interdisciplinary research methods and translating it into public health care.
- The study aims at safety, tolerability and adherence to Ayurveda formulations in the priority research areas of Bal Kasa, malnutrition, insufficient lactation, Abnormal Uterine Bleeding, Osteoporosis in post-menopausal women and Diabetes Mellitus (DM) II.

To ensure smooth rail operations, Indian Railways have provisioned 19,742 Fog Pass Devices during the foggy weather.

- Fog Pass Devices is a GPS based navigation device that helps the loco pilot to navigate during dense fog conditions.

- It provides on-board real-time information (Display as well as voice guidance) to Loco Pilots regarding location of fixed landmarks such as Signal, Level Crossing gate (Manned & Unmanned), Permanent Speed Restrictions, Neutral Sections etc.
- It displays approach indications of next three approaching fixed landmarks in geographical order accompanied with voice message approximately 500m on approach.
- features
 - ✓ Suitable for all types of sections like single line, double line, electrified as well as non electrified sections.
 - ✓ Suitable for all types of electric and diesel locomotives, EMUs/MEMUs/ DEMUs.
 - ✓ Suitable for train speeds up to 160 KMPH.
 - ✓ It has built-in re-chargeable battery back-up for 18 hrs.

Union Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala inaugurated an artificial reef project in Vizhinjam, Kerala.

- The project is designed to boost fishery resources in the region, thus improving the livelihood of traditional fishermen.
- The Kerala State Coastal Development Corporation, with technical assistance from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), is overseeing the project.
- The project will deploy 6,300 artificial reef units across 42 fishing villages from Pozhiyoor to Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram district.

The tourism ministry has included Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme.

- Swadesh Darshan Scheme was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations in the country. It is 100% centrally funded scheme.
- Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State governments, Union Territory Administrations or Central Agencies for development of tourism infrastructure in the country.
- Operation & Maintenance (O&M) of the projects sanctioned under Swadesh Darshan Scheme is the responsibility of the respective State Government/UT Administration.
- Swadesh Darshan 2.0 for development of sustainable and responsible tourist destinations covering tourism and allied infrastructure, tourism services, human capital development, destination

management and promotion backed by policy and institutional reforms.

- The objective for the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme envisage increase in private sector investment in tourism & hospitality.

The Government has extended the deadline for completion of the flagship highway development project Bharatmala Pariyojana Phase-I to 2027-28.

- The move follows an over 100% increase in the estimated cost of the mega project and reflects the slowing of implementation, and financial constraints.
- Bharatmala Pariyojana is an umbrella programme launched under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- The first-phase of Bharatmala was announced in 2017 and was to be completed by 2022.
- Bharatmala focuses on enhanced effectiveness of already built infrastructure, multi-modal integration, bridging infrastructure gaps for seamless movement and integrating National and Economic Corridors.
- features:
 - ✓ Economic Corridors: Integrating the economic corridors facilitates larger connectedness between economically important production and consumption centers.
 - ✓ Inter-corridor and Feeder routes: This would ensure first mile and last mile connectivity.
 - ✓ National Corridor Efficiency Improvement: Through this, the greater actionable goal is to undertake lane expansion and decongestion of existing National Corridors.
 - ✓ Border and International Connectivity roads: Better border road infrastructure would ensure greater maneuverability, while also boosting trade with neighboring countries.
 - ✓ Coastal and Port connectivity roads: Port-led economic development is further boosted through connectivity to coastal areas, encouraging both tourism and industrial development.
 - ✓ Green-field Expressways: Expressways have higher traffic configuration and choke points would benefit from green-field expressways.

The Steel Sector has witnessed tremendous growth and India has emerged as a global force in steel production and the 2nd largest

producer of steel in the world after China.

- India's steel output has been 125.32 million tonnes (MT) of crude steel and 121.29 MT of finished steel production in FY23.
- Steel is one of the widely used materials all over the world. The iron and steel industry is the bottom line producer industry.
- The steel industry plays a pivotal role in crucial sectors such as construction, infrastructure, automobile, engineering, and defense.
- Steel is a key sector for the Indian economy (responsible for 2% of the country's GDP in FY 21-22).
- India's major steel-producing states include Odisha, which leads among all steel producing states, followed by Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and West Bengal also play crucial roles.

Every year on January 3rd, India celebrates a special day called Savitribai Phule Jayanti.

- Savitribai Phule born in a small village in Satara district of Maharashtra on January 3, 1831, Savitribai Phule was an Indian social reformer, poet, and powerful voice in the Indian freedom struggle.
- She was an active participant in the women's liberation movement.
- Established two educational trusts: the Native Female School, Pune, and the Society for Promoting the Education of Mahars, Mangs, and others from downtrodden castes.
- In 1852, the British government acknowledged the great work of the Phule family in the field of education and honored Savitribai by naming her the best teacher.
- She, along with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, actively worked against the caste-based discrimination prevalent in society.
- She played a crucial role in grooming Jyotirao Phule's pioneering institution, Satyashodhak Samaj (1873) that fought for equality of all classes.
- In 1852, she initiated the Mahila Seva Mandal, a platform aimed at creating awareness about women's rights. Notably, this platform brought together members of all castes, challenging entrenched social hierarchies.
- Savitribai organized a barbers' strike in both Mumbai and Pune to demonstrate their opposition to the practice of shaving the heads of widows.
- In 1863, Jyotirao and Savitribai began Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha, India's first home prohibiting

infanticide, helping pregnant Brahmin widows and rape victims.

- Savitribai Phule wrote two books, Kavya Phule in 1854 and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar in 1892, which are collections of her poems.
- She wrote the famous poem 'Go Get Education' to encourage backward and oppressed class people to get an education.
- Her birth anniversary, celebrated as Savitribai Phule Jayanti, is a day to commemorate her legacy and contributions to education and social equality.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has utilised road construction technology i.e. Rejupave technology to build high-altitude bituminous road sections at the Sela tunnel and LGG-Damteng-Yangste (LDY) road near the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Rejupave Technology is developed by India's oldest and premier road research organisation, CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI).
- It is beneficial in constructing high-altitude bituminous roads at low and sub-zero temperature conditions.
- This technology brings down the production and rolling temperature of bituminous mixes by 30 degrees Celsius to 400 degrees Celsius with negligible heat loss in the bituminous mix during transit, despite long haulage time amid snowfall.
- This technology's asphalt modifier is a bio-oil-based product, which significantly lowers the heating requirement of bituminous mixes besides preserving the bituminous mix temperature during transit.
- Rejupave' asphalt modifier in cold climatic regions will have improved long-term durability and better resistance to thermal cracking under low-temperature conditions.
- It also brings down the greenhouse gas emissions in the pristine eco-sensitive mountainous environment of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chandubi Festival was celebrated along the Chandubi Lake in the state of Assam.

- Chandubi Festival is organised every year for five days starting from the first day of the New Year along the Chandubi lake, which is situated in the state of Assam.

- The main attractions of the Chandubi festival are the local folk culture, ethnic cuisine, local handloom and dresses, boating, etc.
- The major aim of the Chandubi Festival is to promote eco-tourism in this biodiversity hotspot of Assam.
- Preserving the waterbody, the water level of which has rapidly been lowering over the years, has been the motive for organising the festival every year.
- The festival has been providing an opportunity to generate livelihood to different tribes - Rabhas, Garos, Gorkhas and tea tribes - living in the area by selling different food items and homemade beverages, and traditionally woven attire.

India is set to take the reins as the chair of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee for the very first time.

- World Heritage Committee is a committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- The Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, defines the use of the World Heritage Fund, and allocates financial assistance upon requests from States Parties.
- It has the final say on whether a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- It examines reports on the state of conservation of inscribed properties and asks States Parties to take action when properties are not being properly managed.
- It also decides on the inscription or deletion of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
- It consists of representatives from 21 of the States Parties to the Convention elected by their General Assembly.
- A Committee member's term of office is six years, but most state parties choose voluntarily to be members of the committee for only four years in order to give other states parties an opportunity to be on the committee.

India plans a year-long festival, aiming to connect the world through Ramayan. Commencing at Delhi's Purana Qila, it will traverse cities, celebrating the epic's cultural significance.

- The festival is scheduled to commence from Delhi's historic Purana Qila (Old Fort) on January 18 and will traverse various cities such as

Lucknow, Ayodhya, and Varanasi. This marks the beginning of a cultural journey that will delve into the rich tapestry of the epic Ramayana.

- India aims to transcend borders with this festival by involving seven neighboring countries, including Cambodia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. Minister of State for Culture, Meenakshi Lekhi, mentioned that Indian missions abroad are actively engaging with countries to finalize their participation, ensuring a diverse and inclusive celebration.

The Centre has decided to conduct an Asset Recycling Drive under the National Monetization Pipeline (NMP), aiming to generate resources for new investments in infrastructure.

- The Centre's asset recycling drive is expected to generate around Rs 1.5 trillion in the fiscal year 2024-25.
- Transactions with monetisation values of around Rs 0.97 trillion were completed in 2021-22, and Rs 1.32 trillion in 2022-23.
- National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) envisages an aggregate monetisation potential of Rs 6-lakh crore through the leasing of core assets of the Central government in sectors such as roads, railways, power, oil and gas pipelines, telecom, civil aviation etc, over a four-year period (FY 2022-25).
- The Monetization through NMP only includes core assets, excluding monetization through disinvestment of non-core assets.
- Currently, only assets of central government line ministries and CPSEs in infrastructure sectors have been included.
- The government is currently in the process of coordinating and collating asset pipelines from states to expand the scope of the NMP, incorporating assets at both the central and state levels in due course.
- To streamline the process, the monetization of non-core assets, including land, real estate, and infrastructure, is being transferred from the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) to the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) within the Ministry of Finance.
- This pipeline is intended to support investments under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) worth Rs 111 trillion in six years through FY25.
- The timeline for the NMP has been strategically set to be co-terminus with the remaining period under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).

Government of India, under the New Education Policy, has decided to include Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages of India.

- Farsi, also known as Persian, is an Indo-Iranian language belonging to the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages. It has a rich historical and cultural significance, not only in Iran but also in the broader Persian-speaking world.
- Before Farsi's inclusion, India recognized six languages as classical: Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
- The recognition as a classical language brings several benefits, such as international awards for scholars, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages, and the creation of Professional Chairs for Classical Languages in Central Universities.

PM Modi announced the launch of Pradhanmantri Suryoday Yojana

- Currently, there is no centrally compiled estimate of the number of households in India with rooftop solar installations.
- Pradhanmantri Suryoday Yojana launched on January, 2024.
- Objectives is to Provide affordable solar energy, Increase energy independence, Promote environmental sustainability.
- It will provide incentives and financial assistance to make it affordable for residential consumers to adopt rooftop solar.
- This scheme comes after India missed its initial target of 40 gigawatts of rooftop solar capacity by 2022 under the existing Rooftop Solar Programme.
- The new scheme signals renewed impetus to achieve the target of 40GW capacity by the extended deadline of 2026.
- With only around 11GW currently installed, the Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana intends to accelerate rooftop solar adoption.
- The scheme aimed to expand India's rooftop solar installed capacity in the residential sector by providing Central Financial Assistance and incentives to DISCOMs
- A consumer can avail of the benefits of the scheme through DISCOM tendered projects or through the National Portal
- The DISCOM's role is limited to issuing of technical feasibility approval, installation of the net meter and inspect the system.
- Net metering is a billing mechanism that credits solar energy system owners for the electricity they add to the grid.

- Surplus solar power units generated from the rooftop solar plant can be exported to the grid.

The Central government is spearheading a significant transformation in the realm of wetland tourism with the 'Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme'

- This initiative, launched in June 2023, aims to revolutionize tourism practices at ecologically-sensitive wetlands, particularly Ramsar sites like Odisha's Chilika Lake and Haryana's Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary.
- Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.
- The scheme will be implemented over the next three years (2023 onwards) to encourage optimal use of wetlands, and enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- The primary focus of the Scheme is to strategically transition from high-volume tourism to high-value nature tourism at ecologically-sensitive wetlands.
- The aim is to enhance livelihood opportunities for local communities through harnessing the nature-tourism potential of the Ramsar Sites across the country.
- The scheme is being implemented in convergence with various Central Government ministries and agencies, State wetland authorities, and a network of formal and informal institutions and individuals, working together for a common cause.
- Out of 16 identified Ramsar sites, five have been selected for pilot projects under the scheme.
- These pilot sites include Sultanpur National Park (Haryana), Bhitarkanika Mangroves (Odisha), Chilika Lake (Odisha), Sirpur (Madhya Pradesh), and Yashwant Sagar (Madhya Pradesh).
- Training programs for participants are carried under the Alternative Livelihood Programme (ALP) (a 30 hours/15 days training programme) and Paryatan Navik Certificate (boatman certification for tourism).

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurated the 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman' campaign, celebrating India's 75th Republic Year

- The Vice-President introduced Nyaya Setu, a transformative initiative extending legal services to the last mile. Under the 'Hamara Samvidhan

Hamara Samman' campaign, efforts focus on legally empowering marginalized communities, ensuring their access to justice. Minister of State Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal highlighted the campaign's role in asserting rights and accessing justice for marginalized groups.

- The event unveiled the achievement booklet of the Access to Justice Scheme, 'Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice' (DISHA).

A total of ₹32.44 Crore has been released for Pre-matric Scholarships and ₹387.27 Crore for Post-Matric Scholarships to States/Union Territories (UTs) under the PM YASASVI scheme in 2023.

- PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme (PM YASASVI) is a scholarship scheme for Other Backward Class (OBCs), Economically Backward Class (EBC), and Denotified Nomadic Tribes (DNT) students.
- Under this scheme, students can avail of Pre-Matric Scholarships from Classes 9 to 10 and Post-Matric Scholarships for their higher education at the post-matriculation or post-secondary level.
- Exceptional students also have the opportunity to receive scholarships for top-tier schools and colleges.
- Additionally, hostel facilities are provided for OBC students through a construction scheme.
- These scholarships shall be available for studies in India only and will be awarded by the Government of State/Union Territory to which the applicant actually belongs, i.e., permanently settled.
- Entitlement: Upto Rs. 75,000 p.a. for Class 9/10, 1,25,000 p.a. for Class 11/12, covering the school tuition fee/hostel fee.
- Implementing Agency: Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Tableau on theme 'India: Mother of Democracy' clinches First Spot at Republic Day Parade 2024

- The winning tableau was based on the theme 'India: Mother of Democracy,' showcasing the country's long-standing tradition of democratic values and practices. The tableau highlighted India's journey through the ages as a cradle of democratic principles, reflecting the diverse and inclusive nature of its political system.
- The tableau was a visual masterpiece, creatively blending historical and cultural elements to

portray India's democratic ethos. It featured symbols and figures from ancient Indian texts and

practices that underscored the roots of democratic thought in Indian civilization.



INTERNATIONAL

Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi is declared winner of election that opposition wants redone

- President Tshisekedi emerged victorious with approximately 73% of the vote, leaving his closest rival, Moise Katumbi, with 18%. Felix Tshisekedi, the son of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, secured his first term in 2019.
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), located in Central Africa, is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa with a diverse landscape and rich natural resources.

BRICS Group To Double In 2024 After Saudi, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia Join Ranks

- BRICS, the group of emerging-market nations comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is poised to undergo a significant expansion on January 1.
- South Africa's envoy to the bloc revealed that Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Egypt have accepted invitations to join, effectively doubling the organization's membership.
- Recently, the existing BRICS members extended invitations to six nations, including the aforementioned, aiming to combine leading energy producers with major consumers among developing countries. Argentina, the sole decline, reversed its membership bid under the new presidency of Javier Milei.
- Representatives from the new invitees participated in a recent BRICS sherpa meeting in Durban, South Africa, indicating their acceptance of the invitation. The five countries are set to send officials to the next sherpa meeting in Moscow on January 30.

India to End Free Movement Regime Permitting Border Crossing Into Myanmar.

- The Indian government has decided to terminate the Free Movement Regime (FMR) allowing visa-free 16-kilometer entry into each other's territory for people living along the India-Myanmar border. Advanced fencing will be erected to fully seal the porous frontier.

- The FMR, in place since 2018, lets tribes inhabiting both sides travel up to 16 km across the border without visas based on annual border passes. It aimed to strengthen cultural ties.

Russia's 2024 BRICS Chairmanship began.

- On January 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin officially marked the commencement of Russia's 2024 BRICS Chairmanship. The overarching strategy will continue to promote BRICS partnerships in politics and security, economy and finance, as well as cultural and humanitarian contacts.
- During this handover, President Putin emphasized the motto for the upcoming tenure, "Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security." This signifies Russia's commitment to fostering collaboration among the BRICS nations - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Uganda to Host 19th NAM Summit

- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was visited Uganda from January 15-20, 2024, to attend the 19th edition of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit.
- The NAM is a forum of 120 developing countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. It aims to represent the political, economic and cultural interests of the developing world. The grouping has 53 members from Africa, 40 from Asia, 26 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Belarus from Europe. There are also 18 observer countries and 10 observer organizations.

France has become the first European Union member to introduce fully digital Schengen visas for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris.

- Commencing on January 1, 2024, the newly launched "Olympic Consulate" system operates through the France-Visas portal, streamlining the application process for 15,000 international athletes, 9,000 journalists, and foreign delegations.



India has signed an agreement with Mauritius to jointly develop a small satellite

- India has signed an agreement with Mauritius to jointly develop a small satellite, which will be launched by ISRO in early 2024. The cooperation will be between ISRO and Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC).
- The joint satellite project will ensure continued Mauritian government support for ISRO's critical ground tracking station located in the island country. This station aids India's launch missions.

Denmark's Queen Margrethe II to Step Down After 52 Years On Throne

- Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, in her New Year's speech, revealed her decision to abdicate the throne after 52 years of rule. The announcement, made on the 14th of January, marks the anniversary of her own accession to the throne at the age of 31, following the death of her father, King Frederik IX.
- Denmark's King Frederik X Ascends As Queen Margrethe II.

Denmark announces alliance on green fuels in India

- The Danish government has announced the launch of the Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI), a strategic initiative aimed at advancing collaboration between Denmark and India in the sustainable energy solutions sector.
- This new partnership seeks to promote growth in green fuels like clean hydrogen while helping both countries progress their shared goal of reaching carbon neutrality.
- GFAI's primary objective is to promote sustainable energy growth in India by establishing an ecosystem that encourages collaboration among businesses, government entities, research institutions, and financial stakeholders from both the Indian and Danish sectors.
- The GFAI is led by the Danish Embassy and Consulate General in India. It aligns with sustainability objectives under the 2020 Green Strategic Partnership signed between the two nations.
- The alliance also comes as India aggressively pursues its target of net-zero emissions by 2070. Denmark already leads the world in climate action and intends to achieve carbon neutrality even earlier by 2050.

Kyrgyzstan Officially Declares Snow Leopard as National Symbol

- President signed a decree recognizing the snow leopard as Kyrgyzstan's national symbol, emphasizing its role in representing natural wealth, cultural prosperity, and ecological stability.
- The decree highlights the snow leopard as an indicator of the stability and health of the mountain ecosystem, covering one-third of the global territory.
- The loss of snow leopards is deemed a threat to the fragile ecological balance impacting various animal species and humans.
- In ancient Kyrgyz culture, the snow leopard held cultural importance as a totem animal linked to the legendary hero Manas, symbolizing greatness, nobility, courage, bravery, and resilience.
- : Kyrgyzstan has been a front-runner in snow leopard conservation globally, hosting the inaugural Global Snow Leopard Forum in 2013.
- The Bishkek Declaration on Snow Leopard Protection and the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP) were key outcomes.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) started a two-day hearing starting January 11th, 2024 to decide on provisional measures in a case filed by South Africa against Israel

- South Africa alleges Israel has violated its obligations under the Genocide Convention regarding acts against Palestinians in Gaza.
- South Africa alleges Israel has committed several of these acts against Palestinians in Gaza with genocidal intent since October 2023. This, combined with the scale of killings, injuries, displacement and destruction, evidences an ongoing genocide, as per South Africa.
- The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the UN that settles legal disputes between countries based on international law. It is not a criminal court and does not try individuals.
- The Genocide Convention is an international treaty that first codified the crime of genocide. It defines genocide as five acts committed with intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

Gabriel Attal Becomes France's Youngest-Ever Prime Minister At 34

- French President Emmanuel Macron has made a significant political move by appointing Gabriel Attal as the new prime minister of France.
- At 34 years old, Attal not only becomes the youngest prime minister in the country's history but also the first openly gay official to hold this prestigious position.

South Korea's parliament made history by passing a groundbreaking bill that bans the eating and selling of dog meat

- This move marks the end of a centuries-old practice that has been increasingly criticized in the face of growing support for animal welfare.
- Proposed by the ruling party and enjoying rare bipartisan support, the bill passed with an overwhelming majority of 208 votes and two abstentions in the single-chamber parliament.
- The legislation aims to "eradicate the consumption of dogs" and will take effect after a three-year grace period. The breeding and slaughtering of dogs for human consumption will be punishable by up to three years in prison or a fine of 30 million won (\$22,800). Notably, the bill does not stipulate penalties for individuals consuming dog meat.

Switzerland to host Ukraine peace summit at Zelenskiy's request

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has secured Switzerland's agreement to host a global peace summit aimed at resolving the conflict sparked by Russia's incursion into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Switzerland, known for its neutrality and past mediation roles, will facilitate talks to find a resolution.

India sets up alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality.

- At the 2024 World Economic Forum in Davos organized around the theme of "Rebuilding Trust", India participated embodying the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – ready to shape a shared future underpinned by global cooperation.
- A key outcome was the launch of a "Global Good Alliance for Gender Equity and Equality" with WEF's backing to bring together best practices, knowledge sharing and investments across women's health, education and enterprise.
- The alliance embodies India's Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam ethos – "One Earth, One Family, One Future" and its ongoing "Sabka Saath Sabka

Vikas Sabka Prayas" development mantra, poised to drive progress on global women's issues.

Japan's Moon Lander SLIM resumes mission after initial setback

- Japan is poised to join an exclusive group of nations that have successfully landed on the Moon. The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), developed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), touched the lunar surface on January 20, 2024.
- This mission marks a significant milestone in Japan's space exploration endeavours and offers a unique opportunity to advance lunar science. Launched on September 6, 2023, aboard a H-IIA rocket, SLIM represents a significant leap in lunar exploration technology.

WHO Issues Guidance on Healthcare AI Ethics

- The World Health Organization published comprehensive recommendations on the ethical governance of emerging large multi-modal AI models (LMM) increasingly used in healthcare like symptom analysis chatbots. Their rapid uncontrolled adoption makes determining proper oversight urgent.
- WHO's 2023 AI ethics guidance highlights six foundational principles for the health sector:
 - ✓ Protecting autonomy
 - ✓ Promoting wellbeing/safety
 - ✓ Ensuring transparency
 - ✓ Fostering accountability
 - ✓ Enabling inclusivity/equity
 - ✓ Furthering sustainability

Egypt Installs Solar Energy Stations at Five Archaeological Sites and Museums

- Solar energy stations have been successfully installed at five archaeological sites and museums in Egypt, depicting a collaborative effort by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA), the Industrial Modernization Centre, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Egypt.
- The five solar energy stations are located at the Giza Plateau's Visitor Center, Mohamed Aly Palace in Manial, Sharm El-Sheikh Museum, and the National and Royal Jewelry Museums in Alexandria. With a total capacity of 325 kW, these photovoltaic systems are estimated to generate 520 MW.hr/year, resulting in an annual reduction of

approximately 295 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions.

Cabo Verde Achieves Malaria-Free Certification by WHO

- In a recent announcement, the World Health Organization (WHO) has officially certified Cabo Verde as a malaria-free country.
- This accomplishment positions Cabo Verde alongside Mauritius and Algeria as the third nation in the WHO African region to achieve malaria-free status.
- Cabo Verde's certification adds to the list of 43 countries and 1 territory globally that have been recognized as 'malaria-free' by the WHO. Notable instances in the South East Asian region include the Maldives (2015) and Sri Lanka (2016), while India awaits such certification.

India helps Afghanistan, sends 40,000 litres of Malathion to combat locust threat.

- In a generous move to support Afghan people in dealing with the locust menace, the Indian government has supplied 40,000 litres of Malathion, an environmentally friendly pesticide, through Iran's Chabahar port. The Taliban-controlled Ministry of Agriculture has expressed gratitude for this assistance, highlighting its significance in protecting crops and ensuring food security in Afghanistan.
- Malathion, known for its efficacy in arid regions and minimal water usage, is considered a crucial tool in locust control. The aid not only addresses the immediate threat in Afghanistan but also serves to prevent the spread of locusts to neighbouring Central Asian countries.

Saudi Arabia prepares to open first alcohol store for diplomats

- Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store in the capital Riyadh which will serve exclusively non-Muslim diplomats, according to a source familiar with the plans and a document.
- Customers will have to register via a mobile app, get a clearance code from the foreign ministry, and respect monthly quotas with their purchases, said the document, which was seen by Reuters.
- The move is a milestone in the kingdom's efforts, led by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to open the ultra-conservative Muslim country for tourism and business as drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam.

Maersk names first vessel of its large methanol-enabled fleet "Ane Maersk"

- The world's first large methanol-enabled container vessel has been named "Ane Mærsk" at a ceremony in the shipyard of HD Hyundai Heavy Industries (HD HHI) in Ulsan, South Korea. The vessel is named after Ane Mærsk Mc-Kinney Uggla, the Chair of the A.P. Moller Foundation and A.P. Moller Holding.
- "Ane Mærsk" is the first of Maersk's 18 large methanol-enabled vessels, that will be delivered between 2024 and 2025. It is the world's second methanol-enabled container vessel. In the beginning of February, it will enter service on the AE7 string connecting Asia and Europe, marking a significant milestone in the company's commitment to pioneering low-emissions shipping solutions.

Cameroon Launches World's First Malaria Vaccine Program for Children.

- Cameroon is set to kick off a landmark malaria vaccine program on January 22nd covering 2.5 lakh children over two years. Africa accounts for 95% of global malaria mortality, so curbing infections here is pivotal.
- Cameroon will utilize Mosquirix - the first ever vaccine approved for malaria in late 2021. Developed by British pharma giant GlaxoSmithKline, it trains the immune system to attack the deadly Plasmodium parasite spread by infected mosquitoes. However, protection starts waning after months.

EU launches alliance to tackle drug trafficking through European ports

- The EU launched a "European Ports Alliance" on to harmonize methods to combat drug smuggling and infiltration by criminal groups at ports.
- The initiative was inaugurated at Belgium's Antwerp port, the main gateway for cocaine into Europe. It brought together EU interior ministers and representatives from 16 EU ports and sea transport organizations.
- A coordinated effort is needed because if efforts are only made at one port, criminals immediately move to another. Europe's major ports currently face violence from local mafias seeking to maintain the lucrative illegal drug trade.

Alabama Conducts First Nitrogen Gas Execution in US

- On January 26th, 2024, Alabama used nitrogen hypoxia to execute a death row inmate for the first time, marking the debut of a controversial and risky method in the United States.
- Kenneth Smith, a convicted murderer, has become the first person in the United States to be executed by nitrogen gas.
- Nitrogen hypoxia involves forcing the inmate to breathe pure nitrogen gas until oxygen deprivation leads to asphyxiation and death. Along with Oklahoma and Mississippi, Alabama approved this method as an alternative to injection and electrocution.

The military regimes ruling Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have announced their immediate withdrawal from the

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional political and economic union established on 28 May 1975 through the Treaty of Lagos.
- Currently comprising 15 countries across West Africa, ECOWAS covers a massive area of over 5 million square kilometers inhabited by an estimated 424 million people.
- ECOWAS is considered a pillar regional bloc of the Africa-wide African Economic Community that aims to promote continental integration.
- The core goal of ECOWAS is to achieve collective self-sufficiency for its member states by creating a single integrated trading area through progressively eliminating trade barriers.
- Additionally, it works to raise living standards and catalyze economic development across West Africa.



GEOGRAPHY and ENVIRONMENT

India has nominated Indore, Bhopal and Udaipur for the Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) scheme under the Ramsar Convention

- India has submitted nominations for three cities – Indore, Bhopal and Udaipur – to receive the tag of ‘International Wetland City’ under the Ramsar Convention.
- The wetlands near the three nominated Indian cities sustain local populations. Indore has the Sirpur Ramsar wetland site, Bhopal has the Bhoj Ramsar wetland, and Udaipur has numerous scenic lakes that attract tourists.
- Conserving these vital urban wetlands through appropriate policies and citizen participation makes the cities eligible for the Ramsar tag.
- The wetland city accreditation also provides international recognition for conservation efforts by the municipal authorities.

A bite of recognition for Similipal Kai Chutney (red ant chutney)

- The Similipal kai chutney made with red weaver ants by the tribal people of Odisha’s Mayurbhanj district (Odisha) received the geographical identity tag.
- Similipal Kai Chutney is popular in Mayurbhanj region for its healing properties and also deemed important for nutritional security of the tribal people.

- Many indigenous people from Mayurbhanj district venture into nearby forest to collect kai pimpudi (red weaver ant).
- The scientists analysed the red weaver ants and found it contains valuable proteins, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, sodium, copper, amino acids, among others. Consuming the species can help boost the immune system and prevent diseases.
- The tribal healers also prepare a medicinal oil in which they dip the ants along with pure mustard oil. After a month, this concoction is used as body oil for babies and to cure rheumatism, gout, ringworm and other diseases by the tribes.

A new plant species of Polygonum genus has been discovered at Gol Pahadi Island of the Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra

- New plant species named Polygonum Chaturbhujanum has been discovered at Gol Pahadi island of PTR. It is an herb.
- Six plant species endemic to India have also been found in Pench.
- They are Aegineta indica, Boerhavia crispera, Habenaria gibsonii var foetida, Iphigenia pallida, Petalidium barlerioides and Barleria gibsonii.
- Pench Tiger Reserve is located in the southern reaches of the Satpura hills in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts in Madhya Pradesh and

continues in Nagpur district in Maharashtra as a separate Sanctuary.

Upgrade Horn of Africa cheetah status to 'endangered', experts appeal to IUCN

- A group of experts have appealed to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to reclassify the status of the Northeast African Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*) to 'endangered' from 'vulnerable'.
- Northeast African Cheetah:
- It is found in the Horn of Africa.
- It is also known as the Sudan cheetah
- This subspecies is more closely related to the Southern African cheetah than to Saharan cheetah populations.
- **Threat:** The subspecies' cubs are being heavily trafficked across the Red Sea to Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- IUCN Conservation status: Vulnerable

Bab el-Mandeb Strait

- Bab al-Mandab, also known as the "Gate of Tears," is a narrow strait connecting the Gulf of Aden to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, serving as a crucial link between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.
- It spans approximately 20 miles at its narrowest point, bordered by Djibouti to the west and Yemen to the east. This strait is a vital maritime route, facilitating the movement of vessels between Europe and Asia.

Alvaro, first cyclone of 2024, hits Madagascar

- Tropical Cyclone Alvaro made landfall in southwest Madagascar on January 1st 2024, becoming the first cyclone to impact the island nation in the ongoing 2023-2024 cyclone season for the southwest Indian Ocean region spanning late October to May.
- Cyclone Alvaro has hit provinces like Atsimo-Andrefana in southwestern Madagascar which face immense flooding challenges during heavy rains, hampering evacuation and drainage towards the sea.

African raptor population declines 88% in 40 years, many crossing IUCN threshold: Report

- Out of these, 29 species constituting 69% have seen drops over 3 generation lengths that qualify them

as globally threatened under IUCN criteria of endangerment.

- The analysis found 6 raptor species endemic or near-endemic to Africa already overshoot the minimum threshold of loss of habitat and numbers that signals heightened extinction risk.
- There is pressing need to reassess the status of over 10 declining yet currently least-concern species which might be more endangered than categorized.
- Habitat destruction, loss of nesting sites and prey base along with poisoning and hunting have accelerator declines, especially in West Africa's high poverty, corruption and misgovernance contexts.

In a significant discovery, the hog deer has been spotted for the first time at the Rajaji Tiger Reserve

- Rajaji Tiger Reserve is spread over three districts of Uttarakhand: Haridwar, Dehradun and Pauri Garhwal. It is situated along the hills and foothills of the Shiwalik ranges.

Hog deer:

- It is a solitary creature but sometimes spotted feeding in small groups in open fields when food there is plentiful. For the most part it is sedentary and does not migrate.
- This species exhibits sexual dimorphism. The females are slightly smaller than males and lack antlers.
- It has a native geographic range throughout India, including the Himalayan foothills and Southeast Asia.
- Humans have introduced free-ranging populations of this deer in Sri Lanka, Australia and the United States, including Texas, Florida, and Hawaii.
- It appears to prefer dense forests; however, they are often observed in clearings, grasslands and occasionally wet grasslands. This variation is usually associated with time of year and food distribution.
- Conservation status: IUCN: Endangered, Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Scheduled I

Jaggery, painting, shawl among 7 Odisha products to get GI tag

- **Kapdaganda Shawl:** It is woven and embroidered by the women of the Dongria Kondh tribe, a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in the Niyamgiri hills in Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi districts. The shawl reflects the rich tribal heritage of the Dongria Kondhs.

- **Lanjia Saurpa Painting:** It is one of the oldest tribal art forms, is also known as Idital. The artworks are famous for their beauty, aesthetics, ritualistic association and iconography. It belongs to the Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in the Rayagada district.
- **Koraput Kala Jeera Rice:** The black-coloured rice variety, also known as the 'Prince of Rice', is famous for its aroma, taste, texture and nutritional value. As the rice grains resemble cumin seeds, it is also called Kala Jeera. Its consumption helps in increasing haemoglobin levels and improves metabolism in the body.
- **Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal:** It is known for its prickly thorns on the stems and the whole plant. The green and round fruits contain more seeds as compared to other genotypes. The plants are resistant to major insects and can be grown with minimal pesticide.
- **Odisha Khajuri Guda (Jaggery):** It is a natural sweetener extracted from date palm trees and has its origin in the Gajapati district. Traditionally, the jaggery is prepared in a trapezoidal form called 'Patali Gur' and is organic by nature. It is dark brown and has a unique taste.
- **Dhenkanal Magji:** It is a type of sweet made from cheese from buffalo milk, with distinct characteristics in terms of appearance, taste, flavour, shape, and size.

Over 100 active permafrost structures identified in Jhelum basin, can cause catastrophic disasters in future: Study

- The Kashmir Himalayas are dotted with permafrost structures called 'rock glaciers', with significant ice volumes within, a new study mapped.
- More than 100 of these had ridges and bulges on their body, which indicates that the permafrost in them has started moving or melting. These are called 'active glacial rocks' and may contribute to natural disasters as the region warms.
- Research on permafrost, which are thick ground layers frozen for at least two years, is at an advanced stage in places like Greenland, Alaska and Siberia. But little is known about the rock glaciers of the Himalayas.
- In several mountainous areas of the world, rock glaciers are prominent due to climate change.
- Rock glaciers typically form in mountainous regions where there is a combination of permafrost, rock debris, and ice.
- One common scenario involves a pre-existing glacier that accumulates debris and rocks as it moves. Over time, if the glacier recedes or thaws,

the debris-covered ice can transform into a rock glacier.

- This process may have been sped up in the last five decades of the Earth's current interglacial period, when the warmer periods have become intense, the author noted. Field measurements confirmed that these rock glaciers occur in highly elevated regions with steep slopes.
- With the ongoing warming of the world, the melting permafrost makes these areas unstable, posing risks to nearby settlements and critical infrastructure. Such a situation is unfolding in Canada.
- Since there is still not much known about them in the Himalayan region compared to other part of the globe. This makes studies that map permafrost distribution in the region most important.
- Researchers studied satellite images and visited the Jhelum basin to identify rock glaciers. They used a statistical model based on topographic and climatic variables like temperature, solar radiation and slope aspect to build a 'Permafrost Zonation Map', pin-pointing around 207 rock glaciers spread over 50 square kilometres.
- These were then classified as 'active' or 'relict' to indicate the status of permafrost within them, identified by the appearance of the rock surfaces, among other things.
- According to the report the Kashmir valley is facing deglaciation, in general, however, it is clearly the south western parts, which are showing a very serious transition from glaciers to rock glaciers, which is considered the final stage of glaciation in any region.

India's lentil production set to touch all-time high: Govt.

- India's lentil production has tapered since 2017-18 when the country recorded its highest output of 1.62 million tonne. According to official data, in the 2022-23 crop year, the country's lentil production stood at 1.56 million tone.
- In India, it's mostly consumed as 'Dal' by removal of outer skin and separation of cotyledons.
- Lentil is also called as Masur and Malka (bold seeded). India's largest producer of lentil (masoor) during the 2023-24 crop years on account of higher acreage.
- It is widely cultivated throughout Europe, Asia, and North Africa.
- The Lentil growing states in India are Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, etc
- It is easy to cook and easily digestible with high biological value. Dry leaves, stems, empty and broken pods are used as valuable cattle feed.

- According to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the world top lentil growers in 2022 were Canada, India, Australia, Turkey and Russia.
- Despite being the second largest producer of lentil, India has so far been importing mainly from Australia, Canada, Russia, Singapore, and Turkey.
- During the current year, it also imported some quantities of lentil from UAE, USA, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

The first-ever IUCN assessment of the Himalayan Wolf is out

- The animal has been categorised as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List. The assessment was done on June 27, 2023.
- The Himalayan Wolf (*Canis lupus chanco*), a prominent lupine predator found across the Himalayas.
- It is also called as Tibetan wolves, which live at more than 4,000 metres altitudes are genetically distinct from grey wolves.
- Living at such high altitudes, these wolves have genetically adapted themselves to live in low oxygen (hypoxic) conditions.
- In China, the Himalayan wolf lives on the Tibetan Plateau in the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Tibet, and western Sichuan.
- In northern India, it occurs in the Union Territory of Ladakh and in the Lahaul and Spiti region in northeastern Himachal Pradesh.
- Conservation status: IUCN: Vulnerable, CITES: Appendix I, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I

New Asian Coral Snake Species Discovered In India

- Researchers from Mizoram University's zoology department have discovered a new species of coral snake in Mizoram.
- New coral snake species has been named *Sinomicrurus gorei* after British Indian doctor Gore.
- The reptile is locally known as 'Rulthihna' due to its striking resemblance to a Mizo traditional amber necklace called 'Thihna'.
- There are a total of nine species of *Sinomicrurus* coral snakes that have been discovered worldwide, and out of these, only one species called *Sinomicrurus maclellandi* is found in Northeast India. It has unique patterns and different scales, hemipenis, DNA, and skull.
- The new study also revealed that while *Sinomicrurus maclellandi* can lay 6-14 eggs at a time, *Sinomicrurus gorei* lays up to three eggs.

The state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) recently discovered two significant natural gas reserves in the Mahanadi basin block in the Bay of Bengal.

- The Maharatna company made the discoveries in the block MN-DWHP-2018/1, which it had won in 2019 in the third round of auction under the open acreage licensing policy.
- Mahanadi River Basin is the 8th largest river basin in the country, with a total catchment area of 139681.51 sq. km, which is nearly 4.28% of the total geographical area of the country.
- The catchment area of the basin extends over major parts of Chhattisgarh and Odisha and comparatively smaller portions of Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.
- The basin has a maximum length and width of 587 km and 400 km, respectively.
- It is bounded by the Central India hills on the north, by the Eastern Ghats on the south and east, and by the Maikala range on the west.
- Physiographically, the basin can be divided into four regions, namely, the northern plateau, the Eastern Ghats, the coastal plain, and the erosional plains of central table land.

Kachchhi Kharek, indigenous dates of Kutch, become Gujarat's 2nd fruit to get GI tag

- The presence of dates in Kachchh (Kutch) is believed to be around 400-500 years old. It is believed that date palm groves along the north-western border of India have developed from the seeds thrown by the settlers, who used to visit Middle-East countries for Haj.
- It is also probable that the Arab gardeners working in the palaces of the former rulers of Kachchh might also have contributed to the import of the date seeds and offshoots from Arab countries.
- Dates grown in Kutch are harvested at the khalal stage, the stage when fruits have matured, accumulated sucrose, and have turned red or yellow but are still crisp.
- The Kutch date season typically commences on June 15 each year, and the trees are known for their tolerance to salinity and adaptability to extreme drought and heat conditions.
- In other countries, they are allowed to ripen further till they become soft and dark brown or black in colour.
- Kachchh is the only place around the globe where fresh dates are economically cultivated, marketed, and consumed.

The Central government will extend basic facilities to the endangered Kolam tribe under the Jan Jati Adivasi Nyay Maha Abhiyan, with a focus on health and education.

- Kolam tribes, also known as Kolamboli, Kulme and Kolmi, occupy a major portion of Madhya Pradesh. The main concentration of this tribe is on the plains and in the mountainous region.
- These tribal groups are reckoned as scheduled tribes and apart from Madhya Pradesh they reside in some parts of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.
- They are listed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in the state of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.
- Around the twelfth century, the Kolam served as priests for the Gond, representing some of their important gods. It is generally accepted that the Kolam descended from the original population in the area. Since they now live near the Gond, they have adopted much of the Gond lifestyle.

Scientists recently stumbled upon a lost forest in the Panama Canal, dating back around 22 million years.

- Panama Canal is an artificial waterway that connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Pacific Ocean.
- The canal cuts across the Isthmus of Panama and is a conduit for maritime trade.
- It was cut through one of the narrowest saddles of the isthmus that joins North and South America.
- It is one of the two most strategic artificial waterways in the world, the other being the Suez Canal.
- It is approximately 80 kilometres long.
- It consists of a series of locks that raise and lower the water level to facilitate the passage of ships through the continental divide.

A Gangetic dolphin was rescued in Odisha. It may be an indicator of more freshwater dolphins in river.

- Common Name: Susu, Scientific Name: Platanista gangetica gangetica.
- Habitat: Ganges river dolphins once lived in the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.
- The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater.

- It is essentially blind and they hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds.
- It has a sturdy, yet flexible, body with large flippers and a low triangular dorsal fin.
- Conservation status: IUCN: Endangered, Wildlife (Protection) Act: Schedule-I, CITES: Appendix I

A recent faunal survey at the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve has added 11 new species records including three birds, four butterflies and four odonates to its database.

- Parambikulam Tiger Reserve is nestled in the picturesque and extensive Nelliampathy-Anamalai landscape of the Western Ghats Mountains in Palakkad and Thrissur districts of Kerala.
- It was declared a Tiger Reserve in 2009, with a total area of 643.66 sq. Km.
- The reserve supports diverse habitat types, viz., evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, dry deciduous, and shola forests.
- Other unique habitats like montane and marshy grasslands, locally known as 'vayals', are also found.
- The reserve houses teak, rosewood, sandalwood, and neem trees.
- It is credited with the world's first scientifically managed plantation of teak. It is home to the world's oldest and tallest teak tree named 'Kannimara', which is 450 years old and at a height of 40 metres.
- The common animals found are Leopard, Elephant, Gaur, Spotted Deer, Sambar, Barking Deer, Common Langur, Nilgiri Langur, Malabar giant squirrel, Sloth Bear, and Wild dog.
- The only South Indian wild goat, the Nilgiri Tahr is found on the high-altitude rocky hills and grasslands in the tiger reserve.

The Supreme Court recently directed the Centre to come clean on its plans to save the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard.

- Great Indian Bustard is a bustard found on the Indian subcontinent.
- Scientific Name: Ardeotis nigriceps
- The species has a current viable population of 100-150 individuals in India and mainly survives in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan that holds about 100 individuals.
- It is a large bird with a horizontal body and long, bare legs, giving it an ostrich-like appearance.

- They breed mostly during the monsoon season, when females lay a single egg on open ground.
- These birds are opportunistic eaters. Their diet ranges widely depending on the seasonal availability of food. They feed on grass seeds, insects like grasshoppers and beetles, and sometimes even small rodents and reptiles.
- Conservation Status: IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1, CITES: Appendix 1

Scientists have mapped the largest known deep-sea coral reef off the US Atlantic coast, stretching about 310 miles from Florida to South Carolina.

- Unlike tropical coral reefs, deep-sea coral must filter food particles from the water for energy.
- The newly discovered reef, which provides habitat for various marine species, has been called “breathtaking in scale” and covers nearly three times the size of Yellowstone National Park.
- A coral reef is a complex underwater ecosystem made up of colonies of coral polyps held together by calcium carbonate. Coral reefs are often called the “rainforests of the sea” and support about 25% of all known marine species
- Deep-sea corals are also called cold-water corals.
- They don’t rely on photosynthesis because they’re living in the dark.
- Instead, they use the tentacles on their polyps to filter food out of the surrounding waters.

The Mpemba effect continues to captivate scientists with its complex interplay of physical mechanisms.

- Mpemba effect is named after Tanzanian student Erasto Mpemba, who brought attention to this counterintuitive phenomenon in 1969, making for curious observations.
- The effect is that hot water can freeze faster than cold water in similar conditions.
- While Aristotle, Francis Bacon, and René Descartes had noticed the effect centuries earlier, the Mpemba effect caught scientists’ attention only more recently.
- Researchers have conducted numerous experiments to determine the causes of this confusing phenomenon, but a consensus conclusion remains wanting.
- One cause, they have posited, is microbubbles left suspended in water that has been heated by boiling.
- These cavities promote convection and transfer heat faster as the water cools.

- Evaporation: as warmer water evaporates more, it also takes away some heat (evaporation is inherently endothermic, which is how sweat cools your skin). Both convection and accelerated heat transfer are enhanced in warmer water because such water is less dense.
- Yet another factor could be the presence of frost in cold water. Frost is an insulator and could slow the loss of heat.
- Scientists have also considered whether compounds in water like calcium carbonate could be precipitated by boiling, and then dissolve, thus increasing the water’s freezing point.

The Lake Retba’s waters are virtually devoid of life and are on the verge of disappearing due to pollution and mining.

- Lake Retba is also known as Lac Rose the Pink Lake.
- It is located north of the Cap Vert peninsula of Senegal, northeast of Dakar
- Its fresh water comes from the seasonal water table in the dunes, which are higher than the lake. Thus, the sea provides most of the lake’s water and all of its salt.
- The Pink Lake is one of the main tourist destinations in the Dakar region, primarily because of the pink colour of its waters. The pink coloration is due to the proliferation of halophilic green algae (living in a salty environment), *Dunaliella salina*, which contain red pigments. The algae is associated with halophilic bacteria of the genus *Halobacterium*.

More than 300 vultures were recorded in the recently completed synchronous vulture survey in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)

- Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) is located in the Nilgiri Mountains of the Western Ghats.
- It encompasses parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka. It was the first biosphere reserve in India, established in 1986.
- The total area of the reserve is 5,520 sq. km. It is the largest protected forest area in India.
- The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wynad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park, and Silent Valley are the protected areas present within this reserve.
- It harbours a wide spectrum of ecosystem types, such as tropical evergreen forests, Montane sholas and grasslands, semi-evergreen forests, moist

deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests, and thorn forests.

- It is India's first biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Vice President to Inaugurate Mega North India StartUp Expo

- The Startup Expo under the theme, "Emerging Startup Trend in North India", is being organized jointly by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), DBT, GoI and CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu, wherein a total of 25 Startup from North India, i.e. from Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Delhi would be showcasing their innovations and products.
- The event is organized with the specific objective to create a convergence point for budding entrepreneurs and seasoned mentors, to foster innovation, collaboration, and growth.
- The event encapsulates the spirit of pushing boundaries, embracing change, creating solutions and ushering new opportunities that address real-world challenges and will witness various innovations by 25 selected startup, in varied sectors which includes, agriculture, industrial biotechnology, medical & diagnostic devices, food technology, nutraceuticals, aroma and space, etc.
- During the expo, StartUps will exhibit their products, prototypes, and services, providing attendees with hands-on experiences of cutting-edge technologies. The event will also offer ample networking time, allowing participants to connect with potential co-founders, investors, mentors, collaborators and industry people.
- This event will also be valuable for the local youth, college and school students, budding entrepreneurs, young farmers, and women of the Jammu region to be acquainted with the government startup schemes, funding opportunities and various other initiatives that are meant to strengthen the youth. It will also encourage the youth to start a career as a StartUp and facilitate the country to become self-reliant.

Three New-to-Science Frogs Discovered in Arunachal Pradesh

- Scientists have reported three new frog species belonging to new genera from Arunachal Pradesh's Namdapha-Kamlang protected area network along the Myanmar border.
- The new frog species discovered are:

- ✓ *Gracixalus patkaiensis* - A translucent green tree frog with jelly-like appearance and insect-like call
- ✓ *Alcalus fontinalis* - A tiny brown frog inhabiting fast-flowing hill streams with unique trickling vocalization
- ✓ *Nidirana noadihing* - A marsh-dwelling "music frog" named after the Noa-Dihing river

CSIR-NPL Marks its 78th Foundation Day

- CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (CSIR-NPL) commemorated its 78th Foundation Day with a grand celebration held on Thursday, January 4th, 2024.
- The event was graced by esteemed dignitaries and luminaries from the scientific community, witnessed a series of impactful sessions and significant announcements.
- The National Physical Laboratory is one of the earliest national laboratories set up under the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the foundation stone of which was laid on the 4th January 1947.

India Joins Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO)

- India has formally signed up for the Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO) - an ambitious multinational initiative to build the world's largest radio telescope spanning over a square kilometer.
- The SKAO is not one instrument but a vast collection of thousands of telescope antennas at sites in South Africa and Australia. These will interconnect as a single giant telescope array.
- It will enable astronomers to probe celestial phenomena out to extreme distances, advancing cosmic understanding.

New Space India Limited (NSIL) announced it has contracted American firm SpaceX to launch an Indian communication satellite aboard the Falcon 9 rocket

- NSIL is the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).



- This will be the first time an Indian government satellite launches on SpaceX's workhorse Falcon 9 launcher. The mission is scheduled in the second quarter of 2024.

GSAT-20

- The satellite that will launch on Falcon 9 is GSAT-20. It was recently renamed as GSAT-N2. Weighing 4.7 tons, it is ISRO's latest high-capacity communication satellite. GSAT-20 is also NSIL's second fully funded satellite mission.
- GSAT-20 will operate in the Ka-band spectrum and provide high-throughput satellite capacity primarily for broadband connectivity and cellular backhaul services. Its coverage zone spans the entire Indian mainland and the island chains of Andaman-Nicobar and Lakshadweep.

Indigenous Equipment Developed for Mechanical Recycling of Waste Thermoplastic Polymers to Composites

- Indigenous equipment called single screw extruder developed for mechanical recycling through melt-mixing of waste thermoplastic polymers and inorganic particulate fillers can help manufacture and characterize polymer composites that can be molded to the required shape for making paver blocks, tiles, and bricks.
- At present, commercially available melt-mixing equipment are not designed for handling waste thermoplastic polymers that are often adhered by contaminants, as the barrel and screw system are not robust enough.
- IIT Bombay has developed an instrument named GoldN (pronounced as Golden) for melt-mixing of waste thermoplastic polymers and inorganic particulate fillers to manufacture polymer composites.
- It can carry out melt mixing as a continuous process, particularly in laboratory conditions, to replicate the real-life conditions as compared to other conventionally available instruments. The researchers at the institute considered some key parameters such as compression ratio and clearance depth to facilitate efficient mixing of waste polymers and fillers.
- The above technology, developed with the support of Department of Science and Technology (DST) through Waste Management Technologies, is now ready for commercialization for carrying out melt-mixing operations in a laboratory environment. It can bring down the cost of this instrument to INR 5 lakhs (by 6-8 times at least) by avoiding the complex design and operating tools and including the indigenous fabrication that are required.

- The researchers have also developed a TGeosA for obtaining thermogravimetric analyses of the polymer composites obtained from the melt mixing instrument. The setup facilitates a sample size as high as 200 g that can incorporate the heterogeneity aspect of the materials being tested.

Scientists have discovered fossils belonging to a previously unknown group of ancient aquatic predators near Greenland

- Named "Timorebestia" or "terror beasts", these large worm-like creatures may have been apex predators more than 518 million years.
- The Timorebestia fossils were found at the renowned Early Cambrian fossil site of Sirius Passet in North Greenland. They reveal 30 cm long creatures with fins, antennae-bearing distinct heads, and formidable jaw structures suited for hunting.
- Sirius Passet is a fossil-rich Cambrian site located in North Greenland. It was discovered in 1984 and named after a Greenland sledge patrol operating in the region.
- Researchers say Timorebestia were giants in the Early Cambrian era and likely near the top of the complex marine food chains back then. Their huge size compared to tiny modern arrow worms highlights the evolutionary significance.

High-frequency waves detected in the Martian Upper Atmosphere could help understand plasma processes over Mars

- Scientists have detected existence of high-frequency plasma waves in the Martian Upper Atmosphere with novel narrowband and broadband features that can help to understand plasma processes in the Martian plasma environment.
- Various plasma waves are often observed in the Earth's magnetosphere, a magnetic field cavity around the Earth. In general, plasma waves are identified as the short-time scale fluctuations in the in the electric and magnetic field observations.
- These plasma waves play an important role in the energization and transport of the charged particles in the Earth's magnetosphere.
- Some of the plasma waves like electromagnetic ion cyclotron waves act as a cleaning agent for the Earth's radiation belt, which is hazardous to our satellites.

- Knowing this scenario, researchers are curious to understand the existence of various plasma waves in the vicinity of unmagnetized planets like Mars.
- The planet Mars do not have any intrinsic magnetic field therefore the high-speed solar wind coming from the Sun interacts directly with the Mars atmosphere, like an obstacle in the flow.
- The researchers at Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), an autonomous institute of Department of Science and Technology have examined the existence of high-frequency plasma waves in the Martian plasma environment by making use of the high-resolution electric field data from the Mars Atmosphere and Volatile Evolution Mission (MAVEN) spacecraft of NASA. These waves could be either electron oscillations that propagate parallel to the background magnetic field (Langmuir waves) or electron oscillations that propagate perpendicular to the background magnetic field (upper-hybrid type waves) in the magnetosheath region of the Mars.

NASA Tests Rotating Detonation Rocket Engine for Future Mars Missions

- NASA has successfully tested a Rotating Detonation Rocket Engine (RDRE) that can potentially halve travel time to Mars. The engine detonates fuel in explosive bursts instead of continuous combustion to achieve more powerful and efficient thrust.
- In recent tests by NASA, the RDRE generated 25,810 newtons of thrust for nearly 4 minutes. Earlier in 2022, it had achieved half as much thrust for 1 minute -already a record. This demonstrates progress toward a fully reusable 44 kilonewton engine that can enable diverse space missions.

India International Science Festival (IISF) 2023 promo film and brochure released during Curtain Raiser Event at THSTI, Faridabad

- A curtain raiser event of India International Science Festival (IISF) 2023 was held in Faridabad, Haryana .
- This edition of IISF is being organised by the Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Department of Space, Department of Atomic Energy, Vijnana Bharti and Government of Haryana. IISF-2023 will be hosted in the DBT Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI) - Regional Centre for

Biotechnology (RCB) campus, NCR Biotech Science Cluster, Faridabad from 17 to 20 January 2024.

- This festival aims to celebrate and highlight a wide range of achievements in the field of science, technology and innovations in India. The theme of IISF 2023 is "Science and Technology Public Outreach in Amrit Kaal".

Indian delegation visits Hawaii to discuss progress of TMT

- An Indian delegation led by Secretary Department of Science and Technology (DST) Professor Abhay Karandikar visited Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA and discussed challenges in the progress of Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project and ways to overcome them.
- Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) is a 30-meter diameter primary mirror optical and infrared telescope being established at Mauna Kea, Hawaii, USA. India is a Founder-Member Partner in this project which aims to open new windows to the universe through optical and infrared astronomy. Indian participation in this project was approved by Union Cabinet in 2014.
- A five-member Indian Delegation led by Prof. Abhay Karandikar met with Prof. Henry Yang, Chairman, Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) International Observatory (TIO) Board, Prof. Robert Kirshner, Executive Director, TIO and TMT Project Managers at Hawaii on 9th January 2024.

India's First National Highway Steel Slag Road section on NH- 66 Mumbai-Goa National Highway inaugurated

- Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member (S&T), NITI AAYOG inaugurated India's First National Highway Steel Slag Road section on NH- 66 Mumbai-Goa National Highway.
- JSW Steel, under the CSIR-CRRI technological guidance, has constructed the 1 km long four lane steel slag road section on Indapur-Panvel Section of NH-66 Mumbai-Goa.
- For construction of this road around 80,000 tons of CONARC Steel slag were converted as processed steel slag aggregates at JSW Steel Dolvi, Raigad plant. The processed steel slag aggregates are superior to natural aggregates in terms of various mechanical properties and utilized for steel slag road construction in all layers of the road in place of natural aggregates.
- The road has bituminous and cement concrete steel slag road section at same location in RHS and LHS carriageways. On this road section, the

processed steel slag aggregates and slag cement have been utilized for construction of the cement concrete road in all layers.

Peregrine Mission-1 Faces Anomaly

- The Peregrine Mission-1 lander marks the first US spacecraft to touch down on the lunar surface since Apollo 17 astronauts departed the moon in 1972. The small lander is owned and operated by startup Astrobotic, which was awarded a \$108 million contract by NASA to deliver scientific payloads to the moon.
- Lifting off at 7:18am UK time aboard the Vulcan Centaur rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida, the mission heralds a new age of commercial cargo transport to the moon. With NASA facing budget constraints, buying third party lunar delivery services at a fraction of the cost of launching its own missions allows the agency to advance its lunar exploration goals on the cheap.
- Touchdown of the Astrobotic lander is scheduled for February 23rd. The craft will spend nearly two weeks circumnavigating the moon before attempting the precise powered descent to target a landing site on the volcanic plain Lacus Mortis.
- Besides NASA's five research instruments on board, the lander carries a special assortment of symbolic human remains specially chosen to inspire interest in renewed lunar exploration.

State-of-art AI supported Telemedicine Mobile Clinic launched for remote hilly areas in Udhampur

- Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh launched state-of-the-art, Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported Telemedicine Mobile Clinic "Aarogya-Doctors on Wheels" for remote hilly areas of Ramnagar region in Udhampur district of J&K.
- The latest upgraded Tele Clinic is Artificial Intelligence-driven to provide healthcare facilities in far flung areas of the region, where such facilities are either not available or inadequately available.
- "Aarogya" 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.
- Afterwards the patient is connected to one of the leading super specialists in the country as this telemedicine hospital has been tied up with some of the leading hospitals in the country. Later, the patient's entire body profile and investigations are done. Within about 40 to 50 minutes, a patient is

provided with the prescription. Dr Singh said the patient is provided free-of-cost treatment.

2nd Indo-French Joint Committee of Science and Technology (JCST), paves way for renewed scientific co-operation

- The scientific collaboration seamlessly aligns with the broader framework of the Indian and French strategic partnership, commemorated by Prime Minister Modi's visit to France on Bastille Day in July 2023, marking 25 years of collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Indo-French roadmap "Horizon 2047", signed on Bastille Day in Paris, underscores the commitment to bilateral scientific cooperation. The JCST, guided by the objectives of bilateral scientific cooperation, aims to identify thematic priorities, allocate resources, and enhance tools for achieving mutual goals.
- Both parties have agreed to prioritize scientific collaboration in the thematic fields of Health, Decarbonized Hydrogen, Marine Sciences, and Applied Mathematics, with dedicated calls for projects to be announced soon.
- Both parties also pointed out the key role of mobility and networking in preparing future cutting-edge scientific cooperation. They agreed to create ambitious new programs supporting the joint research, mobility of scientists, especially focusing on new cooperation and young researchers, while maintaining the existing programs devoted to women scientists, notably through CEFIPRA.

Bamboo Composites

- The industrial product, bamboo composites, has been developed using environment friendly technique by natural and versatile resource bamboo.
- Bamboo has been declared as grass and it proliferates rapidly with no stringent rules and regulations imposed for its growing, cultivation, propagation and cutting. Within 3-4 years, the bamboo gets matured can be utilised for developing into bamboo composite, unlike teak wood, which requires 30-40 years to grow. Bamboo is also an excellent absorber of CO2 and releases oxygen in large amount (approximately 35%) which helps to cure global warming.
- The bamboo composite product resembles teak wood with better durability & dimensional stability, high strength, density, mechanical strength, fire resistance, moisture resistance, and natural & aesthetic appearance.

- The technology of manufacturing bamboo composites, developed by CSIR-AMPRI, has sequential steps like cutting of bamboo poles to desired sizes, splitting to strips, removal of knots, chemical treatment for protection against microbial/natural degradation, its conversion to fibrous form without damaging the natural strength of bamboo fibers, coating of adequate pre-polymer, which is followed by compaction under appropriate heat and pressure to obtain a composite sample of the desired shape.
- The final shape may be a moulded article, plain sheet, thick boards, beams, etc. These shapes can be further machined for the final finished product.

FluxJet: Canada Unveils 621 mph Magnetically-Levitating Train Concept

- Canada announced development plans for a magnetically-levitating train capable of exceeding airliner speeds to connect Edmonton and Calgary.
- Billed as a hybrid between an aircraft and train, the electric FluxJet concept from Canadian startup TransPod aims to shuttle passengers at over 1,000 km/h while hovering along a specially designed track.
- The FluxJet derives its astonishing velocity from a combination of magnetic levitation and electromagnetic propulsion.
- Rather than rolling along steel wheels like a conventional train, the aerodynamic pod will float a short distance above the guideway using the same magnetic repulsion force that allows high-speed Maglev trains to trace their tracks without friction.
- Linear electric motors distributed along the route will then accelerate the vehicles using magnetic fields, avoiding the need for massive onboard engines and fuel. Sophisticated computer control maintains precise gaps between passing pods.
- By virtually eliminating friction while offering traction over the entire route length, this revolutionary concept can reach aviation-like speeds using a fraction of the energy.

Call for Pre-proposals for setting T-Hubs launched under National Quantum Mission

- The launch of the pre-proposal is an important step in the National Quantum Mission approved by the Cabinet last year. With a brainstorming session with researchers to identify expertise, strengths and opportunities scheduled soon, the National Quantum Mission is expected to see substantial progress in the next few months.

- The NQM will also work in collaboration with industry and startups to translate research to deployable technologies.
- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will provide necessary resources for success of submission and to facilitate researchers so that India evolves to a competitive position at the international level.
- The Union Cabinet approved the National Quantum Mission (NQM) on 19th April 2023 being implemented by DST with a total outlay of Rs.6003.65 Crore for a period of eight years.
- The Mission aims to seed, nurture and scale up scientific and industrial R&D and create a vibrant & innovative ecosystem in Quantum Technology (QT). This will accelerate QT led economic growth, nurture the ecosystem in the country and make India one of the leading nations in the development of Quantum Technologies & Applications (QTA).

A new alloy developed can act as alternative magnetic refrigerant for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions

- Researchers have found a new alloy that can act as an effective magnetic refrigerant that can be an alternative cooling agent for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and meet the global demand for higher energy efficiency for tackling global warming.
- Magnetic refrigeration offers an energy-efficient and environment-friendly cooling technology as an alternative to the vapor-cycle refrigeration technology in use today. Hence efforts are on to fabricate magnetic refrigerators for household, industrial, and technological applications.
- Magnetic cooling effect (MCE) is defined as the reversible temperature change of a magnetic material when it is subjected to an external applied magnetic field.
- In the magnetic refrigeration cycle, a magnetic field is applied on the magnetic material under an adiabatic process (no exchange of heat with the surrounding).
- Initially randomly oriented magnetic moments get aligned along the external magnetic field, resulting in the heating of the magnetic material. This heat is transferred from the material to the ambience.
- When the magnetic field is removed during adiabatic demagnetization, the magnetic moments of the material become randomized, resulting in a decrease in temperature below the ambient temperature. This process causes the material to

absorb heat from the surrounding heat-transfer medium.

India's First X-ray Polarimetry Satellite Captures Supernova Remnant

- The XSPECT instrument aboard India's pioneering XPoSat space observatory has successfully acquired its first images of the Cassiopeia A supernova remnant. The achievement comes within days of the mission's January 1 launch.

XPoSat

- XPoSat is India's maiden satellite dedicated to studying polarized and spectroscopic emissions in cosmic X-ray sources. Weighing less than 20 kgs, this compact spacecraft hosts two aligned scientific payloads in low Earth orbit - POLIX and XSPECT. Together, these instruments enable novel polarization and spectroscopic analyses of bright cosmic X-ray sources down to remarkable precision.

XSPECT

- The XSPECT instrument aboard XPoSat facilitates both spectral and timing studies of soft X-ray emissions from exotic celestial objects.
- It harnesses the extended monitoring opportunities offered by the polarimetry-focused POLIX payload to examine long-term behavior patterns.
- Specifically, XSPECT can track gradual changes in spectral line intensities and profiles as well as fluctuations in broadband emissions over 0.8-15 keV energies.

CSIR's Republic Day Tableau highlights the Purple Revolution through Lavender Cultivation in Jammu & Kashmir

- The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research's Republic Day Tableau highlighted the unleashing of a Purple Revolution ushered through Lavender cultivation in Jammu & Kashmir. CSIR's scientific

interventions have led to the phenomenal growth of lavender cultivation and development of lavender products taking lavender from lab-to-market and creating several agri-start-ups in J&K.

- The Tableau also showcased India's first women friendly, compact, Electric Tractor developed by CSIR. The visually enchanting Tableau aligns with the Viksit Bharat theme of the Republic Day Parade 2024.
- CSIR developed an elite variety of lavender suitable for cultivation in temperate regions of J&K and provided free saplings and end-to-end agro-technologies to farmers and also installed distillation units for essential oil extraction in several regions of J&K. The success of Lavender cultivation in J&K earned it the sobriquet, 'Purple Revolution'.
- Under agro-mechanical technology, the indigenously developed India's first women-friendly compact electric tractor of CSIR, PRIMA ET11, was showcased. Highlighting agro-technical developments, the distillation unit for extracting essential oil from lavender flowers was also shown.

Rare All-White Gentoo Penguin Spotted in Antarctica

- A photographer has captured images of an extremely rare all-white Gentoo penguin in Chile's Antarctic territory. The leucistic female penguin was filmed at the Gabriel Gonzalez Videla Base amongst a large colony of typically black-and-white Gentoo penguins.
- The gentoo penguin, with the scientific name *Pygoscelis papua*, belongs to the *Pygoscelis* genus of penguins. Its closest genetic relatives are the Adélie and chinstrap penguins within the same genus.
- The Gentoo penguin species is classified as Near Threatened presently due to declining populations on sub-Antarctic islands. Protection of breeding habitat is crucial for conservation.



DEFENCE & SECURITY

DRDO celebrates 66th Foundation Day

- DRDO was celebrated the 66th Foundation Day of its establishment. Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr Samir V Kamat DRDO paid floral tributes to the Missile Man of India and former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. Floral tributes were also paid to

- Dr VS Arunachalam, Former DRDO Chief, who passed away in August 2023.
- The Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) has also been accorded this year for induction of several DRDO developed systems worth more than 1 lakh 42 thousand crores.
- Chairman DRDO highlighted some other success stories in his speech. He stated that it was a matter

- of great pride for all of us when Hon'ble Prime Minister flew in LCA Trainer on Nov 25, 2023.
- He mentioned that on the National Technology Day on 11 May 2023, Hon'ble Prime Minister dedicated the Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) plant at IREL Vizag to the Nation.
 - This plant was set-up using DRDO Technology. He said that indigenously Designed and Developed Heavy Weight Torpedo (HWT) 'Varunastra' was successfully test fired with a live warhead against an undersea target on 05th Jun 2023 by the Indian Navy. This was the first of its kind demonstration in the country or may be even in the world.
 - He also mentioned about firing of Astra Mk1 air to air missile from Tejas for the first time, Landing of LCA Navy on Indigenous Aircraft Carrier INS Vikrant II, Deployment of DRDO's D4 system at Rashtrapati Bhawan, G-20 Summit, Republic Day Parade and Beating Retreat Ceremony.
 - He further stated that DRDO's oceanographic research vessel 'INS Sagardhwani' embarked on Sagar Maitri Mission-4 to Oman to establish long-term scientific partnerships with Indian Ocean Rim countries in 'Ocean Research & Development'.
 - He also highlighted about the Crew Escape System (CES) for Gaganyaan Programme, which was tested successfully.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurates first all-girls Sainik School at Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh

- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurated Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School at Vrindavan in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh on January 01, 2024.
- The first all-girls Sainik School, with a strength of approx. 870 students, has been inaugurated under the initiative of establishing 100 new Sainik Schools in partnership mode with NGOs/Private/State Government Schools in all State/Union Territories, of which 42 have been set up.
- These are in addition to the existing 33 Sainik Schools already functioning under the erstwhile pattern.

India-UAE Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone' commences in Rajasthan

- The UAE Land Forces contingent comprising 45 personnel arrived in India to participate in the 1st edition of the India - UAE Joint Military Exercise 'DESERT CYCLONE'.

- The Exercise was scheduled to be conducted in Mahajan, Rajasthan from 2nd to 15th January 2024. The UAE contingent is being represented by troops from the Zayed First Brigade.
- The Indian Army contingent comprising 45 personnel is being represented mainly by a Battalion from the Mechanised Infantry Regiment.
- The aim of the Exercise is to enhance interoperability in Sub-conventional Operations including Fighting in Built-Up Area (FIBUA) in desert/ semi desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peace Keeping Operations.
- The Exercise will enhance cooperation and interoperability between both the sides during Peace Keeping Operations.
- Drills planned to be rehearsed during Exercise 'DESERT CYCLONE' include Establishment of a Joint Surveillance Centre, Cordon and Search Operation, Domination of Built-Up Area and Heliborne Operations.
- The Exercise will also foster collaborative partnership and help in sharing best practices between the two sides.
- Exercise 'DESERT CYCLONE' signifies further strengthening of bonds of friendship and trust between India and the UAE.
- The Exercise aims to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.

Indian Naval Platforms remain Mission Deployed in North/ Central Arabian Sea

- Indian Navy continues to monitor maritime security situation in North/ Central Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden. Indian Naval ships and aircraft remain mission deployed for maintaining enhanced surveillance and undertaking maritime security operations.
- Indian Naval Task Groups deployed in the area have investigated large number of fishing vessel and boarded vessels of interest.
- Indian Naval maritime Patrol Aircraft and RPAs are undertaking persistence surveillance over the area.
- IMAC and IFC IOR have been closely monitoring white shipping, especially the Indian Flagged Merchant Vessels plying in the area. Indian Navy is also coordinating with Coast Guard for maintaining enhanced surveillance within the EEZ.
- Indian Navy is closely monitoring overall situation in coordination with national maritime agencies

and remains committed towards ensuring safety of merchant shipping and seafarers in the region.

Ministry of Defence signs contracts worth Rs 802 Crores for procurement of military equipment

- Ministry of Defence inked two contracts for procurement of Qty-697 Bogie Open Military (BOM) Wagons at a cost of 473 Cr with M/s Jupiter Wagons Limited and procurement of Qty-56 Mechanical Minefield Marking Equipment (MMME) Mark II at a cost of 329 Cr with M/s BEML Ltd, under Buy (Indian-IDDMM) category on January 4, 2024 in New Delhi. The BOM Wagons and MMME will be produced with equipment and sub-system sourced from indigenous manufacturers, giving a boost to the indigenous manufacturing and participation of the private sector in defence production, realizing the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- Bogie Open Military (BOM) wagons, designed by Research Design and Standard Organization (RDSO) are specialist wagons used by the Indian Army for mobilization of the Army units.
- BOM wagons are used to transport light vehicles, Artillery Guns, BMPs, Engineering Equipment etc. from their peacetime locations to operational areas.
- This Critical Rolling Stock will ensure speedy and simultaneous induction of units and equipment into operational areas during any conflict situation besides, facilitating their peacetime movement for Military exercise and movement of units from one station to another.
- Marking of all minefields is a mandatory requirement as per amended Protocol-II on Convention in certain Conventional Weapons to which India is a signatory.
- MMME has been designed to operate cross country with complete load of stores and carry out marking of minefields with minimal time and manpower employment.
- The equipment is based on an in-service High Mobility Vehicle having advanced mechanical and electrical systems which will reduce the timings for minefield marking during operations and will enhance the operational capability of Indian Army.

Indian Navy's swift response to the Hijacking attempt of MV Lila Norfolk in the North Arabian Sea

- Indian Navy swiftly responded to the hijacking incident onboard Liberian flagged Bulk Carrier MV Lila Norfolk deploying considerable strength

of assets (both ships and aircraft) and an aggressive intent to counter attack by pirates.

- INS Chennai guided missile destroyer arrived at the scene of action by 1515h. Continuous aerial reconnaissance of MV Lila Norfolk was undertaken by MQ9B (Sea Guardian), P8I and integral helicopters.
- Subsequently, the Indian Navy Marine Commandos boarded MV Lila Norfolk and undertook thorough sanitisation of the upper decks, machinery compartments and living spaces. The team did not find any pirates onboard.
- Forceful warnings by the Indian Naval aircraft to the vessel and likely interception by IN warship, probably compelled the pirates to escape during the night hours.
- All 21 crew of MV Lila Norfolk have been rescued and are safe. Indian Naval forces are investigating the suspected vessels in the area. Presently, the crew of MV is engaged in restoring propulsion, power supply and steering gear. Thereafter, MV Lila Norfolk will recommence her passage to her destination under escort of the Indian Naval Warship.

IDEX- DIO to participated in the Tenth Edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024

- Innovations for Defence Excellence- Defence Innovation Organization (iDEX-DIO) was participated in the tenth edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 from 10 to 12 January 2024 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. An iDEX Pavilion was set up based on the theme of the Summit 'Gateway to the Future', wherein the iDEX innovators will be exhibiting their futuristic technologies in the field of Unmanned Solutions, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Advance Material, etc.

About iDEX

- iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence), the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Defence, Govt of India launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2018.
- The objective of the scheme is to cultivate an innovation ecosystem in the Defence and Aerospace sector by collaborating with startups, innovators, MSMEs, incubators, and academia. iDEX offers grants and support for R&D with significant potential for future adoption in Indian defence and aerospace.
- It is currently engaged with around 400+ Startups and MSMEs, till now procurement of 31 items worth over Rs 2000 Cr. has been cleared. Recognized as a game-changer in the defence

ecosystem, iDEX has received the PM Award for Innovation in the defence sector.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh holds talks with UK Defence Minister Mr Grant Shapps in London; Emphasis on enhancing defence industrial cooperation

- The bilateral defence meeting was followed by the signing of two agreements between India and UK - an MoU on conduct of bilateral international cadet exchange programme, and a Letter of Arrangement between Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) on defence collaboration in research and development. These documents will provide impetus to the people-to-people exchanges particularly among the youth, and larger area of defence research collaboration between the two countries.
- After arriving in London late on 8th January, the Raksha Mantri began his London engagements by paying floral tributes to Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi at his statue at Tavistock Square earlier today.
- Mahatma Gandhi had studied law at the nearby University College London from 1888 to 1891. 9th January is a symbolic date from the perspective of Mahatma Gandhi's return from South Africa to Mumbai in 1915, which is commemorated in the form of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in India, marking the rich contribution of the Overseas Indian community towards the development of the country.

INS Kabra arrives at Colombo, Sri Lanka

- Indian Navy's Fast Attack Craft INS Kabra arrived at Colombo, Sri Lanka on 08 Jan 24. The ship was accorded a warm welcome by the Sri Lanka Navy. During the port call, Commanding Officer, INS Kabra called on Commander, Western Naval Area, Rear Admiral TSK Perera.
- In a presentation ceremony, essential spares and stores meant for the Sri Lanka Navy and Air Force were handed over by the ship. The visit further strengthens the bilateral cooperation and camaraderie between the two Navies in keeping with the Prime Minister's vision of SAGAR.

Indian Air Force AN-32(K-2743)

- An Indian Air Force An-32 aircraft (registration K-2743), had gone missing over the Bay of Bengal on

22 July 2016 during an op mission. 29 Personnel were on board this flight. Large scale Search and Rescue operations by aircraft and ships could not locate any missing personnel or the aircraft debris.

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology which functions under the aegis of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, had recently deployed an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) with deep sea exploration capability at the last known location of the missing An-32.
- This search was conducted at a depth of 3400 m using multiple payloads, including a multi-beam SONAR (Sound Navigation and Ranging), synthetic aperture SONAR and high resolution photography.
- Analysis of search images had indicated the presence of debris of a crashed aircraft on the sea bed approximately, 140 nautical miles (approx. 310 Km) from the Chennai coast.
- The search images were scrutinised and found to be conforming with an An-32 aircraft. This discovery at the probable crash site, with no other recorded history of any other missing aircraft report in the same area, points to the debris as possibly belonging to the crashed IAF An-32 (K-2743).

DRDO conducts successful flight-test of New Generation AKASH missile off Odisha coast

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted a successful flight-test of the New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG) missile from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha at 1030 hrs on January 12, 2024.
- The flight-test was conducted against a high-speed unmanned aerial target at very low altitude. During the flight-test, the target was successfully intercepted by the weapon system and destroyed.
- It has validated the functioning of the complete weapon system consisting of the missile with indigenously developed Radio Frequency Seeker, Launcher, Multi-Function Radar and Command, Control & Communication system.
- The system performance was also validated through the data captured by a number of Radars, Telemetry and Electro Optical Tracking System deployed by ITR, Chandipur.
- The flight-test was witnessed by senior officials from DRDO, Indian Air Force (IAF), Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). The AKASH-NG system is a state-of-the-art missile system capable of intercepting

high speed, agile aerial threats. The successful flight test has paved the way for User trials.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh to lead 8th Armed Forces Veterans' Day celebrations with a rally at Air Force Station, Kanpur

- This year, the event is being celebrated by the three Services at 10 locations across the country, namely Srinagar, Pathankot, Delhi, Kanpur, Alwar, Jodhpur, Guwahati, Mumbai, Secunderabad and Kochi.
- The event at Secunderabad was presided over by Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt
- The Armed Forces Veterans' Day is celebrated on 14th January every year as it was on this day in 1953 that the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army Field Marshal KM Cariappa, who led the forces to victory in the 1947 war, formally retired from the Service. The day was first celebrated in 2016 and it is commemorated every year since by hosting such interactive events in the honour of the Ex-Servicemen.

Launch of 25T Bollard Pull Tug, Bhishm at M/S Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd, Kolkata

- 25T Bollard Pull (BP) Tug, Bhishm was launched by Cmde S Sreekumar, Warship Production Superintendent (Kolkata) on 14 Jan 24 at M/s Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd (M/s TRSL), Kolkata. This Tug is a proud flag bearer of "Make in India" initiative of Govt of India.
- Contract for construction and delivery of six 25T BP Tugs was concluded with M/s TRSL, Kolkata in consonance with "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" initiative of the Government of India.
- 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 manoeuvring 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.

Maiden Indian Navy - Royal Thai Navy Bilateral Exercise and 36th Edition of Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol

- The maiden Bilateral Maritime Exercise between the Indian Navy (IN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) was conducted from 20 to 23 December 2023.
- Indigenously built Indian Naval ships Kulish and IN LCU 56 participated in the inaugural edition of the exercise.
- The RTN side was represented by His Thai Majesty's Ship (HTMS) Prachuap Khiri Khan.
- The 36th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) was also conducted along with the maiden bilateral exercise. Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both navies participated in the Sea Phase of the exercise.
- With the institution of a Bilateral Exercise, both navies have taken a step towards strengthening operational synergy and progressively increasing the exercise complexity.
- During the maiden edition of the exercise, participating units from both navies conducted surface and anti-air exercises including weapon firing, seamanship evolutions and tactical manoeuvres.
- As part of Government of India's vision of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region), the Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region towards enhancing regional maritime security.
- The Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy have maintained a close and friendly relationship which has strengthened over the years. The conduct of maiden IN-RTN Bilateral Exercise along with Indo-Thai CORPAT is a testimony to the growing bilateral relations between the two maritime neighbours and has enabled in enhancing interoperability between the two navies.
- The Indo-Thai Bilateral Exercise is being named as 'Ex-Ayutthaya', which literally translates to 'The Invincible One' or 'Undefeatable', and symbolises the significance of two of the oldest cities Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand, the historic legacies, rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives dating back to several centuries.

CDS Gen Anil Chauhan to inaugurate ninth chapter of CAPSTAR - 9 on the theme 'Artificial Intelligence: Transforming Warfare' in MILIT, Pune

- Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan will inaugurate the prestigious ninth chapter of 'Capsule on Science, Technology and Applied Research' (CAPSTAR) at Military Institute of Technology (MILIT), Pune on 17 January 2024. The three day CAPSTAR - 09 will see the active

participation from services, academia, DRDO Labs and private defence industries.

- The participation of major private firms such as Bit Mapper, Gridbots Technologies, Dimension NXG, PureID Ltd, Varshasookt Pvt Ltd, Nirmitee.io, Innefu Labs, Protech Solutions & Services Ltd, Resonating Mindz, Edvantech Solutions Ltd and academic institutions such as IIT Indore, DIAT and others is aimed as an initiative in policy making on AI for Armed Forces.
- The CAPSTER - 09 is being held as part of the 12th Raising Day celebrations of MILIT which is commemorated on 19 January every year.
- The Institute with motto 'Victory through Technology' traces its roots to 'Institute of Armament Studies' which was set up in 'College of Military Engineering' in early 50s. In 1967, the Institute moved to the picturesque locale of Girinagar.
- From its limited scope of Armament Studies, the role of the Institute was considerably enhanced by the Defence R&D council in 1964 and further in 1981.
- In order to meet the specific and futuristic training requirements of the Armed Forces, MILIT was raised on 19 Jan 12 and subsequently, MILIT emerged as independent tri-services Armed Forces Technical Training Institute under Headquarters, Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) which conducts the flagship Defence Services Technical Staff Course and a number of Training capsules for officers from tri-Services on cutting-edge, disruptive and Niche Technologies.

Chief of The Naval Staff inaugurates Revolutionary Clean and Green CO₂-based AC Plant at INS Shivaji-Leap towards Green Technology

- Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff, inaugurated the unique CO₂ based Air Conditioning plant at INS Shivaji on 17 Jan 24.
- The AC Plant is first of its kind and is set to replace HFC (Hydro Fluoro Carbons) and HCFC (Hydro Chloro Fluoro Carbons) based air conditioning systems onboard ships.
- This step is in line with India's commitment towards Kigali Agreement of 2016 to phase down HFC and HCFC based synthetic refrigerants from 2028 onwards and Transcritical CO₂ based air conditioning plant is the first step towards it.
- This technology aligns with the global efforts to combat climate change and supports Indian Navy's initiative towards sustainable green alternatives.

- This air conditioning plant is equipped with advanced digital control systems and smart technology integration economising manpower for running the plant.
- The system has been developed in collaboration with IISc, Bangalore, a testimony of channelising the Defence-Academia synergy towards induction of a futuristic technology in the Armed Forces. The success of this technology will not only offer state-of-the-art machinery to the Navy but has the potential for a wider application into the commercial air-conditioning & refrigeration market.

Chief of The Naval Staff Flags Off Chadar Trek Expedition to Zaskar River, Ladakh

- Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff flagged off the Indian Navy Chadar Trek (Frozen Zaskar River, Ladakh) expedition at INS Shivaji on 16 Jan 24.
- The CNS handed over the ceremonial Ice Axe to the team leader Cdr Navneet Malik and wished them a successful expedition. The team comprising of 14 members would scale the summit at a height of 11,000 ft and unfurl the National flag and Naval Ensign.
- The expedition embodies the adventurous spirit of the Indian Navy and aims to cultivate a robust and resilient workforce capable of facing challenges and adverse weather conditions.

Indian Navy's Mission deployed Platform Responds to a Maritime Incident in the Gulf of Aden

- INS Visakhapatnam, mission deployed in Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations, swiftly responded to a distress call by Marshall Island flagged MV Genco Picardy following a drone attack at 2311 hrs on 17 Jan 24.
- INS Visakhapatnam, undertaking anti piracy patrol in Gulf of Aden, acknowledged the distress call and intercepted the vessels at 0030 hrs on 18 Jan 24 in order to provide assistance. MV Genco Picardy with 22 crew (09 Indian) reported nil casualties and fire under control.
- Indian Naval EOD specialists from INS Visakhapatnam boarded the vessel in early hours of 18 Jan 24 to inspect the damaged area. EOD specialists, after a thorough inspection have rendered the area safe for further transit. The vessel is proceeding to the next port of call.

Indian Army Special Forces Contingent reaches Egypt for Joint Exercise 'Cyclone'

- The Indian Army contingent comprising 25 personnel reached Egypt to take part in the 2nd edition of India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE. The Exercise will be conducted at Anshas, Egypt from 22nd January to 1st February 2024. The first edition of the exercise was conducted last year in India.
- The Indian contingent is being represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and Egyptian contingent comprising 25 personnel is being represented by Egyptian Commando Squadron and Egyptian Airborne Platoon.
- Aim of the Exercise is to acquaint both the sides with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of Special Operations in desert/ semi desert terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter. Exercise CYCLONE is designed to develop bilateral military cooperation and strengthen bond between two armies through conduct of discussions and rehearsal of tactical military drills.
- The Exercise will involve planning and execution of special operations in sub conventional domain and conducted in three phases. While the first phase will include Military Exhibitions and Tactical Interactions, second phase will focus on training on Improvised Explosive Device (IED), counter IED and Combat First Aid. The third and final phase will encompass Joint Tactical Exercise based on Fighting in Built-up Area and Hostage Rescue Scenarios.
- The Exercise will provide an opportunity to both the contingents to strengthen their bond and share best practices. It will also act as a platform to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.

Indian-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise Khanjar Commences in Himachal Pradesh

- The 11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has commenced at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh. The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 22nd January to 3rd February 2024. It is an annual event conducted alternatively in both the countries.

- The Indian Army contingent comprising 20 personnel is being represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and the Kyrgyzstan contingent comprising 20 personnel is represented by Scorpion Brigade.
- Aim of the exercise is to exchange experiences and best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter. The exercise will emphasise on developing Special Forces skills, advanced techniques of insertion and extraction.
- The exercise will provide an opportunity for both the sides of fortify defence ties while addressing common concerns of international terrorism and extremism. The exercise will also accord opportunity to showcase capabilities of cutting edge indigenous defence equipment besides achieving shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations.

Launch of Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 19 (Yard 129), 5th Barge of 11 X Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile (ACTMC) Barge Project on 24 Jan 24 At M/S Suryadipta Project Pvt Ltd, Thane

- The launch of 'Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 19 (Yard 129)', 5th Barge of 11 x ACTCM Barge Project, built by MSME Shipyard, M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane for Indian Navy, was undertaken on 24 Jan 24 at M/s Suryadipta Project Pvt Ltd (Launch site of M/s SPPL). The launching Ceremony was presided over by Cmde V Pravin, AWPS(Mbi).
- The contract for building 11 X ACTCM Barge was signed between MoD and M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane on 05 Mar 21. The availability of these Barges would provide impetus to operational commitments of IN by facilitating Transportation, Embarkation and Disembarkation of articles/ ammunition to IN Ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbours.
- These Barges are indigenously designed and built under relevant Naval Rules and Regulation of Indian Register of Shipping.
- The model testing of the Barge during design stage was undertaken at Naval Science and Technological Laboratory, Visakhapatnam. These Barges are proud flag bearers of Make in India initiative of Government of India (GoI).



SPORTS

Virat Won 'Puberty Athlete of The Year' Award By Defeating Lionel Messi

- Indian cricketer Virat Kohli just won the Puberty Athlete of the Year award, beating famous football player Lionel Messi.
- Kohli won easily with 78% of the votes from 500,000 people. He had a great year in cricket, scoring lots of runs and breaking records. He became the first cricketer to score 50 centuries in one-day matches. In the World Cup, he scored 765 runs in 11 games, more than anyone else. By the end of the year, he scored 2048 runs in total, the second most in the world.
- The award is presented by Pubity, a sports marketing and brand management company focused primarily on the Indian market.
- It's one of the few awards that recognizes achievements across all sports, offering a platform for lesser-known sports to gain attention.

Indian Grandmaster Koneru Humpy secured the women's individual silver medal at the 2023 World Rapid Chess Championships held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan

- Despite a valiant effort, the 36-year-old Grandmaster succumbed to Russian player Anastasia Bodnaruk in a tie-break sudden death on time.
- With this silver, Humpy completes a set of medals at the women's world rapid championships. She had previously won the bronze in 2012 in Moscow, Russia, and was crowned the world champion in 2019 at Batumi, Georgia.

Anahat Singh, a rising star in Indian squash, secured victory in the girls' under-19 category at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh

- Anahat Singh showcased her dominance on the squash court with a commanding performance in the final against home favorite Robyn McAlpine. The young talent claimed victory with a decisive scoreline of 11-6, 11-1, 11-5, leaving no room for doubt about her supremacy in the girls' under-19 division.

- The event, featuring participants from over 30 countries, highlighted the global appeal and competitive nature of junior squash, setting the stage for the continued growth and success of Indian squash on the international stage.

Saurashtra won the Elite Group title, defeating Bengal by nine wickets in the final at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata

- This was Saurashtra's second Ranji Trophy championship title. Arpit Vasavada was declared the Player of the Tournament, while Jaydev Unadkat was adjudged the Player of the Final.

Kenya's Beatrice Chebet concluded her remarkable year by smashing the world record for the women's 5 km marathon at the Cursa dels Nassos in Barcelona

- Clocking an astounding 14:13, Chebet outpaced her competitors and bettered the previous record by six seconds, setting the stage for a memorable achievement.
- Although subject to World Athletics' ratification procedure, this victory marks a triumphant end to Chebet's stellar 2023 campaign.

The International Cricket Council enforces a new rule restricting Decision Review System (DRS) for stumping incidents, allowing caught-behind challenges separately

- The amended rule mandates umpires to rely solely on side-on camera images for stumping reviews, eliminating the examination of potential snicks. This ensures a focused review for stumped incidents without allowing teams a free review for other modes of dismissal.

The ICC T20 World Cup 2024 schedule was announced on 05 January, with the first game on June 1 and the final on June 29 in Barbados, where the final played

- Indian Team is scheduled to play against Pakistan in New York, USA on June 9.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2023, honouring individuals and institutions that have excelled in their respective fields

- President Droupadi Murmu has conferred the Arjuna Awards to various sports personalities at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- The second-highest athletic honour in India, the Arjuna Award, is given for demonstrating leadership, sportsmanship, and discipline along with good performance over the preceding four years.

Full list of National Sports Awards 2023

Name	Sport	Name	Sport
Mohammed Shami	Cricket	Mohammad Hussamuddin	Boxing
Pawan Sehrawat	Kabaddi	Esha Singh	Shooting
Ritu Negi	Kabaddi	Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar	Shooting
Vaishali Rameshbabu	Chess	Naorem Roshibina Devi	Wushu
Murali Sreeshankar	Athletics	Diksha Dagar	Golf
Parul Chaudhary	Athletics	Harinder Pal Sandhu	Squash
Krishan Bahadur Pathak	Hockey	Sheetal Devi	Para-Archery
Sushila Chanu	Hockey	Anush Agarwalla	Equestrian
Sunil Kumar	Wrestling	Divyakriti Singh	Equestrian Dressage
Antim Panghal	Wrestling	Nasreen Shaikh	Kho-Kho
Aditi Gopichand Swami	Archery	Pinki Singh	Lawn bowls
Ojas Pravin Deotale	Archery	Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy	Blind cricket
Ayhika Mukherjee	Table Tennis	Prachi Yadav	Para Canoeing
Mohammad Hussamuddin	Boxing		

- Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award: Satwik Sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty (badminton)
- Dronacharya Award for Outstanding Coaches in Sports and Games 2023: Ganesh Prabhakaran (mallakhamb), Mahavir Saini (para athletics), Lalit Kumar (wrestling), RB Ramesh (chess), Shivendra Singh (hockey).
- Dhyan Chand Lifetime Award: Kavita (kabaddi), Manjusha Kanwar (badminton), Vineet Kumar Sharma (hockey).
- Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2023: Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (winner)

Divyakriti Singh Becomes 1st Indian Woman Arjuna Awardee for Equestrian Sports

- Divyakriti Singh's accolades extend beyond the Arjuna Award, as she also made history by becoming the first woman from Rajasthan to clinch a medal in Equestrian at the Asian Games. Her triumph in Hangzhou not only showcases her brilliance but also serves as an inspiration for aspiring athletes in the region.

Rhythm Sangwan secured a bronze medal in the women's 25m pistol event, obtaining a Paris 2024 Olympic quota for India

- This accomplishment marked India's 16th shooting quota for the upcoming Olympics, surpassing the previous record tally of 15 set for the Tokyo 2020 Games.
- During the intense 25m pistol final, Rhythm Sangwan showcased her skills, scoring 28 out of 45

to claim the bronze. The gold and silver medals were secured by Jiin Yang and Yeji Kim from the Republic of Korea, who shot 41/50 and 32/50, respectively.

Aman Sehrawat, India's rising wrestling star, clinched a gold at Zagreb Open 2024 in the 57 kg men's singles

- Overpowering China's Zou Wanhao 10-0 in the final with technical superiority.

Real Madrid Wins Against Barcelona in Spanish Super Cup

- Real Madrid played against Barcelona and won 4-1. This big game was part of the Spanish Super Cup final and happened on January 14, 2024. It took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Rohit Sharma Becomes The First Men's Player To Play 150 T20Is

- During the first T20I against Afghanistan, Rohit Sharma not only captained his side to victory but also secured another milestone by becoming the first player to win 100 T20Is.
- As one of the top run-scorers in T20Is, Rohit Sharma boasts an impressive record. With 3853 runs in 149 games and a strike rate of around 140, he has been a consistent performer at the top of the order.

Shaun Marsh Announces Retirement from Professional Cricket

- Marsh announced his retirement with his last match scheduled against Sydney Thunder on January 17, in the Big Bash League 2023-24.
- Marsh's international career with the Australian cricket team was marked by notable performances in Test matches, One Day Internationals (ODIs), and Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is).
- He played 38 Test matches, 73 ODIs, and 15 T20Is for Australia. In ODIs, he particularly excelled with a batting average of 40.78 and an 81.42 strike rate. His Test career also boasts a noteworthy average of 43.32 in 68 innings. Marsh's contributions in T20s, though less prominent, still included 15 games for Australia with a top score of 47.

ICC Players of the Month for December 2023, Pat Cummins and Deepti Sharma Shine

- International Cricket Council (ICC) duly recognized the brilliance of Australia's Pat Cummins and India's Deepti Sharma.
- In a month that showcased cricketing prowess across formats, Cummins and Sharma stood out, earning the prestigious ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month awards.
- Australia's skipper, Pat Cummins, capped off a stellar year with the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for December. Cummins played a pivotal role in Australia's Test series triumph against Pakistan, displaying exceptional leadership and bowling prowess.
- India's Deepti Sharma made history by winning her maiden ICC Women's Player of the Month award for December. Sharma's exceptional performances across all three formats, especially against England and Australia, earned her this well-deserved recognition.

The Best FIFA Football Awards 2024

- The Best FIFA Football Awards 2024 recognized the most exceptional talents in football.

- Lionel Messi and Aitana Bonmati emerged as the best players, with several others receiving prestigious honours. The ceremony, held in London, celebrated players, coaches, and teams for their achievements in the 2023 season.
- Lionel Messi, playing for Argentina and Inter Miami, won the Best FIFA Men's Player award, edging out Erling Haaland in a tiebreaker.
- Aitana Bonmati, from Barcelona and the Spanish national team, claimed the Best FIFA Women's Player award.

ICC's First Female Neutral Umpire In Bilateral Series

- Redfern's appointment is a result of the International Cricket Council's (ICC) decision to have one neutral umpire for all ICC Women's Championship series and T20I matches associated with them.
- This move is aimed at ensuring a degree of neutrality in match officiating while also contributing to the long-term development of female umpires in the sport.

Asian Shooting Championship 2024, Jakarta: Yogesh Bags Dual Gold, Lakshay Takes Bronze

- The Asia Olympic Qualifiers witnessed a remarkable display of skill and precision from Indian shooters, with Yogesh Singh emerging as the star of the event.
- Singh not only secured the individual gold medal in the men's 25m centre fire pistol competition but also led the Indian trio to clinch the team gold.
- Yogesh Singh showcased exceptional marksmanship in the men's 25m centre fire pistol competition, claiming the individual gold medal with a score of 573.
- He outperformed Muad Al Balushi of Oman, who secured the silver with a score of 570, and Indonesia's Anang Yulianto, who took home the bronze with a score of 567. The Indian contingent dominated the event, with Pankaj Yadav and Akshay Jain finishing fourth and sixth, respectively.

Wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya Claims Bronze At France's Grand Prix

- Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Ravi Kumar Dahiya, who faced a setback in the form of injuries, made a triumphant return to the wrestling arena by securing a bronze medal at the prestigious Grand Prix De France Henri Deglane wrestling tournament held in Nice, France.

Tai Tzu Ying Clinches Victory in India Open 2024 Women's Singles

- After facing a Malaysian Open final loss, Tai Tzu Ying bounced back with determination, securing victory in the India Open 2024 women's singles title.

Madrid is set to become the new host city for the Spanish Formula 1 Grand Prix starting from 2026

- This marks a significant shift in the Spanish Grand Prix's location, as Barcelona has been the event's home since 1991. The transition will see Madrid hosting the Grand Prix for 10 years, from 2026 to 2035, introducing a brand-new circuit to the world of Formula 1.

Rohit Sharma named captain of ICC ODI team of the year.

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced five ICC Teams of the Year across formats for men and women as part of the ICC Awards 2023. Six Indians were featured in the ICC

Men's ODI team of the year with Rohit Sharma named as the captain of the 11-member team.

Man Singh Clinches Gold at the Asian Marathon Championships 2024 in Hong Kong

- He completed the marathon with a personal best timing of 2 hours, 14 minutes, and 19 seconds, comfortably defeating runner-up Huang Yongzheng of China by a substantial margin of 65 seconds. This performance also surpassed his previous personal best of 2:16:58, recorded at the Mumbai Marathon in 2023.

Sreeja Akula Secures First Global Table Tennis Title At WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024

- Sreeja Akula faced a formidable opponent in the final, going up against world No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA, a three-time Olympian. In a convincing display of prowess, Sreeja defeated Lily Zhang 3-0 (11-6, 18-16, 11-5) to claim the top spot on the podium.



APPOINTMENTS

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

- The recent appointment of Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar as the ex-officio Chancellor is the result of a modification in Statute 1(1) of the Pondicherry University Act 1985.
- Pondicherry University, established in 1985 by an Act of Parliament, has been a prominent institution for higher education in the region. The Pondicherry University Act of 1985 outlines the governance structure of the university, including the position of the Chancellor.

Nina Singh First Woman CISF Chief Rahul Rasgotra ITBP Chief

- Nina Singh, a seasoned 1989-batch IPS officer from the Rajasthan cadre, has shattered the glass ceiling by being appointed as the Director General of the CISF. Currently serving as the Special DG of the CISF, her elevation to the top post is a testament to her exemplary career and leadership skills.

Arvind Panagariya Appointed Head of Sixteenth Finance Commission By Government

- Arvind Panagariya, a distinguished trade economist, had previously served as the first vice chairman of the Niti Aayog from 2015 to 2017.
- While the names of the other members of the Sixteenth Finance Commission will be notified separately, the order also designated **Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey**, former joint secretary in the Department of Revenue, as the panel's secretary. The tenure for both the Chairman and other members is specified to last until the submission of the Commission's report or October 31, 2025, whichever comes earlier.

Vivek Srivastava Named DG Of Fire Service, Civil Defence & Home Guards

- This significant appointment is set to take effect from the date of Srivastava's joining the post and will continue until June 30, 2025, or until further orders, whichever occurs earlier.

Randhir Jaiswal Takes Over As MEA Spokesperson From Arindam Bagchi

- This move comes after Arindam Bagchi's appointment as India's next Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva in October 2023. Mr. Bagchi, a seasoned 1995-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer holding the position of Additional Secretary in the MEA, had taken over as the spokesperson in March 2021.

Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh Assumes Command of Western Naval Command

- Before assuming the prestigious position as the FOC-in-C of the Western Naval Command, Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh held the position of Vice Chief of the Naval Staff at the Naval Headquarters in New Delhi. The change in command also sees Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi taking on the role of Vice Chief of Naval Staff at the Naval Headquarters.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna Appointed As NALSA Executive Chairperson

- India's President has appointed Justice Sanjiv Khanna, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, as the NALSA Executive Chairperson, succeeding Justice S. K. Kaul, who retired on December 25.
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) is a statutory body established under the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987. This organization plays a pivotal role in providing free legal services to the weaker sections of society and aims to organize Lok Adalats for the amicable settlement of disputes.

Nadia Calvino Appointed as New President of the European Investment Bank

- She succeeds Werner Hoyer to become the eighth president of the EU bank. Notably, Calvino is the first woman and the first Spaniard to lead this prestigious institution, marking a significant milestone in the bank's history.

Shashi Singh has been elected as the president of the All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the apex body for rubber industries in India.

- The All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the foremost authority representing India's rubber industry, has recently announced a significant leadership change. Shashi Singh has been elected as the new President, succeeding Ramesh Kejriwal.

Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi Appointed As Vice Chief Of Navy

- Vice Admiral Tripathi's journey in the Indian Navy began after his commissioning on July 1, 1985. An alumnus of Sainik School Rewa and the National Defence Academy at Khadakwasla, his career has been marked by a series of key assignments and accomplishments.

Canara Bank CGM P Santhosh Appointed as MD of NARCL

- With effect from January 5, succeeding Natarajan Sundar, who resigned from the post.
- The National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) was established in July 2021. Commonly referred to as a 'bad bank', its main objective is to manage and dispose of the stressed assets of commercial banks.

SEBI Names G Ram Mohan Rao As Executive Director For 3 Years

- Rao handled critical portfolios including inspections, investigations, and market surveillance. His experience at the Northern Regional Office and the Serious Fraud Investigation Office reflects a comprehensive understanding of regulatory challenges and a commitment to addressing them effectively.

Rashmi Shukla becomes Maharashtra's first woman Director General of Police

- This appointment is groundbreaking as Ms. Shukla becomes the first woman to hold this prestigious position in the state.
- She takes over the reins from Rajnish Seth, her batchmate from the 1988 IPS cadre, who recently retired and moved on to become the chairman of the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC). Prior to her current appointment, Ms. Shukla led the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and served as the Additional Director-General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Sanjiv Aggarwal Appointed CEO and MD of NIIFL

- Aggarwal, formerly a partner at the UK-based private equity firm Actis, brings a wealth of experience in energy investments, particularly in the Asian market, including India.
- NIIFL, a quasi-sovereign wealth fund with 49% government ownership, manages an impressive portfolio of over \$4.9 billion in equity capital commitments across its four funds.

Senior IAS officer Vikas Sheel appointed Executive Director, Asian Development Bank

- Vikas Sheel, a 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is now the Executive Director at ADB. He brings valuable experience from his current role as Additional Secretary and Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission, contributing to India's representation at this prestigious institution.
- The Asian Development Bank is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966, which is headquartered in 6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila 1550, Philippines.

Raghuram Iyer appointed as CEO of Indian Olympic Association

- Raghuram Iyer, the former CEO of Rajasthan Royals, brings a diverse and rich professional background to his new role. His experience extends to prominent positions with IPL teams such as Lucknow Super Giants and Rising Supergiants. Additionally, he has made contributions to ATK Mohun Bagan in the Indian Super League and served as the CEO of RPSG Mavericks, a table tennis team.

Indra Mani Pandey Takes on BIMSTEC Secretary General Role

- Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey becomes the fourth Secretary General of BIMSTEC, succeeding Tenzin Lekphell.
- As a career diplomat, Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey has been a part of the Indian Foreign Service since 1990. Before assuming the role of Secretary General at BIMSTEC, he served as the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva.
- BIMSTEC, formed on the 6th of June 1997, comprises seven South Asian and Southeast Asian nations and focuses on 14 priority sectors. Member states, dependent on the Bay of Bengal, include Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Senthil Pandian C appointed as India's WTO Ambassador.

- This appointment follows the conclusion of Brajendra Navnit's term as India's ambassador to the WTO on March 31, 2024. The decision was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), entrusting Pandian, a 2002 IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, with the responsibility for a three-year term from the date of assuming office.

Tshering Tobgay Re-Elected as Bhutan's Prime Minister

- The People's Democratic Party (PDP), led by Mr. Tobgay, secured a landslide victory, winning nearly two-thirds of the seats in the recent election, as announced by the election commission on January 10.

Sheel Vardhan Singh Assumes Role As UPSC Member

- He was the former Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).
- The UPSC, headed by a chairperson, is responsible for conducting the civil services examination.

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 for its third season

- The RuPay Prime Volleyball League Season 3 is scheduled to commence on February 15, 2024.

Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary appointed Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal

- The Sashastra Seema Bal, one of India's central armed police forces, is primarily responsible for guarding the country's borders with Nepal and Bhutan.
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Established in 1963, the SSB was originally set up to counter the activities of Chinese troops along the Indo-Nepal border following the Sino-Indian War.

Justice Prasanna B Varale Appointed Supreme Court Judge

- Justice Prasanna B Varale, currently serving as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court, will now become the third sitting judge from the Dalit community in the Supreme Court.



AWARDS

Prof. B.R. Kamboj, the Vice Chancellor of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, has been bestowed with the prestigious M.S. Swaminathan Award

- M.S. Swaminathan. The prestigious Award was instituted by Trust for Advancement of Agricultural Sciences (TAAS), in 2004 with the objective to recognize life time contributions of eminent persons who have made global impact in the field of agriculture, including food security and sustainability of agriculture in India.

Hero MotoCorp bagging the CII National Award for Excellence in Water Management and setting an ambitious goal to become 500% water positive by 2025

- CII National Awards for Excellence in Water Management has been recognizing industry for its contribution in making a Water Secure World - be it through their operations, innovations, or CSR activities.

Professor Adrian Michael Cruise, a key figure in the Gravitational Wave Research Group at the University of Birmingham, has been honored in the New Year Honours for his contributions to space services

- The recognition highlights his services to space and places him alongside other influential figures in the realm of UK astronomy.
- As an elected member of the European Space Agency's Voyage 2050 Senior Committee, Professor Cruise continues to contribute significantly to shaping the strategic direction of European space science.

Renowned Bengali writer Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay receives the 2023 Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar, celebrating his significant contributions to Indian languages in honor of the late poet Kuvempu

- It is a national award instituted in memory of the late poet laureate Kuvempu.
- The award is given annually to a writer who has contributed in any of the languages recognised by the Constitution of India.
- The award carries a cash award of Rs. 5 lakh, a silver medal and a citation.
- Kuppali Venkatappa Puttappa, popularly known by his pen name Kuvempu, was an Indian poet, playwright, novelist and critic.
- He is widely regarded as the greatest Kannada poet of the 20th century.

The 81st Golden Globe Awards are set to be presented in a lavish event at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, USA

Category	Winner
Best Film - Drama	Oppenheimer
Best Actress - Drama	Lily Gladstone, Killers of the Flower Moon
Best Film - Musical or Comedy	Poor Things
Best Actor - Musical or Comedy	Paul Giamatti, The Holdovers
Best TV Series - Drama	Succession
Best Actress in a TV Series - Drama	Sarah Snook, Succession
Best TV Series - Musical or Comedy	The Bear
Best Limited Series, Anthology Series or TV Movie	Beef

Cinematic and Box Office Achievement	Barbie
Best Original Song	What Was I Made For? by Billie Eilish and Finneas (Barbie)
Best Original Score	Ludwig Göransson, Oppenheimer
Best Actor – Drama	Cillian Murphy, Oppenheimer
Best Actress – Musical or Comedy	Emma Stone, Poor Things
Best Director	Christopher Nolan, Oppenheimer
Best Animated Film	The Boy and the Heron
Best Actor in a TV Series – Drama	Kieran Culkin, Succession
Best Actress in a TV Series – Musical or Comedy	Ayo Edebiri, The Bear
Best Non-English Language Film	Anatomy of a Fall
Best Performance in Stand-Up Comedy on TV	Ricky Gervais, Ricky Gervais Armageddon
Best Actor in a TV Series – Musical or Comedy	Jeremy Allen White, The Bear
Best Screenplay	Justine Triet and Arthur Harari, Anatomy of a Fall
Best Supporting Actor in a TV Series	Matthew Macfadyen, Succession
Best Supporting Actress in a TV Series	Elizabeth Debicki, The Crown
Best Actor in a Limited Series, Anthology Series or TV Movie	Steven Yeun, Beef
Best Actress in a Limited Series, Anthology Series or TV Movie	Ali Wong, Beef
Best Supporting Actor	Robert Downey Jr, Oppenheimer
Best Supporting Actress	Da’Vine Joy Randolph, The Holdovers

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, presented the Sports and Adventure Awards 2023 at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan January 9, 2024

- The Awards include Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Awards-2023; Dronacharya Awards-2023; Arjuna Awards-2023; Dhyan Chand Awards-2023; Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Awards-2022; Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar-2023; and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy-2023.

Singapore's Changi Airport, for 2023, reclaims the title of World's Best Airport in the esteemed Skytrax awards, solidifying its reputation for excellence in air travel

- The annual Skytrax awards are a significant benchmark in the aviation industry, recognizing excellence in airport services and facilities. These accolades are based on customer satisfaction surveys from international air travelers, making them a true reflection of the passenger experience.

Government of India has notified the ANUBHAV Awards Scheme 2024

- To participate in the scheme, retiring Central Government employees/pensioners are required to submit their Anubhav write ups, 8 months prior to retirement and up to 1 year after their retirement.
- The published write-ups will be shortlisted for Anubhav Awards and Jury Certificates.
- The Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare launched Anubhav Portal in 2015, allowing retired Central Government employees to share their experiences online.

NICMAR has recently been awarded the prestigious Platinum certification by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) under its Green Campus Rating program

- The IGBC Platinum Certification is a testament to NICMAR Hyderabad's significant efforts in promoting sustainability.
- The campus stands out with over 25 trees per acre, amounting to a 47% green cover, and features water-efficient irrigation systems.
- A significant portion (90.04%) of the landscape area is adorned with drought-tolerant or native species, while a smaller percentage (9.96%) is covered by turf.

President Draupadi Murmu presented the posthumous Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award to Savita Kanswal, a brave mountaineer from Lothru village in Uttarkashi district in a ceremony

- Savita Kanswal made history by becoming the first Indian woman mountaineer to conquer both Mount Everest (8848 m) and Mount Makalu (8485 m) within an astonishing span of 16 days.
- The Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award, formerly known as the National Adventure Awards is the highest adventure sports honour of the Republic of India.
- The award is named after Tenzing Norgay, one of the first two individuals to reach the summit of Mount Everest along with Edmund Hillary in 1953.
- It is awarded annually by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

Gianni Infantino, FIFA President, received the esteemed International Sports Personality of the Year award, acknowledging remarkable achievements in sports since its 2009 inception

- Established in 2009, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Creative Sports Awards have evolved over the past decade.
- Initially focused on domestic achievements, the awards opened up to international recipients in 2012. Today, the International Sports Personality of the Year stands as the pinnacle of recognition for global figures who contribute significantly to the development and fairness of sports.

Ranjan Gogoi, ex-CJI and current Rajya Sabha MP, will receive the esteemed 'Assam Baibhav' award, Assam's top civilian honor, on February 10th

- This marks the third year of the Assam Baibhav awards, with the inaugural award presented to business magnate Ratan Tata in the first year, followed by journalist Tapan Saikia in the second year. The decision to confer this year's award upon Ranjan Gogoi reflects the state government's acknowledgment of his exceptional service and achievements.

The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024

- The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar awardees include one child each in the fields of Bravery, Science & Technology, and Innovation; four in Social Service; five in Sports; and seven in Art and Culture. The group, as per the Ministry's press release, consists of 9 boys and 10 girls from 18 different States and Union Territories.

Name	State	Category
Aaditya Vijay Bramhane (posthumous)	Maharashtra	Bravery
Anushka Pathak	Uttar Pradesh	Art & Culture
Arijeet Banerjee	West Bengal	Art & Culture
Armaan Ubhrani	Chattisgarh	Art & Culture
Hetvi Kantibhai Khimsuriya	Gujarat	Art & Culture
Ishfaq Hamid	Jammu & Kashmir	Art & Culture
Md Hussain	Bihar	Art & Culture
Pendyala Laxmi Priya	Telangana	Art & Culture
Suhani Chauhan	Delhi	Innovation
Aryan Singh	Rajasthan	Science & Technology
Avnish Tiwari	Madhya Pradesh	Social Service
Garima	Haryana	Social Service
Jyotsna Aktar	Tripura	Social Service
Saiyam Mazumder	Assam	Social Service
Aaditya Yadav	Uttar Pradesh	Sports
Charvi A	Karnataka	Sports
Jessica Neyi Saring	Arunachal Pradesh	Sports
Linthoi Chanambam	Manipur	Sports
R Surya Prasad	Andhra Pradesh	Sports

At the prestigious Wings India Awards 2024, both the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru and the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi were jointly awarded the 'Best Airport of the Year'

- Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport was specifically recognized with the '25 MPPA Traffic Award' in the Airports category for handling more than 25 million passengers annually.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is set to honour the exemplary performances in Indian cricket at the NAMAN Awards ceremony in Hyderabad

- Shubman Gill is slated to receive the Cricketer of the Year award, acknowledging his extraordinary performance in 2023.
- Ravi Shastri, a former all-rounder and head coach of the Indian cricket team, will be honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Shastri's illustrious career includes representing India in 80 Tests and 150 One Day Internationals (ODIs), scoring over 3,000 runs in both formats and taking 280 wickets.

The Government of India has announced that former Bihar Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur, will be posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian award

- Karpoori Thakur, born in January 1924, was a prominent figure in Bihar's political landscape.
- Known for his deep connection with the backward classes, Thakur's political journey was marked by his steadfast commitment to social justice.
- He served as Bihar's Chief Minister twice, first from December 1970 to June 1971 and again from December 1977 to April 1979.

The 96th annual Academy Awards nominations have been unveiled

- Oppenheimer Takes the Lead: Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" dominates the nominations with an impressive count of 13, making it a frontrunner for several prestigious awards.
- Strong Contenders: Following closely are "Poor Things," "Barbie," and "Killers of the Flower Moon," each earning significant nominations, promising a competitive showcase of talent.

Padma Awards 2024

Padma Vibhushan Awards 2024

S.No.	Awardee Name	Field	State
1.	Ms. Vyjayantimala Bali	Art	Tamil Nadu
2.	Shri Konidela Chiranjeevi	Art	Andhra Pradesh
3.	Shri M Venkaiah Naidu	Public Affairs	Andhra Pradesh
4.	Shri Bindeshwar Pathak	Social Work	Bihar
5.	Ms. Padma Subrahmanyam	Art	Tamil Nadu

Padma Bhushan Awardees 2024

Awardee Name	Field	State/Country
Ms. M Fathima Beevi	Public Affairs	Kerala
Shri Hormusji N Cama	Literature & Education	Maharashtra
Shri Mithun Chakraborty	Art	West Bengal
Shri Sitaram Jindal	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
Shri Young Liu	Trade & Industry	Taiwan
Shri Ashwin Balachand Mehta	Medicine	Maharashtra
Shri Satyabrata Mookherjee	Public Affairs	West Bengal
Shri Ram Naik	Public Affairs	Maharashtra
Shri Tejas Madhusudan Patel	Medicine	Gujarat

Shri Olanchery Rajagopal	Public Affairs	Kerala
Shri Dattatray Ambadas Mayaloo alias Rajdutt	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Togdan Rinpoche	Others - Spiritualism	Ladakh
Shri Pyarelal Sharma	Art	Maharashtra
Shri Chandreshwar Prasad Thakur	Medicine	Bihar
Ms. Usha Uthup	Art	West Bengal
Shri Vijaykanth	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Kundan Vyas	Literature & Education - Journalism	Maharashtra

Padma Shri Awardees 2024

Name	Field	State/Region/Country
Shri Khalil Ahamad	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Badrappan M	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Kaluram Bamaniya	Art	Madhya Pradesh
Ms. Rezwana Choudhury Bannya	Art	Bangladesh
Ms. Naseem Bano	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Ramlal Bareth	Art	Chhattisgarh
Ms. Gita Roy Barman	Art	West Bengal
Ms. Parbati Baruah	Social Work	Assam
Shri Sarbeswar Basumatary	Others - Agriculture	Assam
Shri Som Datt Battu	Art	Himachal Pradesh
Ms. Takdira Begum	Art	West Bengal
Shri Sathyanarayana Beleri	Others - Agriculture	Kerala
Shri Drona Bhuyan	Art	Assam
Shri Ashok Kumar Biswas	Art	Bihar
Shri Rohan Machanda Bopanna	Sports	Karnataka
Ms. Smriti Rekha Chakma	Art	Tripura
Shri Narayan Chakraborty	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
Shri A Velu Ananda Chari	Art	Telangana
Shri Ram Chet Chaudhary	Science & Engineering	Uttar Pradesh
Ms. K Chellammal	Others - Agriculture	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Ms. Joshna Chinappa	Sports	Tamil Nadu
Ms. Charlotte Chopin	Others - Yoga	France
Shri Raghuvveer Choudhary	Literature & Education	Gujarat
Shri Joe D Cruz	Literature & Education	Tamil Nadu
Shri Ghulam Nabi Dar	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
Shri Chitta Ranjan Debbarma	Others - Spiritualism	Tripura
Shri Uday Vishwanath Deshpande	Sports	Maharashtra
Ms. Prema Dhanraj	Medicine	Karnataka
Shri Radha Krishan Dhiman	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Manohar Krishana Dole	Medicine	Maharashtra
Shri Pierre Sylvain Filliozat	Literature & Education	France
Shri Mahabir Singh Guddu	Art	Haryana
Ms. Anupama Hoskere	Art	Karnataka
Shri Yazdi Maneksha Italia	Medicine	Gujarat
Shri Rajaram Jain	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Jankilal	Art	Rajasthan
Shri Ratan Kahar	Art	West Bengal
Shri Yashwant Singh Kathoch	Literature & Education	Uttarakhand
Shri Zahir I Kazi	Literature & Education	Maharashtra
Shri Gaurav Khanna	Sports	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Surendra Kishore	Literature & Education - Journalism	Bihar
Shri Dasari Kondappa	Art	Telangana

Shri Sridhar Makam Krishnamurthy	Literature & Education	Karnataka
Ms. Yanung Jamoh Lego	Others - Agriculture	Arunachal Pradesh
Shri Jordan Lepcha	Art	Sikkim
Shri Satendra Singh Lohia	Sports	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Binod Maharana	Art	Odisha
Ms. Purnima Mahato	Sports	Jharkhand
Ms. Uma Maheshwari D	Art	Andhra Pradesh
Shri Dukhu Majhi	Social Work	West Bengal
Shri Ram Kumar Mallick	Art	Bihar
Shri Hemchand Manjhi	Medicine	Chhattisgarh
Shri Chandrashekhar Mahadeorao Meshram	Medicine	Maharashtra
Shri Surendra Mohan Mishra (Posthumous)	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Ali Mohammed & Shri Ghani Mohammed* (Duo)	Art	Rajasthan
Ms. Kalpana Morparia	Trade & Industry	Maharashtra
Ms. Chami Murmu	Social Work	Jharkhand
Shri Sasindran Muthuvel	Public Affairs	Papua New Guinea
Ms. G Nachiyar	Medicine	Tamil Nadu
Ms. Kiran Nadar	Art	Delhi
Shri Pakaravur Chithran Namboodiripad (Posthumous)	Literature & Education	Kerala
Shri Narayanan E P	Art	Kerala
Shri Shailesh Nayak	Science & Engineering	Delhi
Shri Harish Nayak (Posthumous)	Literature & Education	Gujarat
Shri Fred Negrit	Literature & Education	France
Shri Hari Om	Science & Engineering	Haryana
Shri Bhagabat Padhan	Art	Odisha
Shri Sanatan Rudra Pal	Art	West Bengal
Shri Shankar Baba Pundlikrao Papalkar	Social Work	Maharashtra
Shri Radhe Shyam Pareek	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Dayal Mavjibhai Parmar	Medicine	Gujarat
Shri Binod Kumar Pasayat	Art	Odisha
Ms. Silbi Passah	Art	Meghalaya
Ms. Shanti Devi Paswan & Shri Shivan Paswan* (Duo)	Art	Bihar
Shri Sanjay Anant Patil	Others - Agriculture	Goa
Shri Muni Narayana Prasad	Literature & Education	Kerala
Shri K S Rajanna	Social Work	Karnataka
Shri Chandrashekar Channapatna Rajannachar	Medicine	Karnataka
Shri Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit	Literature & Education	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Romalo Ram	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
Shri Navjivan Rastogi	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
Ms. Nirmal Rishi	Art	Punjab
Shri Pran Sabharwal	Art	Punjab
Shri Gaddam Sammaiah	Art	Telangana
Shri Sangthankima	Social Work	Mizoram
Shri Machihan Sasa	Art	Manipur
Shri Omprakash Sharma	Art	Madhya Pradesh
Shri Eklabya Sharma	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
Shri Ram Chander Sihag	Science & Engineering	Haryana
Shri Harbinder Singh	Sports	Delhi
Shri Gurvinder Singh	Social Work	Haryana
Shri Godawari Singh	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Ravi Prakash Singh	Science & Engineering	Mexico

Shri Seshampatti T Sivalingam	Art	Tamil Nadu
Shri Somanna	Social Work	Karnataka
Shri Kethavath Somlal	Literature & Education	Telangana
Ms. Shashi Soni	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
Ms. Urmila Srivastava	Art	Uttar Pradesh
Shri Nepal Chandra Sutradhar (Posthumous)	Art	West Bengal
Shri Gopinath Swain	Art	Odisha
Shri Laxman Bhatt Tailang	Art	Rajasthan
Ms. Maya Tandon	Social Work	Rajasthan
Ms. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi Thampuratty	Literature & Education	Kerala
Shri Jagdish Labhshanker Trivedi	Art	Gujarat
Ms. Sano Vamuzo	Social Work	Nagaland
Shri Balakrishnan Sadanam Puthiya Veetil	Art	Kerala
Shri Kurella Vittalacharya	Literature & Education	Telangana
Shri Kiran Vyas	Others - Yoga	France
Shri Jageshwar Yadav	Social Work	Chhattisgarh
Shri Babu Ram Yadav	Art	Uttar Pradesh



OBITUARIES

Professor Ved Prakash Nanda, a luminary in the Indian diaspora, recently passed away, leaving behind a legacy of profound contributions to literature, education, and international law

- Born in 1934 in Gujranwala, British India, his journey transcended borders as his family migrated to India after the partition in 1947. Prof.
- Padma Bhushan Award (2018): Recognition for outstanding contributions to literature and education.

Jacques Delors, the former European Commission chief and a key figure in the formation of the European Union (EU), has died at the age of 98

- A prominent French socialist, Delors played a crucial role in shaping the EU during his three-term presidency from January 1985 to the end of 1994.
- Before his tenure as the European Commission president, Delors served as France's finance minister under President Francois Mitterrand from 1981 to 1984.

Franz Beckenbauer, one of only three men two have won the FIFA World

Cup as a player and as a manager, has died at the age of 78

- He led the team to victory in the 1972 European Championship and the 1974 World Cup, earning him the Ballon d'Or in 1972 and 1976.

The Indian classical music world mourns the passing of Ustad Rashid Khan, a towering figure who left an indelible mark on the Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana and beyond

- Rashid Khan's mastery wasn't limited to classical concerts. He lent his voice to several prominent Bollywood films, including "My Name is Khan," "Jab We Met," and "Manto," further solidifying his connection with a wider audience.
- He was conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awards, and in 2012, West Bengal bestowed upon him the Banga Bhushan, recognizing his contribution to the state's artistic landscape.

Renowned German actor Christian Oliver, aged 51, famed for roles in Speed Racer and Valkyrie, tragically perished in a Caribbean plane crash

- German actor Christian Oliver, known for his roles in films like Speed Racer and Valkyrie, met an untimely demise in a plane crash in the Caribbean.

- Oliver, known by his birth name Christian Klepser, shared the big screen with George Clooney in "The Good German" and showcased his talents in the 2008 action-comedy "Speed Racer." With a prolific career spanning over 60 movie and TV credits, he played a minor role in Tom Cruise's film "Valkyrie."

Munawwar Rana, a celebrated Urdu poet, passed away at the age of 71 due to cardiac arrest in Lucknow

- He was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2014 for his poetry book 'Shahdaba'. However, he returned the award about a year later, citing increasing societal intolerance.
- His other recognitions include the Ameer Khusro Award, Mir Taqi Mir Award, Ghalib Award, Dr

Zakir Hussain Award, and the Saraswati Samaj Award. His works have been translated into several languages.

The Indian classical music fraternity mourns the loss of Dr. Prabha Atre, a revered classical vocalist and a luminary of the Kirana Gharana, who passed away in Pune at the age of 91

- Dr. Atre's contributions were recognized through several prestigious awards. She was a recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1991), Padma Shri (1990), Padma Bhushan (2002), and the Padma Vibhushan (2022), India's second-highest civilian honor.



IMPORTANT DAYS

1 January - Global Family Day

- It is celebrated as a day of peace and sharing. Its aim is to unite and spread a message of peace by considering and promoting the idea that Earth is one Global Family so as to make the world a better place to live for everyone.

2 January- World Introvert Day

- January 2, the day following the dreaded celebrations of the previous year is observed as World Introvert Day in order to better understand the numerous introverts all over the world. It is the ideal day to honor introverts by giving them the time and space they require.

3 January- International Mind Body Wellness Day

- It's International Mind-Body Wellness Day, a time to recommit to loving both our bodies and minds by putting new strategies for development and wellness into action.

4 January - World Braille Day

- In remembrance of the birth of Louis Braille, the inventor of Braille, January 4 is marked as World Braille Day.

5 January- National Birds Day

- National Bird Day is celebrated to raise awareness of the value of tiny tweets in the ecosystem. The Avian Welfare Coalition, which works hard to promote awareness for birds that are captured or

produced in captivity for either financial gain or for human amusement, is behind this initiative.

6 January - World Day of War Orphans

- World Day of War Orphans is celebrated to create awareness about the plight of war orphans and to address the traumatic conditions faced by them.

8 January - African National Congress Foundation Day

- South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was founded on 8 January 1912 by John Langalibalele Dube in Bloemfontein. Behind this, the primary motive was to give voting rights to black and mixed-race Africans or to unite African people and spearhead the struggle for fundamental political, social, and economic change.

8 January- Earth's Rotations Day

- Every year, January 8 is recognized as Earth Rotation Day. Today marks the anniversary of French physicist Leon Foucault's 1851 proof that the Earth revolves on its axis.

9 January - NRI (Non-Resident Indian) Day or Pravasi Bharatiya Divas

- NRI or Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is observed every year on 9 January to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community towards the

development of India. This day also commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on 9 January 1915.

10 January - World Hindi Day

- Vishwa Hindi Diwas is an annual event observed on January 10. World Hindi Day was created to mark the occasion when Hindi was first spoken at the UNGA in 1949. With nearly 600 million speakers worldwide, Hindi is the third most widely spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese and English.

11 January - Death anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri

- He was the second Prime Minister of Independent India. He popularised the slogan 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' He actively participated in India's freedom struggle. He died on 11 January 1966. And he was also known as the 'Man of Peace' globally.

11 January - National Human Trafficking Awareness Day

- It is observed on 11 January to spread awareness about the persistent issue of human trafficking. This day aims to raise awareness about the plight of human trafficking victims, as well as to promote and protect their rights.

12 January - National Youth Day

- The birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda also called Swami Vivekananda Jayanti is celebrated every year on 12 January. He was born on 12 January 1863. The government had decided to observe it as Rashtriya Yuva Diwas because the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth. He had given a speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago and glorified India's name.

15 January - Indian Army Day

- Every year 15 January is observed as Indian Army Day because on this day in 1949 field Marshal Kodandera M Cariappa took over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Commander-in-Chief.

16 January- National Startup Day

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared January 16 as National Startup Day in the year 2021. Since then various programs and events are organized by government and non-government

organizations to applaud and promote the Indian startup ecosystem.

16 January- Martin Luther King Jr Day

- Martin Luther King Jr Day is a federal holiday in the United States that takes place on the third Monday in January. It honors the life and legacy of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

17 January- Benjamin Franklin Day

- Every year on January 17, on the anniversary of his birth, Benjamin Franklin Day is observed to honor one of the most important Founding Fathers of the United States. It is a time to recognize one of America's most illustrious and significant individuals and to think back on his many accomplishments and the influence he had on the world.

17 January: Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti

- It is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh and this year it falls on January 17. He was the tenth Guru out of a total of ten Sikh Gurus. On 22 December 1666, he was born in Patna, Bihar as per the Julian calendar.

19 January- Kokborok Day

- On January 19th, the Indian State of Tripura observes Kokborok Day, also known as Tripuri Language Day, to foster the Kokborok language. This day honours the year 1979 when Kokborok became officially recognized for the first time.

20 January- Penguin Awareness Day

- Every year on January 20, Penguin Awareness Day is observed. Because humans typically don't live in penguins' natural habitats, the species' annual population decline goes largely unnoticed. This day is a fantastic effort to increase awareness of this important issue.

21 January - Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya Foundation Day

- On 21 January 1972, the states of Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya became full-fledged states under the North Eastern Region (Re-organisation) Act, of 1971. Therefore, Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya celebrate their Statehood Day on 21 January.

23 January - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti

- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was born on 23 January 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa. He was one of the most prominent Indian freedom fighters. His army was known as Indian National Army (INA) or Azad Hind Fauj. He also led an Indian national force from abroad against the Western powers during World War II.

24 January- National Girl Child Day

- On 24 January every year, National Girl Child Day is celebrated to highlight the inequalities faced by a majority of the girls in India, the importance of education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care and safety of girl children, etc.

24 January - International Day of Education

- International Day of Education is observed on 24 January every year to support transformative actions for inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

25 January- National Voters Day

- Every year on 25 January National Voter's Day or Rashtriya Matdata Diwas is celebrated to encourage young voters to participate in the political process. In 2011 the first time this day was celebrated to mark Election Commission's Foundation Day.

25 January- National Tourism Day

- Every year on 25 January National Tourism Day is celebrated in India to raise awareness and educate people about the importance of tourism and the role it plays in the Indian economy.

25 January- Mahayana New Year

- Buddhists all over the world celebrate Mahayana New Year on January 25 of this year. Various Buddhist philosophies and ideologies are referred to as Mahayana. One of Buddhism's two main branches, Mahayana is primarily practiced in Northeast Asia. Tibet, Taiwan, Mongolia, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Mahayana Buddhism is practiced according to customs and traditions unique to each region.

26 January- Republic Day

- On 26 November, 1949 the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution the supreme law of the land and replaced the Government of India Act 1935. It came into effect on 26 January

1950 with a democratic government system. This day marks the largest parade that took place at Rajpath, Delhi every year.

26 January - International Customs Day

- International Customs Day (ICD) is celebrated every year on 26 January by Customs Organisation to recognize the role of customs officials and agencies in maintaining border security. It also focuses on the working conditions and challenges that customs officers face in their jobs.

27 January- National Geographic Day

- Every year on January 27, National Geographic Day is observed all across the country. It is a day set aside to honour the "National Geographic Magazine," which has been published continuously for more than a century.

28 January- Birth Anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai

- Lala Lajpat Rai was born on 28 January, 1865 in Punjab. He was a prominent nationalist leader who played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. He also earned the title of 'Punjab Kesari' or 'the Lion of Punjab'. He initiated the foundation of the Punjab National Bank. He died on 17 November 1928, due to serious injuries. The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Hisar, Haryana is named after Lala Lajpat Rai.

28 January- K.M Cariappa Jayanti

- 28 January in Indian and World History is celebrated, observed, and remembered for various reasons, and one of them is the birth anniversary of Kodandera Madappa Cariappa. He was the first Commander-in-chief of the Indian Army. And today we are commemorating his 124th birth anniversary.

29 January- Indian Newspaper Day

- A day set aside to honour the beginning of newspapers in India is known as Indian Newspaper Day. This day is intended to raise awareness of Indian newspapers. Indian Newspaper Day, which is observed on January 29th each year, is today. However, there is no theme to observe this important occasion.

30 January - Martyrs Day or Shaheed Diwas

- 30 January is celebrated as Martyr's Day or Shaheed Diwas every year in memory of Mahatma

Gandhi and the sacrifice of three revolutionaries of India. As, of 30 January 1948, the 'Father of Nation' was assassinated. And on 23rd March 3 heroes namely Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar of the nation were hanged to death by the British.

30 January – World Leprosy Day

- World Leprosy Day is observed on the last Sunday of January to focus on the target of zero cases of

leprosy-related disabilities in children. As we know disabilities do not occur overnight but happen after a prolonged period of undiagnosed disease.

31 January- International Zebra Day

- Every January 31, people around the world celebrate International Zebra Day. The purpose of the day is to spread knowledge about how you can support the conservation of this animal.



OPSC MCQ

1. Which state has consistently ranked first in recording entries on the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) platform?
 - (a) Kerala
 - (b) Uttar Pradesh
 - (c) Rajasthan
 - (d) Andhra Pradesh
2. The Kharsawan Massacre, often mentioned in news, happened in which current state?
 - (a) Odisha
 - (b) Chhattisgarh
 - (c) Jharkhand
 - (d) Bihar
3. Which country has recently filed a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice accusing it of genocide?
 - (a) Lebanon
 - (b) Turkey
 - (c) Iran
 - (d) South Africa
4. Who has been recently appointed as the Chairman of the Sixteenth Finance Commission?
 - (a) Arvind Panagariya
 - (b) Rahul Rastogi
 - (c) Vimsen Bhatnager
 - (d) Amitab Kant
5. When is the 'World Braille Day' observed every year?
 - (a) January 1
 - (b) January 2
 - (c) January 4
 - (d) January 6
6. Adora Magic City is the first homegrown cruise ship of which country?
 - (a) China
 - (b) Japan
 - (c) North Korea
 - (d) South Korea
7. Red Ant Chutney, which has recently received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, belongs to which state?
 - (a) Odisha
 - (b) Bihar
 - (c) Andhra Pradesh
 - (d) Meghalaya
8. Which country is host and chair of the 46th session of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee in 2024?
 - (a) India
 - (b) Bangladesh
 - (c) South Africa
 - (d) Brazil
9. According to the prestigious awards by Skytrax in 2023, which airport was crowned the World's Best Airport for the year 2023?
 - (a) Singapore's Changi Airport
 - (b) Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi
 - (c) Hong Kong International Airport
 - (d) Incheon International Airport
10. What is the name of the assault rifle recently launched by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)?
 - (a) Ugram
 - (b) Micro-Uzi
 - (c) Dragunov SVD
 - (d) Vidhwansak
11. Chandubi Festival, recently seen in news, is celebrated in which Indian State?
 - (a) Arunachal Pradesh
 - (b) Assam
 - (c) Manipur
 - (d) Meghalaya
12. Which state has recently become the first state to map all accident black spots on the Mapples App?
 - (a) Punjab
 - (b) Haryana
 - (c) Himachal Pradesh
 - (d) Uttar Pradesh
13. The Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, that was recently in the news, is located in which state?
 - (a) Bihar
 - (b) Chhattisgarh
 - (c) Madhya Pradesh
 - (d) Uttar Pradesh
14. Kyaukphyu SEZ and deep sea port, that was recently in news, is located in which country?
 - (a) Myanmar
 - (b) Thailand
 - (c) Bangladesh
 - (d) Laos
15. On which date, the 'Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas' observed in India?
 - (a) January 5
 - (b) January 15
 - (c) January 22
 - (d) January 9

16. **Wancho Wooden Craft, which has recently received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, belongs to which state?**
- (a) Sikkim
(b) Manipur
(c) Assam
(d) Arunachal Pradesh
17. **Lanjia Saura paintings, which recently got GI tag, belong to which state?**
- (a) Odisha
(b) Jharkhand
(c) Bihar
(d) Andhra Pradesh
18. **In which state was the 125 feet high bronze statue of Dr. BR Ambedkar inaugurated ?**
- (a) Andhra Pradesh
(b) Telengana
(c) Maharashtra
(d) Kerala
19. **According to the recent report of Forbes, which is the strongest currency in the world?**
- (a) Kuwaiti Dinar
(b) Australian Dollar
(c) Saudi Riyal
(d) Bahamian dollar
20. **Who will be the first impartial female umpire appointed by ICC for bilateral series?**
- (a) Lauren Agenbag
(b) Pat Carrick
(c) Kim Cotton
(d) Sue Redfern
21. **In which state of India will the 'World Economic Forum' establish a center based on 'Health Care and Life Sciences'?**
- (a) Telangana
(b) Andhra Pradesh
(c) Tamil Nadu
(d) Kerala
22. **Where is Asia's largest aviation expo, Wings India 2024, being organized in which city?**
- (a) Bhopal
(b) Bangaluru
(c) Bhubaneswar
(d) Hyderabad
23. **Which batsman made the record of scoring most centuries in T20 International?**
- (a) Rohit Sharma
(b) Virat Kohli
(c) Subham Gill
(d) David Warner
24. **Maritime exercise 'Ayutthaya' is conducted between the Navy of India and which country ?**
- (a) Myanmar
(b) Thailand
(c) Bangladesh
(d) Philipines
25. **Who was honored with the Best FIFA Men's Player Award?**
- (a) Lionel Messi
(b) Cristiano Ronaldo
(c) Marcelo
(d) Mbappe
26. **With which country has India signed an agreement for exploration and mining of Lithium?**
- (a) Argentina
(b) Bolivia
(c) Peru
(d) Chile
27. **Which Tiger Reserve has got the title of India's first 'Dark Sky Park' ?**
- (a) Kanha Tiger Reserve
(b) Sariska Tiger Riserve
(c) Similipal Tiger Reserve
(d) Pench Tiger Reserve
28. **When is National Youth Day celebrated every year ?**
- (a) 13 January
(b) 14 January
(c) 15 January
(d) 12 January
29. **Which two cities have received the 'Cleanest Ganga City' award in the Swachh Survekshan2023?**
- (a) Varanasi and Prayagraj
(b) Haridwar and Kanpur
(c) Patna and Ghazipur
(d) Agra and Meerut
30. **In which city did PM Modi inaugurate the 27th National Youth Festival**
- (a) Bhopal
(b) Nashik
(c) Surat
(d) Delhi
31. **Recently the book 'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar' was published, it was written by?**
- (a) Sanjeev Joshi

- (b) Aravind Adiga
(c) Arundhati Roy
(d) Khushwant Singh
- 32. Who won the round in Men's 10m Air Rifle Shooting event at ISSF World Cup 2024?**
(a) Jaspal Rana
(b) Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore
(c) Divyansh Singh Panwar
(d) Gagan Narang
- 33. Who won the FIH Hockey 5S Women's World Cup title**
(a) Netherlands
(b) Switzerland
(c) India
(d) Australia
- 34. Where was the foundation of the first Naturopathy Hospital of North-East India recently laid?**
(a) Bhubaneswar
(b) Dibrugarh
(c) Raipur
(d) Patna
- 35. NTPC Green Energy Limited has signed an agreement with which state government for green hydrogen?**
(a) Maharashtra
(b) Rajasthan
(c) Punjab
(d) Karnataka
- 36. Indian Army is organizing joint military exercise 'SADA TANSEEQ' with which country?**
(a) Oman
(b) Iran
(c) Saudi Arabia
(d) Turkey
- 37. With which country has the Union Cabinet recently approved the MoU for cooperation in the information technology sector?**
(a) Oman
(b) Saudi Arabia
(c) Iran
(d) Qatar
- 38. When National Voters Day is celebrated every year?**
(a) 24 January
(b) 21 January
(c) 25 January
(d) 28 January
- 39. Karpoori Thakur will be honored with Bharat Ratna (posthumously), he was the former Chief Minister of which state?**
(a) Bihar
(b) West Bengal
(c) Uttar Pradesh
(d) Jharkhand
- 40. When is National Girl Child Day celebrated every year?**
(a) 24 January
(b) 20 January
(c) 19 January
(d) 18 January
- 41. India's first submarine tourism will be started in which state?**
(a) Kerala
(b) West Bengal
(c) Gujarat
(d) Andhra Pradesh
- 42. Joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' is conducted between India and which country?**
(a) United Arab Emirates
(b) Tajikistan
(c) Oman
(d) Qatar
- 43. Pendyala Lakshmi Priya is related to which dance, who was awarded the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024?**
(a) Kuchipudi
(b) Bharat natyam
(c) Odissi
(d) Kathakli
- 44. Recently, which state was ranked as the Best Performer in the Indian startup ecosystem ranking for 2022?**
(a) Tamil Nadu
(b) Maharashtra
(c) Gujrat
(d) Rajasthan
- 45. Panama Canal, which has been in news, connects which two oceans?**
(a) Atlantic Ocean & Pacific Ocean
(b) Atlantic Ocean & Indian Ocean
(c) Indian Ocean & Arctic Ocean
(d) Pacific Ocean & Arctic Ocean
- 46. According to the 2024 Henley Passport Index, what is the rank of India?**
(a) 80th
(b) 81st

- (c) 82nd
(d) 83rd
47. Who recently became the first Indian woman to receive the Arjuna Award for Equestrian Sports?
- (a) P. V. Sindhu
(b) Mary Kom
(c) Saina Nehwal
(d) Divyakriti Singh
48. Recently, International Camel Festival was started in which city of India?
- (a) Jaisalmer, Rajasthan
(b) Kutch, Gujarat
(c) Bikaner, Rajasthan
(d) Jodhpur, Rajasthan

49. Ganga Sagar Mela, India's second-largest fair after Kumbh Mela, is celebrated in which state of India?
- (a) Assam
(b) West Bengal
(c) Bihar
(d) Gujarat
50. Punganur Cow, recently seen in the news, is native to which state of India?
- (a) Karnataka
(b) Kerala
(c) Tamil Nadu
(d) Andhra Pradesh

ANSWERS

1. Answer: B

- Uttar Pradesh has retained top rank for the third straight year in ensuring extensive usage of the Supreme Court e-committee's Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), a nationwide platform integrating courts, police, prisons and forensic labs. Over 1.56 crore entries have been logged by U.P. so far through the single window arrangement which enables seamless information exchange at every stage - from FIR registration to imprisonment.

2. Answer: C

- On January 1, 1948, the town of Kharsawan in present-day Jharkhand witnessed a massacre of Adivasis by the police. This happened during a protest against the merger of the princely state of Kharsawan into Odisha state.

3. Answer: D

- South Africa has approached the International Court of Justice urging it to declare that Israel is in breach of its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention in light of its bombing campaign in Gaza. South Africa has been historically sympathetic to Palestine due to its own experience under apartheid. However, many African nations have softened their stand on Israel over the years.

4. Answer: A

- Dr. Arvind Panagariya has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Finance Commission of India. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives recommendations on center-state financial relations. Dr. Panagariya is an eminent economist who has served as the first Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog. He will now head the 16th Finance Commission, which will suggest the tax devolution formula between the centre and states for 5 years starting 2026-27. The appointment comes after the President established a new Finance Commission through a notification dated December 31, 2023.

5. Answer: C

- Every year January 4 is observed as World Braille Day to raise the importance of Braille, which serves as a communication medium for blind and partially sighted people. The day was first initiated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019

and January is observed as Braille Literacy month. French Educator, who innovated the Braille system Louis Braille was born on January 4, 1809.

6. Answer: A

- China launched its first homegrown cruise ship, Adora Magic City, from Shanghai port in January 2024 on its maiden commercial voyage. With amenities like mahjong rooms and hotpot restaurants, the 16-deck luxury ship targets China's expanding domestic tourism market as national pride in indigenous manufacturing grows. Its success is seen as showcasing China's shipbuilding prowess and attempt to rival foreign cruise liners.

7. Answer: A

- The Red Ant Chutney of Mayurbhanj in Odisha has recently been granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The application for registration was submitted by The Mayurbhanj Kai Society Ltd in 2020 under Class 30, as per the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. This unique chutney, also known as Kai Chutney, is rich in valuable nutrients such as proteins, calcium, zinc, vitamin B-12, iron, magnesium, potassium, sodium, copper, and amino acids, contributing to immune system enhancement.

8. Answer: A

- India is set to chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024, marking a historic milestone for our nation. Vishal V Sharma, India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, announced this decision. This decision stems from a proposal by Indian authorities, made in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General. The World Heritage Committee, comprising representatives from 21 member states, gathers annually to recognize global cultural and natural heritage. Their work contributes to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

9. Answer: A

- Singapore's Changi Airport has regained its title as the World's Best Airport for the year 2023, according to the esteemed awards presented by Skytrax, an air transport research firm. After being surpassed by Qatar's Hamad International Airport

in the past two years, Changi Airport secured the top spot for the twelfth time, showcasing its enduring excellence. The Skytrax Awards, recognized as a significant benchmark in the aviation industry, acknowledge outstanding airport services and facilities.

10. Answer: A

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) launched the "Ugram" assault rifle. The DRDO developed the rifle in collaboration with a private company and the Armament Research and Development Establishments (ARDE), a DRDO laboratory in Pune. The "Ugram" is a 7.62 x 51 mm caliber rifle that weighs less than four kilograms and has a range of 500 meters.

11. Answer: A

- The Chandubi Festival, an annual five-day celebration, recently took place along the Chandubi Lake in the Assam. This cultural extravaganza, starting on the first day of the New Year, showcases the rich local folk culture, ethnic cuisine, traditional handloom and dresses, as well as activities like boating.

12. Answer: A

- Punjab has become the first state in India to map all 784 accident black spots on the Mappls App, a navigation system developed by MapMyIndia. This initiative, announced by Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav, is part of the preparations for the launch of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's 'Sadak Suraksha Force'.

13. Answer: B

- The Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve, which was recently in the news due to issues related to encroachment, is located in the state of Chhattisgarh. The tiger reserve, situated in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district, has faced challenges due to illegal encroachment in its buffer area. The Chhattisgarh high court ordered the removal of encroachers from the reserve, following a legal battle where the court rejected the petition filed by the encroachers.

14. Answer: A

- China is pushing to expedite the construction of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in western Myanmar's Rakhine state. This initiative aims to ensure smoother access to the Bay of Bengal and is being developed by the Kyaukphyu SEZ Deep Seaport Co. Ltd, a joint venture between the CITIC Myanmar Port Investment Ltd and the Myanmar government-backed Kyaukphyu SEZ Management Committee. The project involves the construction of the Kyaukphyu SEZ and deep sea port. China's involvement in this project has strategic implications, potentially impacting India's traditional role as a net security provider in the region and Beijing's growing influence in Myanmar and the surrounding areas. The development of this SEZ is part of China's broader efforts to expand its economic and strategic footprint in Southeast Asia.

15. Answer: D

- Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas is celebrated on January 9th every year to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India. The day commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on January 9, 1915.

16. Answer: D

- Recently, three items of Arunachal Pradesh have received the prestigious Geographical Indication tag. These are adi kekir (ginger), handmade carpets by Tibetan settlers and wooden

items made by Wancho community. Wancho wooden craft items are unique as they feature human heads- tobacco pipes with head-shaped bowls and drinking mugs with carrying heads.

17. Answer A

- Lanjia Saura paintings, also known as ekons or iditals, are a unique style of wall mural art from Odisha. The art form belongs to the Lanjia Saura community, a PVTG largely residing in the Rayagada district. These paintings are in the form of exterior murals painted on the mud walls of homes. White paintings figure over a crimson-maroon background. It is believed that the Lanjia Sauras paint their walls with Idital artworks to show gratitude to their deities and forefathers, and also for the well-being of their community. Reflecting the love and affection of the primitive tribes for nature, they feature subjects like tribal humans, trees, animals, birds, the Sun and the Moon.

18. Answer A

- In Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will unveil the 125 feet Bronze statue of Dr BR Ambedkar at Swaraj Maidan in Vijayawada. Termed as "Statue of Social Justice", it pays tribute to the contributions of DR BR Ambedkar and seeks to inspire future generations for an egalitarian society.

19. Answer A

- The highest-valued currency in the world is the Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD). Since it was first introduced in 1960, the Kuwaiti dinar has consistently ranked as the world's most valuable currency.

20. Answer D

- Sue Redfern will become the first International Cricket Council-appointed female neutral umpire to stand in a bilateral series as she has been named for the upcoming ICC Women's Championship and T20I fixtures between Australia and South Africa.

21. Answer A

- World Economic Forum and Telangana Government Collaborate to Establish C4IR in Hyderabad. World Economic Forum (WEF) and Telangana collaborate to establish the world's first health tech and life sciences-focused Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) in Hyderabad.

22. Answer D

- HYDERABAD, 18 January 2024: Asia's largest event on civil aviation (Commercial, General and Business Aviation), the four-day 'Wings India 2024', kickstarted today at Begumpet Airport by Mr Jyotiraditya M Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation & Steel, GoI.

23. Answer A

- The Hitman Rohit Sharma Holds The Record Of Most Centuries In T20 International Cricket. as He Scored 5 Centuries in 151 Matches (143 Innings) During His T20 International Career. Which Remains The Most Centuries Scored By Batsman In T20Is. Surya Kumar Yadav(IND) and Glenn Maxwell(AUS) Hit 4 Centuries each in T20Is. Check Out The List Of Top 10 Batsmen With Most Centuries Scored In T20 International Cricket.

24. Answer B**25. Answer A**

- Lionel Messi claimed The Best FIFA Men's Player award by the narrowest of margins having recorded the same amount of points as Erling Haaland, a breakdown from FIFA has revealed.

26. Answer A

- Ministry of Mines, Government of India has achieved a significant milestone with the signing of an agreement between Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) and the state-owned enterprise of Catamarca province of Argentina CATAMARCA MINERA Y ENERGÉTICA SOCIEDAD DEL ESTADO (CAMYEN SE) at Catamarca, Argentina., on 15th January, 2024.

27. Answer D

- The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Maharashtra has become India's first Dark Sky park and is the fifth in Asia. The park earned the title for protecting the night sky and preventing light pollution, making the facility ideal for astronomy enthusiasts.

28. Answer D

- National Youth Day (Yuva Diwas or Swami Vivekananda Birthday) is celebrated with the great joy and enthusiasm in India every year on 12th of January. It is celebrated to commemorate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, maker of the modern India.

29. Answer A

- Varanasi and Prayagraj won the top two awards amongst the Cleanest Ganga Towns. Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh won the top three awards for Best Performing State. Chandigarh walked away with the award for the Best Safaimitra Surakshit Sheher.

30. Answer B

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 27th National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra today. Shri Modi paid floral tributes to the portrait of Swami Vivekananda and Rajmata Jijau.

31. Answer A

- 'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar,' a collection of 75 poems penned by BrahMos Aerospace Deputy CEO Sanjeev Joshi, was launched in a prestigious event graced by top Indian defence and literary figures. This book reflects the confluence of creative expression and defence expertise.

32. Answer C

- India's Divyansh Singh Panwar won the gold medal in the men's 10m air rifle shooting event at the ISSF World Cup 2024 in Cairo.

33. Answer A

- The 2024 Hockey5s World Cup was the first edition of the FIH Women's Hockey5s World Cup, the quadrennial world championship for women's national hockey5s teams organized by the FIH. It was held from 24 to 27 January 2024, in Muscat, Oman. The Netherlands won the final against India to claim the first gold medal.

34. Answer B

- Northeast India is witnessing a significant advancement in healthcare with the establishment of its first Naturopathy hospital in Dibrugarh, Assam.

35. Answer A

- NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government of Maharashtra for development of Green Hydrogen and derivatives (Green Ammonia, Green Methanol) of up to 1

million Ton capacity per annum, including Pumped Storage Projects of 2 GW and development of renewable energy.

36. Answer C

- The inaugural edition of India-Saudi Arabia Joint Military Exercise 'SADA TANSEEQ' commenced at Mahajan, Rajasthan. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 29th January to 10th February 2024.

37. Answer A

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on 15th December, 2023, between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of the Sultanate of Oman on cooperation in the field of Information Technology.

38. Answer C

- In order to encourage more young voters to take part in the political process, Government of India has decided to celebrate January 25 every year as "National Voters' Day". It has been started from 25 January 2011 to mark the foundation day of Election Commission of India.

39. Answer A

- Former Chief Minister of Bihar Karpoori Thakur was conferred the nation's highest honour, Bharat Ratna, posthumously by the President of India Droupadi Murmu this evening. The award comes 35 years after his death -- Karpoori Thakur died on February 17, 1988.

40. Answer A

- Every January 24, India celebrates National Girl Child Day to highlight the rights and welfare of girls.

41. Answer C

- The Gujarat government, in partnership with Mazgaon Dock Limited, is set to pioneer India's first-ever submarine tourism project at Dwarka, exploring marine wonders around Bet Dwarka.

42. Answer A

- The two-week-long joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone' between India and UAE is underway in the arid landscape of Rajasthan. The first edition of the India-UAE military exercise aims to enhance interoperability through exchanging knowledge and sharing best practices in military operations

43. Answer A

- Kuchipudi dancer Pendyala Lakshmi Priya was honored with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 by President Draupadi Murmu. Priya, a 15-year-old class 10 student from Kazipet, Telangana, was honored for her excellence in the field of art and culture.
- Kuchipudi dancer Pendyala Lakshmi Priya was honored with the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 by President Draupadi Murmu. Priya, a 15-year-old class 10 student from Kazipet, Telangana, was honored for her excellence in the field of art and culture.

44. Answer: A

- Tamil Nadu secured the title of the 'best performer' state in the 2022 Startup India State Startup Rankings. The state's strategic efforts included the revamping of its nodal startup agency, StartupTN, in 2021, and budget allocations for the launch of new funds like Tamil Nadu Startup Seed Fund (TANSEED),

Emerging Sector Seed Fund, and Tamil Nadu SC/ ST Fund. The rankings also recognized Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, and Himachal Pradesh as best performers, while Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Telangana were categorized as 'leaders.'

45. Answer: A

- Scientists recently discovered a 22-million-year-old lost forest in the Panama Canal, a crucial artificial waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Stretching 80 kilometers, the canal features locks to adjust water levels for ship passage through the isthmus. Initiated by France in 1881, the United States took over in 1904, completing and managing the canal until 1999. Panama assumed full control in 2000, following the Torrijos-Carter Treaties with the U.S. in 1977.

46. Answer: B

- According to the 2024 Henley Passport Index, India is ranked 80th out of 199 countries. This is a three-rank increase from 2023, when India was ranked 83rd. The Henley Passport Index ranks countries based on the number of destinations that allow visa-free entry to their passport.

47. Answer: D

- Jaipur's Divyakriti Singh, aged 23, is the inaugural Indian female recipient of the Arjuna Award for equestrian sports. The sole representative from Rajasthan this year, Singh underwent three years of training in Germany at the Hof Kasselmann dressage yard in Hagen. She secured an Individual Silver and two Bronze medals at the International Dressage Competition in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

48. Answer: C

- The International Camel Festival in Rajasthan's Bikaner district started with a vibrant Heritage Walk from Rampuriya Haveli, showing decorated camels, traditional costumes, and local folk artists. Tourists and locals enjoyed folk songs, Rammats' tunes, and dances, fostering a festive atmosphere in the city park. The event featured a warm reception by residents with flowers and rangoli decorations. Additionally, the Tourism Department organized Rangoli, Mehndi, and drawing competitions at Bikaji ki Tekri, rewarding winners with mementos.

49. Answer: B

- Gangasagar fair is celebrated every year on 14 or 15 January. This fair is held on the day of Makar Sankranti. In the year 2023, about 51 lakh devotees participated in this fair. This fair is held in South Pargana district of West Bengal. This fair is celebrated at Sagardweep, located some distance from the Bengal coast.

50. Answer: C

- The Prime Minister recently personally fed Punganur cows at his New Delhi residence. Punganur cows, native to Andhra Pradesh's Punganur village, are one of the world's smallest cattle breeds, standing 70-90 cm tall and weighing less than 200kg. Known for their resilience to drought, they adapt to low-quality feed and produce milk with 8% fat content, rich in nutrients. These eco-friendly cows play a significant role in cultural practices, as seen in Andhra Pradesh's temples, including Tirupati Thirumala Temple.