

APTI PLUS OAS GAZETTE

JUNE 2024



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CREATING CIVIL SERVANTS FOR THE NATION



Odisha FC(Football Club) women
wins the IWL 2023-24



Odisha is set to launch its
first Vande Metro train



The Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF)
honored the life and achievements
of Nandini Satpathy.



The Odisha govt. has reported
an 87% reduction in new
leprosy cases



Odisha is introducing all-women
managed Sakhi booths

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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

The three-month ban on entry of tourists and visitors to Bhitarkanika National Park during the mating season of saltwater crocodiles will come into force from May 1.

- The ban will be effective till July 31. The restriction is being imposed to ensure that the estuarine crocodiles are not disturbed during their breeding season by visitors.
- Besides, the sound of the mechanised boats carrying tourists and forest officials also disturb the crocodiles. "Once the reptiles get disturbed during nesting, they become more violent and majority of the crocodile attack incidents occur during the breeding season.
- The female crocodiles lay eggs inside mangrove forests near water bodies of the park and guard the eggs till the emergence of hatchlings. Forest guards have been directed to keep watch on the movements of mother crocodiles.
- The nests are usually prepared with mangrove twigs, leaves and mud on high grounds which cannot be inundated during high tide and flood besides facilitating exposure to direct sunlight. A female crocodile lays 50 to 60 eggs in a nest.

East Coast Railway's GM, Mohes Kumar Behera, inspected the redevelopment work at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar railway stations.

- The redevelopment of the station is being done with a project cost of Rs 303 crore under the Indian Railways' Amrit Station Scheme.

Amrit Bharat Station Scheme:

- The Ministry of Railways launched an ongoing mission in **February 2023 to redevelop 1,309 Indian Railway stations nationwide.**
- The mission aims to **modernize these stations, improving passenger amenities, traffic circulation, inter-modal integration, and signage.**
- It is based on long-term Master Planning and the implementation of the Master Plan's elements according to station needs and patronage.
- The scheme includes introducing new amenities and upgrading or replacing existing ones.
- The ultimate goal is to transform these stations into vibrant city centers in the long term.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is setting up 666 theme-based booths in Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) areas in

Odisha to increase tribal voter representation.

- These booths, designed to showcase the indigenous traditions and culture of PVTGs, aim to raise awareness about electoral participation and voter education in local dialects.
- Odisha is home to 13 PVTGs with a total population of 2,64,974, including groups like Paudi Bhuiya, Juang, Saura, and others.
- Through registration drives conducted by booth-level officers since December last year, all eligible PVTG voters (1,84,274) have been enrolled.
- Voter education content in local dialects, alongside traditional folk arts and community engagement, has helped achieve 100% PVTG enrolment.
- Wall paintings, street plays, and cultural forms like Pala and Daskathia have been effective tools for voter education and awareness.

Sambalpur Zoo authorities implement special initiatives to protect animals from extreme heat.

- The Odisha government has renamed the zoo at Motijharan in Sambalpur as "Sambalpur Zoo & Rescue Centre in 2023."
- Established in 1980 on a 13-hectare land, the zoo was previously known as the Deer Park & Wild Animal Conservation Centre.
- It now boasts 27 enclosures and houses 333 animals, including 123 deers, 41 sambars, and four sloth bears. Notably, the zoo also features five Schedule-1 species animals such as leopards, sloth bears, chousinghas, pythons, and peacocks.
- Last year, the Hirakud Wildlife Division initiated a botanical garden with over 6,000 plants, acting as a greenbelt for the animals and enhancing visitor flow.
- The zoo serves as an educational hub on wildlife for the public and has improved visitor amenities like more toilets, drinking water facilities, a cafeteria, exclusive parking, a children's park, and complete renovation of drainage and enclosures in the past year.

Odisha FC(Football Club) women made history on March 24 by winning the Indian Women's League (IWL) 2023-24, defeating Gokulam FC.

- FIFA, headquartered in **Zurich, Switzerland**, took note of their achievement.
- FIFA President Gianni Infantino congratulated Odisha FC in a letter to AIFF chief Kalyan Chaubey.

- Infantino praised Odisha FC Women's constant efforts and results throughout the season.
- Odisha FC's performance in the league was outstanding, with 10 wins, 1 loss, and 1 draw.

Kalahandi district faces significant migration, with thousands leaving annually for job opportunities in other states.

- Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Mumbai, and Pune are preferred destinations due to higher wages and better working conditions.
- Lack of employment opportunities and apathetic administration contribute to the rise in migration.
- Manjhari village in Golamunda block is a stark example, with over 2,000 out of 3,000 registered voters having migrated for work.
- The district administration and state Labour department's lack of proactive measures exacerbates the issue.
- Special awareness programs to discourage migration have been initiated, but compliance remains low.
- Despite challenges, migrants continue to seek opportunities elsewhere to support their families.
- Some returning migrants highlight instances of not being paid properly for work, leading them to seek jobs elsewhere.
- Villages like Manjhari show signs of depopulation, with vacant houses and deserted streets due to large-scale migration.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has cleared the deck for construction of two 6-lane flyovers and other civil works in Sambalpur district, Odisha, despite the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) being in force allowing civil works to commence after certain procedures are completed.

- The civil works entail the construction of a 6-lane flyover on the Angul-Sambalpur section of NH-42 (NH-55) and another 6-lane flyover at Ainthapali junction, along with a 2-lane railway over-bridge (ROB) on NH-53 in Sambalpur district.
- These projects will be executed in Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) mode, with the cost estimated at approximately Rs 576.17 Crore.

- Recently, The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved the upgradation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of three projects worth Rs 488 crore in the state.
- The approved projects included a bypass on NH-59 for Berhampur city, railway over bridge (RoB) on Puri-Konark road and five submersible bridges on Malkangiri-Motu NH-326.

IDCO:

- Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) was set up by the Government of Odisha as a statutory Corporation in 1981. IDCO has been acting as the Nodal Agency for providing industrial infrastructure and land for industrial and infrastructure projects in the State.
- About 116 industrial estates/areas are present in strategic locations of Odisha with an area of Ac.10900.529 land

The Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) honored the life and achievements of Nandini Satpathy, Odisha's first woman Chief Minister.

- The event marked the official release of biography titled "Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa," authored by Pallavi Rebbapragada.

Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa

- "Nandini Satpathy: The Iron Lady of Orissa," published by Simon & Schuster, offers an insightful portrayal of the remarkable journey of Nandini Satpathy.
- Born into a family of intellectuals and freedom fighters, she emerged as a trailblazing leader known for her unwavering spirit and principled stand.
- Starting from her courageous acts during the freedom struggle, including the symbolic act of pulling down the Union Jack, Nandini Satpathy's journey saw her rise to prominence as the youngest member of the Rajya Sabha at the age of 31.
- Her tenure as the Minister of Information and Broadcasting under Indira Gandhi's cabinet witnessed pivotal moments in India's history, notably her role in the Free Bangla Radio during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971.

Odisha aims to implement a new road safety policy to slash road accident fatalities by 50% by 2030.

- Odisha aims to reduce road accidents and fatalities by 50% by 2030 through a new road safety policy.

- The policy emphasizes the 4Es - Engineering, Education, Enforcement, and Emergency Care, along with administrative and technology-enabled interventions.
- Priority areas will be identified for road safety research, with key institutions and academicians nominated to carry out research activities. Collaboration with automobile industry bodies is planned to establish research facilities.
- Centre of Excellence (CoE): A CoE will be established to foster innovations and advancements in road safety, prioritizing root cause analysis of major accidents for corrective measures.
- The policy includes strengthening legal provisions and financial support for sustainability, along with enhancing emergency and trauma care facilities.
- The Odisha Road Safety Authority will be established to rationalize and expedite road safety actions, plan budgeting, and expenditure.
- Departments have been asked to submit feedback on the draft policy by May 15, after which it will be finalized with suggestions incorporated.

Statistics:

- Odisha recorded 36,463 fatalities and 75,147 injuries in 77,637 accidents in the last 7 years. On average, 15 persons die in road accidents every day in the state.
- The highest number of deaths, 5,739, occurred in 11,992 road accidents in 2023.

Vedanta Limited, Lanjigarh has launched an advanced Energy Management System across its power plant.

- This initiative aims to enhance energy efficiency levels and optimize refinery operations through digitization efforts.
- The Energy Management System monitors the energy performance parameters of 120 critical electrical assets, facilitating systematic monitoring, analysis, control, and optimization.
- Vedanta's commitment to achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2050 or sooner is reinforced through this initiative, aligning with its ESG goals. The company's alumina refinery has received several recognitions for its energy efficiency initiatives, showcasing its dedication to sustainability.
- Vedanta Aluminium Notable achievements include:
 - An ~8% reduction in GHG emissions intensity in FY23 while increasing production by ~16%
 - Recycling over 15 billion liters of water and achieving a noteworthy 11% reduction in water withdrawal from freshwater sources

- Doubling waste utilization and collaborating on over 60 rural community water bodies restoration projects.

The Orissa High Court's recent decision to grant interim bail to accused individuals in three separate cases under unique conditions has sparked attention and debate.

- In one instance, the petitioner, Pintu Mahalik, and three others were accused of raping a minor girl. Pintu's advocate argued that prolonged detention without trial violated his fundamental rights, leading the court to grant him interim bail for three months. The condition: Planting 125 saplings in his village and maintaining them.
- Similarly, in a murder case, another accused was granted bail under the condition of planting 200 saplings. The judge extended this condition to an accused involved in abetting the suicide of a minor girl in a separate case.
- These unconventional bail conditions, emphasizing environmental responsibility, have stirred both praise and criticism within legal circles and society at large.

The Dongria Kondh community in Odisha's Niyamgiri hills has announced a boycott of the 2024 Lok Sabha and Assembly polls to protest the government's neglect of their development.

- The community alleges that many of its members have been falsely implicated in cases due to their protests against the misuse of natural resources in Niyamgiri, including minerals, water, land, and forests.
- The Dongria Kondh people, belonging to the Munda ethnic group, reside in the Niyamgiri hills, spanning across 250 sq.km in Odisha's Rayagada and Kalahandi Districts.
- Their belief system centers around Niyam Raja, the paramount deity of the Niyamgiri jungle.
- With an approximate population of 8,000 individuals, they inhabit around 100 villages in the region.
- The name "Dongria Kondh" originates from "dongar," signifying 'hill,' while they refer to themselves as "Jharnia," translating to 'protector of streams.'
- Their primary language is Kui, which is predominantly spoken within the Kondh community, albeit it lacks a written form.

- Distinctive in appearance, Dongria women adorn multiple rings through their ears and three nose rings, while men typically wear two nose rings. Girls embellish their hair with clips and wear rings and beads around their necks.
- Their livelihood is sustained through horticulture and shifting cultivation, reliant on the resources provided by the Niyamgiri forests.

The Poverty and Human Development Monitoring Agency (PHDMA) of Odisha received recognition from NITI Aayog for its narrative-based monitoring and evaluation technique.

- The narrative-based monitoring and evaluation technique adopted by Poverty and Human Development Monitoring Agency (PHDMA) of Odisha to assess the impact of programmes on the ground recently received NITI Aayog's recognition.

Addressing a session at the National Conference for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (NCEML-2024) organised by the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) of NITI Aayog in New Delhi, Member Secretary PHDMA Roopa Roshan Sahoo spoke about the qualitative monitoring methods adopted by the agency which puts people and their lived experiences on the forefront. This method is in contrast to quantitative monitoring that shows outcomes without shedding any light on the impact that the initiatives have on people.

- According to the Secretary "Wellbeing is not about one scheme; they are the outcome of a basket of schematic interventions. We discuss with multiple beneficiaries in a household, listen to their lived experiences with the schemes, deeply observe their surroundings, visually document everything from the ground and finally collate the narratives to assess the impact. "Statistics doesn't tell us this, stories do. Governance initiatives impact people's lives. Prosperity is not in numbers, it's in the stories that we see and will tell," she explained further.
- The studies undertaken by PHDMA including Swabhiman Tales, an impact assessment study conducted at Swabhiman Anchal, the left-wing extremist-affected area in Odisha's Malkangiri.
- The study helped portray a clear picture of ongoing development works after the construction of Gurupriya Bridge and map the rising aspirations among residents. Similarly, a narrative study conducted in Rayagada, Nabaraangpur and Nuapada districts

to assess the availability of services and their utilities based on the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report, provided perspectives that were useful as policy inputs. PHDMA's qualitative monitoring practice to shape policies was well-appreciated by the panelists and audiences present at the DMEO conference.

Odisha is introducing all-women managed Sakhi booths in areas with low female voter turnout to encourage more women to vote.

- These special booths will have an all-women team overseeing the election process.
- Previously known as pink booths, they are being rebranded with staff wearing Odisha handloom clothing this year.
- In addition to Sakhi booths, other model polling stations include those managed entirely by youth and those staffed solely by persons with disabilities (PWD).
- District administrations are preparing for emergencies, particularly the heat wave, by equipping polling stations with medical kits and setting up heatstroke rooms in community health centers and polling stations with adequate space.

Over 5,500 voters in the disputed Kotia region hold dual voting rights, enabling them to participate in both Odisha and Andhra Pradesh elections.

- The dispute, ongoing since 1968, involves 21 villages claimed by both states.
- Residents benefit from schemes of both states, holding Aadhaar and ration cards from each.
- The region, comprising 28 villages, is claimed by both states, leading to a unique electoral situation.
- 5,502 voters, including 2,913 women, reside in 21 of the 28 villages of Kotia.
- The main occupation of the villagers is farming, and the region falls under Koraput (ST) Lok Sabha constituency in Odisha and Araku (ST) Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh.
- The Supreme Court, in 2006, held that inter-state boundaries do not fall under its jurisdiction, leaving the resolution to Parliament.
- Despite objections, Andhra Pradesh conducted rural polls in 2021, leading to ongoing tensions between the two states.

A 17-year-old Royal Bengal Tiger named 'Nandan' passed away at

Nandankanan Zoological Park in Odisha.

- Nandan had entered the zoo in 2013 from Chandaka Sanctuary and had offspring with tigress Megha, siring five cubs in total.
- Nandankanan Zoological Park, located 15 km from Odisha's capital, Bhubaneswar, was inaugurated in 1960.
- It holds the distinction of being the first zoo in India to join the World Association of Zoos & Aquariums (WAZA), a global alliance dedicated to animal care and conservation worldwide.
- The park is renowned for its successful breeding programs, particularly for the Indian pangolin and white tiger.
- Other species like leopards, mouse deer, lions, ratel, and vultures are also bred here.
- Additionally, Nandankanan was the world's first facility to breed gharials in captivity, establishing a captive crocodile breeding center in 1980.

The Odisha government has made progress in reducing elephant deaths, but challenges like poaching and infrastructure impact persist.

- In 2023-24, Odisha saw 65 elephant deaths, down from 92 in 2022-23, marking the lowest in five years.
- Despite this improvement, electrocution and accidents remain significant causes of elephant mortality.
- The state needs to focus on preventing jumbo deaths due to electrocution and accidents, as well as tackling poaching and the impact of linear infrastructure.
- Efforts have led to a decrease in electrocution deaths, but deliberate electrocution is still a concern.
- Accident-related deaths have not decreased despite the overall decline in jumbo deaths.

The 'Mo Booth' mobile app, launched by the State Election Commission, provides Khordha district voters with essential information on polling stations and queue lengths.

- The application ensures users stay updated on the number of individuals who have cast their votes, aiding them in making well-informed decisions on optimal voting times.
- Furthermore, the app provides live updates to officials regarding polling party arrivals, polling progress, and enables them to seek assistance

for any Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) malfunctions.

- The app features a Booth Level Officer (BLO) module, aiding BLOs in managing and optimizing polling booth operations effectively.
- BLOs can efficiently update voter queue sizes, anticipate potential voting process bottlenecks, and make strategic decisions based on accurate voter turnout data.
- Additionally, the app incorporates a Sector Officer (SO) module, facilitating seamless communication and coordination among multiple polling booths within a designated sector.
- SOs can instantly update polling booth statuses, request assistance when required, and swiftly resolve any encountered challenges during the electoral process.

Niladri Mahodaya, the foundation day of the Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri, was celebrated with traditional fervor and adherence to the shrine's guidelines.

- This day marks the consecration of the Srimandir, as per the 'Madalapanji', with the installation of idols of Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Balabhadra on the Ratnasimhasan.
- It is one of the 12 important festivals in the temple.

IIT Bhubaneswar will establish a centre for coastal and river bank erosion, primarily focusing on research related to the morphological aspects of coastal landforms, river bank stability, and scour and deposition issues related to various offshore structures.

- The center will focus on coastal and river bank erosion research.
- Established by the School of Infrastructure under the 'Fund for Improvement of S&T Infrastructure (FIST)' scheme of the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- A MoU signed with NeXHS Renewables Private Limited for partial funding of necessary equipment.
- Aims to accelerate development and deployment of scalable renewable energy solutions.

An Eddy covariance flux tower is installed in Similipal Biosphere Reserve for studying forest carbon

sequestration. Understand climate change impact on forest carbon dynamics.

- Tower placed at Pithabata south range by CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow.
- Measures CO₂, H₂O, and energy exchange between vegetation surface and atmosphere.
- First-of-its-kind in Similipal to measure forest carbon sequestration.
- CSIR's initial forest carbon flux measurement in Indian semi-evergreen forest.
- Develop a model predicting climate change impact on Indian forest carbon dynamics.
- Long-term data to formulate effective forest management strategies.

Carbon Sequestration:

- Forest carbon sequestration is a process of increasing carbon content of forest through processes that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- Forest carbon is stored within the forest ecosystem in five pools such as above-ground biomass, below-ground biomass, deadwood, litter and soil organic matter.
- As per the India State of Forest (ISF) report 2019, Odisha has around 6 per cent of India's total forest carbon stock.

The Kalinga Nagar Industries Association (KNIA) has requested the Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) to increase chrome ore production.

- This request is aimed at addressing the demand and supply gap in the market.
- KNIA wants OMC to offer the required quantity in the national e-auction for long term linkage (LTL) buyers.
- The goal is to protect the interests of industries in the state.

Issues Faced by Ferrochrome Industries:

- Ferrochrome industries in Odisha are struggling due to a shortage of chrome ore.
- The shortage is mainly caused by reduced production from Tata Steel Sukinda Mines and lower production from OMC.
- This has led to a drop in chrome ore availability in the open commercial market.

Elephant census in Odisha, which has not been conducted for seven years, is set to begin on May 22 and will run until May 24, 2024.

- The census will employ the direct count method and cover 43 divisions across the state.
- Data collected during the census will be analyzed at multiple levels—range, division, circle—and finally, at the headquarters to determine the final elephant population count.
- The last elephant census in 2017 recorded 1,976 elephants, a slight increase from the 1,954 counted in 2015.
- No subsequent census has been conducted due to the 2019 summer cyclone, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other intervening factors.
- In the past five years, the state has experienced the loss of over 400 elephants due to poaching, electrocution, and accidents.
- This upcoming census is crucial for updating the current elephant population data and planning further conservation efforts.

The Odisha government has reported an 87% reduction in new leprosy cases between 2000 and 2024.

- This significant decline is attributed to early detection and prompt treatment, facilitated by the integration of the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP) with the general healthcare system.

NLEP:

- National Leprosy Control Programme (NLCP) was launched by the Govt. of India in 1954- 55.
- Multi Drug Therapy (MDT) came into wide use from 1982, and the National Leprosy Eradication Programme was introduced in 1983.
- The strategy of NLEP was based on controlling the disease through reduction in the quantum of infection in the population and reduction in infective source, thus breaking the chain of disease transmission.
- India achieved the goal set by the National Health Policy, 2002 of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem, defined as less than 1 case per 10,000 population, at the National level in December 2005.

35 baby crocodiles born in Mahanadi, marking the fourth successful natural breeding of gharials in Satkosia gorge.

- PCCF Wildlife Susanta Nanda confirmed the natural breeding, highlighting the significance of this event.
- Mahanadi is recognized as the southernmost limit for gharials in India.

- The Gharial Species Recovery programme has played a crucial role in preventing the local extinction of gharials in the region.
- In 2019, around 20 gharials were reintroduced to the river near Tikarpada as part of the recovery programme.
- The first natural breeding was observed in 2021 after a gap of nearly 40 years.
- Subsequent years saw an increase in the number of hatchlings, with 28 in 2021, 30 in 2022, and 35 in 2023.
- The conservation efforts include declaring the nesting site in Satkosia gorge a no fishing zone, banning all fishing activities, and involving the local fishermen community for effective conservation.

Preetismita Bhoi of Odisha achieved a new World Record at the IWF World Youth Weightlifting Championships in Lima, Peru, while Jyoshna Sabar won the silver medal in the same category.

- Both athletes trained at the Odisha Weightlifting High Performance Centre at Kalinga Stadium, highlighting the state's efforts in nurturing weightlifting talent.
- The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) is a permanent non-profit organization composed of 193 affiliated National Federations worldwide, from all five Continents
- The IWF was founded in 1905, being one of the oldest International Sport Federations
- The IWF is the world controlling body for weightlifting and is also recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as the sole controlling body for international weightlifting
- The IWF is a member of Global Association of International Sport Federations (GAISF) and the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF)

The Orissa High Court has ruled that the Lokayukta, an anti-corruption ombudsman, cannot ignore legal procedures.

- In two cases involving alleged misappropriation of funds, the Lokayukta ordered chargesheets based on inquiry reports without considering comments from the relevant authorities.
- The ruling was given on petitions which had challenged the Lokayukta's orders on complaints received regarding misappropriation of Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) funds by two engineers.

- The High Court quashed these orders, stating that the Lokayukta must follow statutory provisions for handling corruption cases against public servants.

The supply of anti-tuberculosis drugs has resumed in districts across the state under the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP).

- This comes after months of shortage that impacted thousands of TB patients.
- A fresh batch of medications arrived from the Central government, addressing the supply disruption.
- The Odisha government plans to procure anti-TB drugs independently through the Odisha State Medical Corporation Ltd (OSMCL) starting in the next financial year (2024-25).
- This move aims to prevent similar shortages in the future.

About:

- Tuberculosis (TB) is a communicable disease that usually attacks the lungs.
- It's caused by bacteria called Mycobacterium tuberculosis.
- These bacteria spread through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks.
- There are two main types of TB:
- Latent TB infection: This is when you have the TB bacteria in your body but aren't sick. You can't spread TB to others in this state. However, the bacteria can become active later if your immune system weakens.
- Active TB disease: This is when the TB bacteria multiply and cause symptoms like coughing, fever, weight loss, and fatigue. People with active TB can spread the disease to others.

Rainfall caused the saalumantap (pavilion) at the Virupaksha Temple in Karnataka's Hampi to collapse on May 21.

- Despite saying that repair work was already underway, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) said that this event made people worry about their efforts to protect the site.
- Over time, the pavilion's stone pillars and base became weaker from being exposed to the elements, especially rain. The recent heavy rains showed that the structure would not last for years as expected, so it needs to be fixed right away.

- Although the Virupaksha Temple in the ruins of Hampi goes back to the 7th century, it became very famous during the Vijayanagara Empire in the 14th century. During the Sangama dynasty, the temple grew a lot and became a focal point for religious and cultural events. Massive gopurams, intricate carvings, and the centre sanctum with a Shiva lingam make it a great example of Dravidian architecture.
- It was an important part of South India's last great Hindu kingdom. The Virupaksha Temple is both a spiritual centre and a UNESCO-designated historical site as part of the Group of Monuments at Hampi. It is a landmark of the Vijayanagara Empire's artistic and cultural achievements.

Ranjit Majhi, an advocate for implementing the Forest Rights Act (FRA), received the prestigious Shambhavi Puraskar 2024.

- The award is instituted by the Bansidhar and Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) and recognizes Majhi's efforts in empowering 112 villages in Odisha's Sundargarh district with Forest Land Rights, alongside his environmental protection endeavors.
- The grand event marking the 11th edition of the Shambhavi Puraskar honored Majhi with a cash award of Rs 2.5 lakh.

About BIPF

- Bansidhar and Ila Panda Foundation (BIPF) was established in 2011 to implement sustainable and scalable interventions in the areas of health, education, livelihood, and water and sanitation, undertaken by the Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys Ltd., also known as IMFA
- Shambhavi Puraskar 2023 was awarded to Dr. Md. Imran Ali also known as Odisha's Anti Drug Champion.

The Forest department has reported the arrival of at least 165 Indian Skimmers at the sand bed of Mahanadi river in Kakhadi, Athagarh, for nesting and egg-laying purposes.

- Khuntuni forest range officer Nilamadhab Sahu informed that approximately 82 eggs have been laid by the skimmers, with 35 having hatched thus far.

Migratory birds:

- Indian Skimmers (Panichiri birds) have been migrating from Southern Asia to the sand bed of Mahanadi river in Kakhadi for mass nesting

over the past four years, recognizing the site as a safe breeding ground.

- Skimmers create shallow depressions in the sand for laying their eggs, with the nesting process taking approximately 25 to 30 days.
- According to the source, total population of the endangered **Panichiri birds is around 4,000** in the world.
- Previously, the birds congregated at the banks of the Mahanadi river near Mundali barrage under Chandaka Wildlife Division. However, habitat loss, degradation, pollution, and human disturbances have threatened this site.

The Tribal Youth Micro Entrepreneurship (TYME) initiative by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) Rayagada is transforming the lives of tribal youth in Odisha.

TYME Initiative:

- Goal: Empower tribal youth from needy households as micro-entrepreneurs (Juba Udyogis).
- Method: Develop potential, provide training and financial support.
- Impact: Enable youth to earn livelihoods and become role models in their communities.
- TYME supports both traditional and innovative business ideas.
- Encourages tribal youth to explore new avenues for income generation, setting examples for their peers.

ITDA:

- The Integrated Tribal Development Project (I.T.D.P), Rayagada comprising of Rayagada Block came into existence on the 29th August 1974.
- Under Registration of Societies Act, 1960, it has been recognized as Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) from the year 1979-80.
- The Programme on Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) under Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) is being implemented since the Fifth Five Year Plan with specific objectives of reducing poverty, improving educational status and eliminating exploitation of the tribal families.
- Under Article 275(I) of constitution of India, funding is being made directly for specific projects in the Sub-Plan area.

ReNew E-Fuels Private Limited, a subsidiary of ReNew, and JERA will evaluate the development of a green

Ammonia production facility in Paradip, Odisha.

- The project aims to utilize 500 MW of renewable energy to produce green hydrogen, a crucial component for green ammonia production.
- The expected annual production capacity of green ammonia is about 100,000 tonnes by 2030.
- This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to accelerate the clean energy transition and support India's National Green Hydrogen Mission.

National Green Hydrogen Mission:

- On 15 August 2021, the Prime Minister of India announced the launch of the National Hydrogen Mission (NHM)
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission aims to provide a comprehensive action plan for establishing a Green Hydrogen ecosystem.
- The overarching objective of the Mission is to make India the Global Hub for production, usage and export of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.

A recent study by researchers from IIT-Bhubaneswar, published in Nature, reveals that urbanisation has significantly increased warming in Indian cities, including a 60% rise in Bhubaneswar.

- The research highlights that tier-II cities in Eastern India experience stronger urbanisation-driven warming compared to metros like New Delhi and Mumbai.
- It was found that cities like Jamshedpur, Raipur, and Patna showed the highest urban contributions to warming, while Bhubaneswar did not rank among the top 20.
- Factors contributing to the urban heat island effect include reduced evaporative cooling, higher-thermal-inertia surfaces, changes in surface albedo, and increased human activity, affecting other climate parameters such as rainfall and pollution.
- The researchers emphasize the importance of targeted urban planning and heat mitigation efforts, which could also address issues like extreme rainfall, floods, and air pollution.

Despite tuberose cultivation being a lucrative business with the potential for substantial earnings, farmers are struggling due to the absence of proper marketing avenues.

- Despite the high demand for tuberose flowers from cities like Aska, Sorada, Bhanjanagar, Bhubaneswar, Bhawanipatna, Puri, and Nabarangpur, farmers face challenges due to the lack of a proper marketing system.
- The government provides some support, including an annual financial assistance of Rs 6,000 for cultivation, but farmers emphasize the need for the government to address marketing and storage issues promptly.
- Scientific interventions, such as encouraging farmers to cultivate the 'Prajwal' variety and providing training on soil testing and organic manure usage, are helping improve yields.

About tuberosa:

- Scientific Name: Polianthes tuberosa L.
- Family : Amaryllidaceae
- Common Name : Tuberose
- Hindi Name : Rajanigandha
- Tuberose is a native of Mexico from where it spread to different parts of the world during the 16th Century.
- It is believed that tuberose was brought to India via Europe in 16th century.

Tribal communities in Odisha are facing exploitation due to the lack of a proper system for buying Mahua flowers, a valuable forest product.

- The government sets a minimum price (MSP) to protect tribals, but the Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation (TDCC) doesn't include Mahua flowers in its procurement list.
- Middlemen take advantage of this gap and buy Mahua flowers at very low prices from tribals.
- This "distress sale" deprives tribals of a fair income despite a good harvest.
- This situation threatens the livelihood of hundreds of tribal families who depend on Mahua collection for income.

Odisha is set to launch its first Vande Metro train, a shorter-distance version of the Vande Bharat Express, on the Haridaspur-Paradip route.

- This announcement was made by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, who stated that the Haridaspur-Paradip railway line would be doubled to accommodate this new service.
- Once the railway line is doubled, the Vande Metro will cater to urban commuters travelling distances of up to 250 km.
- Additionally, the Railway Minister disclosed plans for the upcoming Jajpur-Dhamra railway line, which will pass through Jajpur town, Aradi, and Chandabali.

OPSC Current Affairs

**NATIONAL**

Indian Army and Punit Balan Group develop Constitution Park in Pune

- Constitution Park, jointly developed by Indian Army and Punit Balan Group, was inaugurated in Pune.
- The park was inaugurated by GOC-in-C, Southern Command, Lt Gen Ajai Kumar Singh. Speaking after the inauguration, Lt. Gen. Ajai Kumar Singh said that in order to propel India towards development by 2047, every citizen must honor the duties outlined in the Constitution. Constitution of India bestows upon us both Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties

The Hindu wins three awards at 6th International Newspaper Design Competition

- The judges commended The Hindu for its meticulous attention to detail and engaging narrative style, awarding them an 'Award of Excellence' in the 'Best of Double Spread' category.
- The judges praised The Hindu's winning entry for its exceptional combination of visually striking illustrations, comprehensive explanations, and compelling storytelling, providing readers with a truly immersive and medal-worthy experience.

India's toy exports slip to \$152.34 mn in 2023-24; need strategy to push it: GTRI report

- India's toy exports declined marginally to USD 152.34 million in 2023-24 from USD 153.89 million in the previous financial year, according to a report by economic think tank GTRI. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's toy exports did not benefit much from the mandatory quality control orders.
- It said that while the domestic measures were primarily aimed at boosting local industry and ensuring safety, they did not significantly enhance India's toy exports.
- "From FY'2020 to FY'2022, exports increased modestly from USD 129.6 million to USD 177 million. However, by FY'2024, exports decreased to USD 152.3 million," the report said.

Three Indian Literary Works Enter UNESCO Registry

- Three Indian literary works, Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra, and Sahridayaloka-Locana, have been inscribed in the 2024 Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP) Regional Register. This is the first time India has had three nominations accepted in a single cycle.
- The announcement was made during the 10th General Meeting of MOWCAP, held from May 7 to 8, 2024, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and hosted by the Ministry of Culture of Mongolia, the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok.
- The 'Ramcharitmanas' (literal meaning: lake of the deed of the Rama), was composed by Goswami Tulsidas in Awadhi language in the 16th century and is considered one of the greatest works of Hindu literature.
- The Panchatantra, written by Pandit Vishnu Sharma, is a compilation of animal fables in poetry and prose.
- The 'Sahridayaloka-Locana', dating to the 9th and 10th centuries AD, includes text and discussions related to poetics, dramaturgy and the theatrical insights.
- "The Ramcharitmanas and Ramayana are read not only in India, but also in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka," said Ramesh Chandra Gaur, Head, Kala Nidhi Division, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).
- Since 1992, UNESCO's Memory of the World (MoW) Programme has been working to prevent the irrevocable loss of our collective memory by protecting the world's documentary heritage in all its forms by democratizing access and raising awareness of the need to preserve these significant works.

India Skills 2024: India's Biggest Skill Competition to Commence in New Delhi. Over 900 Candidates to Participate in 61 Skills

- The IndiaSkills Competition 2024 – the country's biggest skill competition designed to demonstrate the highest standards of skilling is all set to commence on 15th May 2024. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has organised an inauguration ceremony at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi which will witness the participation of over 900 students from

more than 30 states and Union Territories and over 400 industry experts.

- The four-day-long IndiaSkills will allow participants to showcase their diverse skills and talent on a national platform across 61 skills – from traditional crafts to cutting-edge technologies. While 47 skills competitions will be held onsite, 14 will be held offsite in Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat keeping in mind the availability of best infrastructure. The students will also participate in 9 exhibition skills such as Drone-Film making, Textile-Weaving, Leather-Shoemaking, and prosthetics-makeup.
- The students participating in the national-level competition have been trained in IIIs, NSTIs, Polytechnics, institutes of engineering, institutes of nursing, and institutes of biotechnology. This is a testament to the international-standard training Indian youth are receiving in the existing skill network.
- Winners of IndiaSkills, with the help of the best industry trainers, will get prepared for the WorldSkills Competition scheduled to take place in Lyon, France in September 2024, which will bring together 1,500 competitors from over 70 countries.

Special Commemorative Coin Released on MDL Shipyard 250th Anniversary

- Commemorative coins, bearing unique designs to mark special events, are issued by the Government of India.
- These coins are primarily for collection purposes and are not considered legal tender unless notified by the government.
- The tradition of issuing commemorative coins in India dates back to 1964, with the release of a coin featuring Jawaharlal Nehru to commemorate his birth anniversary.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) will begin work in mid-September on the Shinku La tunnel, which will provide all-weather connectivity from Manali to Leh via the Nimmu-Padam-Darcha axis.

- The tunnel, located at an altitude of 15,800 feet, is expected to be completed in four years and will become the world's highest tunnel, surpassing China's Mila tunnel at 15,590 feet.
- The construction of the Shinku La tunnel will further enhance military mobility and logistics support for deployed forces in the Ladakh sector,

as the Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road will offer a third connectivity option to Ladakh. Connectivity between Nimmu and Darcha was achieved in March 2024, and the road is currently being blacktopped.

- This development comes amid the ongoing military standoff between India and China in eastern Ladakh, which has entered its fifth year. Despite negotiations, there is no indication of a resolution to the outstanding issues along the contested Line of Actual Control (LAC), although India hopes that talks will help restore the status quo ante of April 2020.
- The 4.1-km long Shinku La tunnel will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 60 km, from 355 to 295 km. It will serve as an alternative to the Manali-Leh and the traditional Srinagar-Leh routes. The Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road holds strategic importance as it is shorter than the other two axes and crosses only one pass, the 16,615-ft high Shinku La.

Bharat Pavilion at the 77th Cannes Film Festival inaugurated

- Cannes, 15th May, 2024: In a year that spells magic for Bharat at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, with numerous official selections across sections, The Bharat Pavilion was inaugurated today at the 77th Cannes Film Festival in France.
- Hosted each year at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, Government of India, Bharat's participation is spearheaded by the National Film Development Corporation as the nodal agency and FICCI as the industry partner. The pavilion marks India's continued commitment to showcasing its rich cinematic heritage and fostering international collaborations with the global film fraternity.
- Many states like Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra among others are present representing India at Cannes Film Market this year, to pitch their exquisite locales for international film shoots and to promote state incentives for filming to producers and production houses. Three films which have been shot in India through partnerships through India's Film Facilitation Office (FFO) of India have been shortlisted in various sections at this year's festival.
- Notably, this is the first time ever that the UT of J&K is participating in the Cannes Film Market and reaching out to global film production companies to shoot in what is popularly known as 'Heaven on Earth.' The film incentive policy of J&K is less than a year old and on the very first day the response received through business

meetings with several stakeholders has been more than encouraging, the officials at the J&K booth said.

- The Bharat Pavilion serves as a dynamic platform, providing a gateway to the diverse landscape of Indian films, talent, and industry opportunities and is set to host a series of scintillating panel discussions and networking sessions during the course of the 77th Cannes Film Festival.

Student Enrollment Under SC Category Grows By 44 %

- The student enrollment under the Scheduled Caste category has grown by 44 per cent, from 46 lakh in 2014-15 to 66 lakh in 2021-22. According to a report of the National Commission for Backward Class, minority female student enrollment also witnessed over 42 per cent increase, from over 10 lakh in 2014-15 to 15 lakh in 2021-22. Female SC enrollment increased by 51 per cent, whereas that of ST students went up by 65.2 per cent.
- According to the report, during the academic year 2020-21, a 27 per cent reservation for OBC students was implemented in Central Schools, resulting in over 34 thousand OBC children securing admissions.
- In Institutes of National Importance, there was a 71 per cent increase in OBC enrollment, with female OBC enrollment more than doubling, the report said.

The government of Nagaland has announced plans to establish a Political Affairs Committee (PAC) with the overarching aim of finding a fair and inclusive solution to the pervasive Naga political issue. This decision was taken in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on May 9.

- The PAC will include the council of ministers and leaders from all political parties within the 14th Nagaland Legislative Assembly (NLA). As a facilitator, the primary role of the PAC will be to bring about an amicable resolution to the Naga political conflict.
- The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, KG Kenye, has tasked Legislature Party leaders with forming "Political Consultative Committees" (PCCs). The creation will be conducted in conjunction with their representative party organisations. With renewed effort to continue the spirit of the all-party opposition-less government, the aim is to

reach a broad consensus for an early and peaceful settlement to the political deadlock.

Hepatitis A Outbreak Affects 8,000 in Kerala's Malappuram

- There has been a big spread of Hepatitis A in Kerala's Malappuram district, with about 8,000 cases and 12 deaths.
- The virus, which is known for being very contagious, usually affects kids younger than 15 years old, but it is now spreading to older people whose immune systems aren't working as well.
- Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by a highly contagious virus.
- Infected individuals can show symptoms such as jaundice, fever, and stomach pain.
- Symptoms typically appear between two to six weeks after contracting the virus.
- In 99% of cases, the infection goes away on its own and does not damage the liver permanently.
- Severe outcomes like liver failure or death are rare.
- The main way the Hepatitis A virus gets from feces to mouth is through contaminated food or water.
- It can be found in the poop of an infected person before they even show any signs, and it can still be found after symptoms have gone away. Past cases, like those in Delhi and Kanpur, were caused by broken sewer lines and letting dirty water into the water supply.

DAHD and UNDP signs MoU on Digitalization of Vaccine Cold Chain Management, Capacity Building, and Communication Planning.

- UNDP and DAHD will jointly work on Strengthening Animal Health with One Health approach at centre.
- This step will contribute to creation of a digital future via digitalization and remote temperature monitoring of cold chain by UNDP India. This will ensure that vaccines are stored in an adequate temperature of prescribed limit of 2-8 degree Celsius which is important to increase immunization coverage and outreach.
- Currently, DAHD is supplying FMD (Foot and Mouth diseases) vaccine worth approximately Rs. 900 Crore this year and aims to cover 50 Crore large animals and 20 Crore small animals in FMD vaccination programme.
- Through this MoU, technical assistance will be extended to CEAH to enhance its capabilities in animal husbandry practices. Other aspects of MoU covers support in planning and development of effective and inclusive livestock insurance

programme and crafting and implementation of an effective communication plan for the department which will help in ensuring better propagation and outreach of the department's activities.

- The partnership will also work on extension services and skill development initiatives to improve the technical know-how and capacities of stakeholders in the animal husbandry sector.
- This collaboration marks a significant step towards enhancing animal health and husbandry practices in India, leveraging UNDP's global expertise and DAHD's mandate. Together, DAHD and UNDP aim to create a robust, efficient, and inclusive framework for managing animal health and welfare in the country.

Cabinet Approves Over Rs 10,300 Crore for IndiaAI Mission, will Empower AI Startups and Expand Compute Infrastructure Access

- The Cabinet has approved an allocation of over Rs 10,300 crore for the IndiaAI Mission today, marking a significant step towards bolstering India's AI ecosystem. This substantial financial infusion, slated over the next five years, is poised to catalyse various components of the IndiaAI Mission, including pivotal initiatives like the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI Future Skills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe & Trusted AI.
- The overarching aim of this financial outlay is to ensure a structured implementation of the IndiaAI Mission through a public-private partnership model aimed at nurturing India's AI innovation ecosystem.
- A cornerstone of this effort is the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, envisioned to erect a cutting-edge, scalable AI computing infrastructure by deploying over 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) through strategic public-private collaborations.
- According to the Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and Jal Shakti, Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar, this approval will benefit Indian citizens and contribute to the expansion of India's economy.
- Shri Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "AI is going to be the kinetic enabler for India's digital economy. Prime Minister Modi ji has always said that India is going to fully exploit the power of AI for the benefit of its citizens and for the expansion of its economy. I am grateful and thankful to the Hon'ble PM for the approval of more than 10,000

crores for the India AI program, which will catalyze India's AI ecosystem and position it as a force shaping the future of AI for India and for the world. This will benefit states like Kerala which, for years, missed the bus in creating a robust tech ecosystem. There is immense potential among Young Indians in Kerala and with this financial outlay will help realise their ambitions."

- This financial outlay will fortify the IndiaAI Startup Financing mechanism, facilitating streamlined access to funding for budding AI startups and catalyzing their journey from product development to commercialization. The proposal also includes funding provisions for industry-led AI projects aimed at fostering social impact, propelling innovation and entrepreneurship.
- The IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC) which will be a leading academic institution, ensuring streamlined implementation and retention of top research talent. Funds approved by the Cabinet will enable IAIC to spearhead the development and deployment of foundational models, with a specific emphasis on indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific models, leveraging edge and distributed computing for optimal efficiency.
- The IndiaAI Datasets Platform, which will be developed by the Independent Business Division (IBD) of IndiaAI, is slated to receive a boost to enhance accessibility, quality, and utility of public sector datasets, in order to ensure data-driven governance and catalyzing AI-based innovation and research.
- Simultaneously, the IndiaAI Future Skills program will focus on expanding the reach of AI education by increasing the accessibility of graduate and post-graduate AI programs, while also establishing Data and AI Labs that will not just be spread across major Indian cities but also smaller towns and cities to impart foundational-level courses in Data and AI.
- Aligned with the broader vision of the IndiaAI Mission, these initiatives aim to bolster India's global leadership in AI, foster technological self-reliance, ensure ethical and responsible AI deployment, and democratize the benefits of AI across all strata of society.

On 14 May 2024, the Supreme Court has delivered a landmark judgment exempting lawyers from liability under the Consumer Protection Act of 1986.

- The decision overturned a previous ruling by the National Consumer Disputes Redressal

Commission (NCDRC) from 2007, which classified legal services as fallible under the Act.

- The bench, led by Justice Bela Trivedi and Justice Pankaj Mithal, stressed that legal representation, although paid, does not constitute a 'service' as intended under the Consumer Protection Act due to its unique professional characteristics.
- The court established a clear distinction between professions and other forms of business under the CPA. They pointed out that when the CPA was initially enacted and later revised, there was no indication that it was intended to cover professional services such as those offered by lawyers or doctors.
- Justice Trivedi argued that the term 'profession' implies a discipline involving specialized knowledge or learning, which is distinct from a mere 'business' or 'trade' driven by commercial interests.
- The ruling also suggested revisiting previous judgments which differed in view, such as the inclusion of medical services under the CPA decided in *Indian Medical Association v V.P. Shantha* (1995).

India Climbs to 39th Position In World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index

- India has climbed to the 39th position in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024, while US topped the list. India also ranks the highest in South Asia among the lower-middle-income economies. Earlier, India was ranked 54th in 2021 published index.
- On an overall index score of 7, where 1 is the worst, and 7 the best, India scored 4.25. India's significant leap in the rankings underscores its growing competitiveness in the global tourism landscape. The biennial index analyzed the travel and tourism sectors of 119 countries, evaluating them on a range of factors and policies that foster tourism development.

Artara'24 Celebrates Indian Cultural Diversity in Dubai

- Artara'24 provided a prestigious stage for lesser-known artists, students, and art enthusiasts to showcase their extraordinary abilities and connect with fellow creative minds.
- Held at the **Al Jalila Cultural Center**, a venue under the Dubai Cultural Center, the exhibition featured an impressive collection of over **250 pieces of art**, each telling its own unique story and reflecting the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of the talented participants.

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Celebrates International Women in Maritime Day

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) celebrated the International Day for Women in Maritime, today in New Delhi, honouring the vital contributions of women seafarers. This year's theme, "Safe Horizons: Women in Shaping the Future of Maritime Safety," underscores the importance of safety and security of women in the maritime sector.
- During the celebration, 27 women seafarers from various marine institutes pursuing different degrees in maritime field and some professionals from the field were recognized for their dedication and significant contributions to the maritime industry. These women exemplify the strength and resilience required to thrive in a traditionally male-dominated field, and their achievements are paving the way for future generations of women in maritime.
- Secretary Shri T K Ramachandran said "On this International Day for Women in Maritime, we honor the invaluable contributions of women in the maritime sector. Their dedication and expertise are crucial as we navigate towards a more sustainable and equitable future. We must continue to break down barriers and create opportunities for women in this industry. Together, we can achieve a balanced, diverse, and prosperous maritime community."

India recently passed the important milestone of \$100 billion in payments. In the fiscal year 2022-23, it reached a record \$112 billion.

- At this peak, an amazing \$29 billion was sent back to India just in the December quarter. This shows that money sent back to India is strongly going up.
- Studies that look back over the last 25 years show that payments to India tend to be highest during election years. For example, remittances hit \$83.2 billion in fiscal year 2019-20, which happened to be an election year. They slightly dropped to \$80.2 billion the next year, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This trend shows that there is a regular, though not always clear-cut, link between election years and changes in remittance inflows.
- The flow of remittances is greatly affected by many things, such as the job market around the world and the chances for the Indian diaspora.
- Important events in history, like the oil boom in the 1970s and the IT boom in the 1990s, greatly

improved job possibilities for Indians working abroad, which led to more money being sent back home. According to the Indian government, these “private transfers” are an important part of the country’s balance of payments and a major source of foreign currency.

Government gets Rs 2.11 lakh crore from RBI by way of dividend

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has transferred a record surplus of Rs 2.1 lakh crore to the central government for FY’2023-24, exceeding expectations.
- This windfall, largely from interest income on overseas securities and income from LAF operations, strengthens the government’s fiscal position and may lead to a reduction in borrowing. The surplus, determined by the Economic Capital Framework (ECF), represents 25.5% of RBI’s total assets.

India Records Positive Growth Among Top 5 World Steel Producers in April

- World crude steel production in April 2024 was 155.7 million tonnes, a 5.0% decrease from April 2023. China, the largest steel producer, saw a 7.2% decline to 85.9 million tonnes.
- Japan, the third-largest producer, registered a 2.5% decline to 7.1 million tonnes. The United States, the fourth-largest producer, produced 6.7 million tonnes, a 2.8% decline. Russia, the fifth-largest producer, experienced a 5.7% decline to 6.2 million tonnes.
- India’s modern steel industry began in 1875 with the **Kulti plant near Kolkata. Jamsetji Tata established India’s first modern steel plant, Tata Steel, in Jamshedpur in 1907.**
- Today, India is the second-largest producer of crude steel and the largest producer of sponge iron globally. It is also the third-largest user of finished steel, after China and the USA.

Mission ISHAN, India’s push for ‘one nation, one airspace’, will benefit airlines & passengers alike

- India has kickstarted the process of unifying its four airspace regions into one spanning the entire nation in order to streamline and enhance air traffic management.
- The Airports Authority of India (AAI), the public entity responsible for air traffic management (ATM) services, last month invited expressions of interest (EoI) for the preparation of a detailed

project report for an Indian Single Sky Harmonized Air Traffic Management at Nagpur (ISHAN).

- The move is expected to benefit not just the airlines through more seamless operations and increased flight handling capacity, but also passengers by reducing congestion and flying times.
- The AAI provides ATM services over Indian airspace and adjoining oceanic areas covering over 2.8 million square nautical miles, of which 1.04 million square nautical miles are continental and 1.76 million square nautical miles are oceanic.
- This airspace is controlled through four flight information regions (FIRs) at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai, and a sub-flight information region at Guwahati.
- FIRs are controlled by a single authority, which is responsible for providing air traffic services, such as information on weather conditions, visibility, wind and runway obstacles as well as alerting services, including search and rescue assistance.
- Unifying these FIRs will mean that all of these can be managed and controlled from one point – in India’s case, Nagpur – which is expected to make air traffic operations more efficient, safer and seamless, enabling it to handle more capacity.
- This is especially important given the huge boom that the aviation industry is witnessing.
- According to the credit rating agency, ICRA, for FY2024 (April-March 2024), domestic air passenger traffic is estimated to be around 154 million, a year-on-year growth of 13 percent, surpassing the pre-Covid levels of about 142 million in FY2020.
- By 2030, the aviation industry expects domestic passenger traffic to double to 300 million.

Jyoti Ratre, 55, becomes oldest Indian woman to conquer Mount Everest

- Ratre’s accomplishment comes precisely six years after Sangeeta Bahl, at 53, earned the title of ‘India’s oldest woman to climb Mount Everest’ on May 19, 2018. This was Ratre’s second attempt to summit the highest peak in the world. In 2023, she had to return from 8,160 mt due to harsh weather.
- Jyoti Ratre has conquered the highest peaks on five continents including Island Peak, Elbrus, Kilimanjaro, Mount Aconcagua, and Kosciuszko. She aims to summit Mount Vinson in Antarctica and Denali, also called Mount McKinley, in North America to fulfil her dream of conquering the highest peaks on all seven continents.

The Indian central government is inviting comments on a potential ban

on the import, breeding, and selling of 24 breeds of dogs.

- The Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairying issued a public notice on May 2 seeking input from stakeholders and the larger public on a previous order, dated March 12, that identified these breeds—including Pitbull Terriers, Rottweilers, and Mastiffs—as dangerous and proposed their prohibition.
- This initial order was set aside by the Delhi High Court last month following objections from non-governmental bodies who criticized the lack of consultation taken before its decision.
- The ministry has directed all registered organizations and other stakeholders to submit comments on this issue by June 1, emphasizing the need for scientific reasoning in their arguments. The reconsideration of the ban results from reservations expressed by the Karnataka High Court on April 10 and compliance with the Delhi High Court's April 16 order. Until a new decision is reached, the Ministry's March 12 order will not be enforced.

In 2023, the Supreme Court insisted on introducing disincentives for stubble burning, majorly affecting the perennial problem of air pollution. Reacting to this, the Central Government has directed a halt on Minimum Support Price (MSP) benefits to farmers who engage in stubble burning.

- This decision is informed by a goal to discourage a practice detrimental to environmental health and air quality, particularly in Northern India.
- **Government Initiatives and Actions**
- The central directive facilitates the exclusion of farmers practicing stubble burning from receiving MSP benefits from 2024-25. This was articulated following a recommendation from the Committee of Secretaries (CoS) in their meeting on April 10, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. In addition, a significant push was for the 'red entry' mark in farm records, identifying and recording farmers practising stubble burning. This system was endorsed to be streamlined using a protocol developed with the assistance of NSRC and ISRO for accurate tractability of farm fires.

Following the tragic death of a 24-year-old woman, Surya Surendran, who accidentally consumed oleander leaves, two major religious temple boards in Kerala have imposed a ban on the use of oleander flowers in temple offerings.

- The incident occurred when the victim, unknowingly chewed oleander (locally known as Arali in Kerala) leaves, leading to severe poisoning and her subsequent death. This prompt action by the Travancore Devaswom Board and the Malabar Devaswom Board aims to prevent future incidents by restricting the flower's use in religious offerings and prasad.

Oleander Plant and Its Risks

- Nerium oleander, commonly known as oleander, is a highly toxic plant despite its widespread cultivation for ornamental purposes. All parts of the plant, including leaves, stems, flowers, and roots, contain potent cardiac glycosides that can cause severe poisoning.
- Symptoms of oleander toxicity include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, irregular heart rate, and even death in severe cases. Oleander poisoning can occur through ingestion, inhalation of smoke from burning the plant, or contact with skin. Despite its danger, oleander remains popular in landscapes for its attractive flowers and drought resistance.
- The recent death highlights the plant's lethal potential, leading to need for increased public awareness and regulatory responses.

The Spices Board of India has recently issued detailed guidelines to tackle the problem of ethylene oxide (EtO) contamination in spices exported from India.

- This action was prompted by the bans imposed by Hong Kong and Singapore on the sale of popular Indian spice brands like MDH and Everest, after these products were found to contain the carcinogenic chemical ethylene oxide.
- The contamination has raised significant quality concerns among international buyers and has led to a mandatory recall of these products from the market.
- Ethylene Oxide is a chemical commonly used for the sterilisation and fumigation of agricultural products due to its effectiveness in killing bacteria, fungi, and insects. However, due to its potential

health risks, including carcinogenic effects, its presence in food products has become highly regulated globally.

Spices Board Guidelines

- To address these issues, the Spices Board's guidelines provide a clear framework for exporters:
- Prohibition of EtO Use: Exporters are instructed to avoid the use of EtO across all stages of the spice production and supply chain. This includes not only the treatment processes but also transportation, storage, and packaging.
- Testing and Monitoring: Regular testing for EtO contamination is mandated. This includes checking raw materials, processing aids, and finished goods. Any instances of contamination detected must be followed by a thorough root cause analysis to implement effective preventive measures.
- Alternative Sterilisation Methods: The guidelines encourage the use of alternative sterilisation methods such as steam sterilisation, irradiation, and other approved methods by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- Critical Control Points: Exporters must identify ethylene oxide as a hazard and incorporate critical control points within their Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points and Food Safety Plan.

The mosquito-borne disease known as West Nile Virus (WNV) has recently made headlines in Kerala.

- Twelve confirmed cases and four suspected cases have been reported in the southern state in the past several weeks.
- The health minister, Veena George, and other officials have increased their vigilance and promised to take action to contain the disease and treat those who are sick.
- West Nile virus (WNV) is transmitted by the Culex mosquito and its offspring, which are vectors of the virus. The virus is passed from one individual to another through the feeding of mosquitoes on sick birds, which are regularly moving from one location to another. The virus can infect humans after an incubation period if a mosquito bites a human. Additional routes of transmission include

transfusions of blood, gestational transmission from mother to kid, and laboratory settings. On the other hand, coming into touch with sick people or animals won't cause it to spread.

- The first WNV case in India was in 1952 in Mumbai. Since then, southern and central regions have had rare occurrences and outbreaks. This virus continues to threaten public health, as the entire genome sequence of WNV was found in samples from a severe encephalitis epidemic in Kerala in 2011.

Recently, the Ministry of Labour and Employment joined the PM Gati Shakti site. Strengthening health infrastructure and social security measures in industrial places and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is the main goal.

- According to Sumita Dawra, secretary of the ministry, this project aims to use a lot of building data from the port to improve workers' social security in these growing areas.
- The ministry started by geotagging about 1.3 million buildings that were part of the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) and about 1.5 million buildings that were part of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). This included 104 ESIC hospitals. This geotagging is an important step in figuring out how to improve service coverage and see what areas are already covered.
- Exploring 268 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) through the Gati Shakti platform as part of strategic growth will give many workers in these zones access to social security programs. By doing this, the safety net for workers will be strengthened, providing more coverage and benefits.
- The government wants to add more programs to the PM Gati Shakti portal in the future. With a focus on services for people with disabilities, this includes National Career Services centers. The growth plan for these centres helps the most vulnerable groups and is open to everyone.



INTERNATIONAL

After US, India to sign 6G co-operation agreement with European body

- India's Bharat 6G Alliance and European telecom industry body Industry Alliance 6G are set to form a partnership that will pave the way for

cooperation in developing 6G technology, people aware of the matter said.

- One of the persons said Bharat 6G and Industry Alliance 6G would sign an agreement soon. A second person said both sides were looking to define the contours of the collaboration quickly, but the actual agreements would be signed in the coming quarter.
- The partnership could be in the form of a memorandum of understanding, similar to the one Bharat 6G signed with the US last September.
- Launched in 2023 by the department of telecommunications, Bharat 6G Alliance was set up to bring industry players, academia and research organisations together to advance the Bharat 6G mission.
- In September 2023, the Bharat 6G Alliance signed an MoU with America's Next G alliance to work on 6G wireless technologies and build resilient supply chains. The two countries had said in a joint statement that they shared a vision of creating secure and trusted telecommunications and enabling global digital inclusion.
- Both countries endorse an ambitious vision for 6G networks, including cooperation on standards and a desire to work together to promote research and development in 6G.
- Now, India and the European Union are expanding cooperation on high technologies under the EU-India Trade and Technology Council. The two entities signed an MoU on semiconductor co-operation just a few months ago.

What is the Bharat 6G Alliance?

- The telecom department announced last year, "B6GA aims to bring together Indian startups, companies, and the manufacturing ecosystem to establish consortia that drive the design, development and deployment of 6G technologies in India. By accelerating standards-related patent creation within the country and actively contributing to international standardization organisations such as 3GPP and ITU, B6GA seeks to position India at the forefront of 6G innovation."
- It also aims to open market access for Indian firms in foreign nations, the department said.
- The government is looking to forge coalitions with other 6G global alliances to better understand the business and societal needs of 6G beyond technical requirements, foster consensus on these needs, and promote R&D
- Bharat 6G Alliance has also solidified India's presence in the International Telecom Union, which has accepted India's 6G vision document. This will give India a voice in setting standards, among other things.

Paleontologists in Argentina have unearthed the remains of a previously unknown species of herbivorous dinosaur that roamed the earth approximately 90 million years ago.

- The newly identified dinosaur, named Chakisaurusnekul, is believed to have been a fast runner, a trait that would have been advantageous in evading predators during the Late Cretaceous period.
- The discovery was made in the Pueblo Blanco Natural Reserve, located in the southern province of Río Negro, an area that has proven to be a treasure trove of fossils. This region of Patagonia has yielded numerous finds, providing valuable insights into the diverse ecosystem that once thrived there.
- Chakisaurusnekul was a medium-sized dinosaur, estimated to have reached lengths of 2.5 to 3 meters (8 to 10 feet) and standing about 70 centimeters tall (27 inches). What sets this dinosaur apart is its unusually curved tail, which paleontologists believe was adapted for speed and agility. The downward curvature of the tail is a unique feature among dinosaurs and is thought to have contributed to the animal's ability to maneuver quickly and balance during sprints.
- The name Chakisaurusnekul is derived from the indigenous languages of the region. "Chaki" comes from the Aonikenk language, meaning "old guanaco," a reference to a medium-sized herbivore mammal found in the area. "Nekul" is from the Mapudungún language, translating to "fast" or "agile," aptly describing the dinosaur's characteristics. Studies of the Chakisaurusnekul have revealed that it possessed very strong hind limbs, further supporting the theory that it was a good runner. This adaptation was crucial for survival, as the dinosaur lived alongside a large number of predators. Its only defense against these threats was its speed, which allowed it to outrun potential dangers.
- The discovery of Chakisaurusnekul is significant for several reasons. It adds a new species to the family of elasmarian ornithomorphs, a group of dinosaurs known for their bird-like hips and herbivorous diet. Moreover, it provides evidence of the diversity of dinosaur species that existed in South America during the Cretaceous period. The research team, supported by the National Geographic Society, initially discovered the fossils in 2018. However, the findings were only recently published in the journal Cretaceous Research.

- The study describes Chakisaurusnekul as the first ornithischian species discovered in the Huincul Formation, highlighting its importance in understanding the evolutionary history of dinosaurs in this region. This find is a clear indication of the rich biodiversity that existed during the Cretaceous period and the adaptations that herbivorous dinosaurs developed to survive alongside numerous predators. The Chakisaurusnekul, with its distinctive physical traits, stands as a clear example of the adaptability and variety of prehistoric life.
- As paleontologists continue to study these ancient remains, each bone and fossilized fragment brings us closer to piecing together the lives of creatures that once roamed the earth.
- The Chakisaurusnekul, with its unique adaptations for speed, enriches our knowledge of the past and sparks curiosity about what other discoveries lie buried, waiting to be uncovered. The work of these scientists not only contributes to our historical knowledge but also encourages the preservation of natural sites where such important discoveries are made. The fast-running Chakisaurusnekul is indeed a remarkable addition to the roster of known dinosaurs.

Zimbabwe Introduces New Currency Amid Skepticism

- Zimbabwe on Tuesday started circulating a new currency to replace one that has been battered by depreciation and often outright rejection by the people. The ZiG was introduced electronically in early April, but people are now able to use banknotes and coins.
- It's the southern African country's latest attempt to halt a long-running currency crisis underlining its persistent economic troubles. The government had previously floated various ideas to replace the Zimbabwe dollar, including introducing gold coins to stem inflation and even trying out a digital currency.
- Since it was launched electronically on April 5, the ZiG short for Zimbabwe Gold and backed by the country's gold reserves appears to be heading down the same path of mistrust, with some government departments refusing to accept it.
- The ZiG is the sixth currency Zimbabwe has used since the spectacular 2009 collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar amid hyperinflation of 5 billion percent, one of the world's worst currency crashes to date. That set off a chaotic series of events: first the US dollar was allowed as legal tender, then banned, then unbanned.
- A new bond note became legal tender, the Zimbabwe dollar was reintroduced before the gold coins and digital currency were tried.
- However, nothing brought any currency stability and the US dollar remains the most trusted for ordinary Zimbabweans.
- As the shiny new ZiG banknotes hit the streets, the mistrust was evident.
- Kudzanayi Mande, a vegetable trader at the crowded Mbare market in the capital of Harare, said she would rather forgo a sale than accept the ZiG. She was confused, the 56-year-old said.
- Already there is an official exchange rate and a depreciated black market rate, so I will wait a bit to see what its real value is, she said. "The US dollar is still a safer bet.
- The government has allowed some businesses, such as gas stations, to refuse to accept the ZiG in favour of US dollars. Some departments, like the office that issues and renews passports, accept only US dollars.

China set to launch Chang'e-6 lunar probe, carry Pakistan's lone Moon mission

- China is set to launch the Chang'e-6 lunar probe on a round trip to the Moon.
- The spacecraft is on the launch pad in the southern province of Hainan and has completed a final rehearsal for the launch, covering all relevant systems.
- The Chang'e-6 mission marks a significant step forward for China's space endeavours, as it aims to gather soil and rock samples from the far side of the Moon, a region that has remained permanently hidden from Earth's view.
- Due to the lack of a direct line of communication with Earth, the Chang'e-6 mission will rely on a recently deployed relay satellite orbiting the Moon during its 53-day mission.
- This will be the first-ever attempt to retrieve lunar samples from the far side, providing valuable insights into the early evolution of the Moon and the inner solar system.
- This mission will also involve the first-ever ascent from the Moon's far side during its return journey to Earth.
- The Chang'e-6 probe is scheduled for launch on May 3, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).
- This mission is the first of three challenging endeavours that China intends to undertake, leading to a historic Chinese crewed lunar landing and the establishment of a base on the Moon's south pole.

- Pakistan is set to make history as it launches its first-ever lunar mission, ICUBE-Q, aboard China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe.
- The ICUBE-Q satellite has been designed and developed by Pakistan's Institute of Space Technology (IST) in collaboration with China's Shanghai University and Pakistan's national space agency, SUPARCO.
- The orbiter carries two optical cameras to capture images of the lunar surface.
- Following successful qualification and testing, the ICUBE-Q satellite was integrated with the Chang'e-6 mission, which aims to collect soil and rock samples from the far side of the Moon, a feat that has never been accomplished before.
- This historic partnership between Pakistan and China in lunar exploration represents a significant boost for Pakistan's space program.

India set to host the prestigious 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection in 2024

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Government of India, through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), will host the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46) and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP 26) from May 20 to 30, 2024, in Kochi, Kerala. This is in line with India's poise to facilitate constructive global dialogue on environmental stewardship, scientific collaboration, and cooperation in Antarctica.
- The ATCM and meetings of the CEP are pivotal in the international community's ongoing efforts to safeguard Antarctica's fragile ecosystem and promote scientific research in the region. Convened annually under the Antarctic Treaty System, these meetings serve as forums for Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties and other stakeholders to address Antarctica's pressing environmental, scientific, and governance issues.
- The Antarctic Treaty, signed in 1959 and entered into force in 1961, established Antarctica as a region dedicated to peaceful purposes, scientific cooperation, and environmental protection. Over the years, the Treaty has garnered widespread support, with 56 countries currently party to it. The CEP was established under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Madrid Protocol) in 1991. The CEP advises the ATCM on environmental protection and conservation in Antarctica.
- India has been a Consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1983. It participates in the decision-making process along with other 28 Consultative Parties to the Antarctic Treaty to date. India's first Antarctic research station, Dakshin Gangotri, was established in 1983. At present, India operates two year-round research stations: Maitri (1989) and Bharati (2012).
- The permanent research stations facilitate Indian Scientific Expeditions to Antarctica, which have been ongoing annually since 1981. In 2022, India enacted the Antarctic Act, reaffirming its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.
- As a signatory to the Antarctic Treaty, India remains dedicated to environmental protection, scientific cooperation, and peaceful operations in Antarctica. Dr M Ravichandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, highlighted the importance of India hosting the ATCM and CEP meetings in 2024.
- The Antarctic Treaty Secretariat (ATS) serves as the administrative hub for the Antarctic Treaty System. Established in 2004, the ATS coordinates the ATCM and CEP meetings, repoints and disseminates information, and facilitates diplomatic communication, exchanges, and negotiations related to Antarctic governance and management. It also monitors compliance with Antarctic Treaty provisions and agreements and provides assistance and guidance to Antarctic Treaty Parties on treaty implementation and enforcement matters.
- Key items on the 46th ATCM agenda include strategic planning for sustainable management of Antarctica and its resources; policy, legal, and institutional operations; biodiversity prospecting; inspections and exchange of information and data; research, collaboration, capacity building and cooperation; addressing climate change impacts; development of tourism framework; and promoting awareness. Lectures of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research will also be conducted. The 26th CEP agenda focuses on Antarctic environment evaluation, impact assessment, management, and reporting; climate change response; area protection and management plans including marine spatial protection; and conservation of Antarctic biodiversity.
- The hosting of the 46th ATCM and 26th CEP meeting reflects India's growing role as a responsible global stakeholder in efforts to preserve Antarctica for future generations. Through open dialogue, collaboration, and consensus-building, India remains committed to upholding the principles of the Antarctic Treaty

and contributing to the sustainable management of one of Earth's last pristine wilderness areas.

- India's scientific and strategic endeavours in the polar regions (the Arctic and Antarctic), the Himalayas, and the Southern Ocean are under the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) in Goa. NCPOR is an esteemed autonomous institution under MoES, Government of India.
- Participation in the ATCM and CEP meetings is restricted to delegates designated by Parties, Observers and invited Experts. Over 350 delegates from 60+ countries are expected to attend the 46th ATCM and 26th CEP this year hosted by NCPOR, MoES at Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre (LBICC) in Kochi, India.

NPCI inks pact with Bank of Namibia for developing UPI-like instant payment system

- NPCI said its overseas arm has signed a pact with the Bank of Namibia (BoN) for developing a UPI-like instant payment system for Namibia. By leveraging technology and experiences from India's UPI, the partnership seeks to help Namibia modernize its financial ecosystem. This includes improving accessibility, affordability and connectivity with both domestic and international payment networks, and interoperability.
- NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) has signed an agreement with the Bank of Namibia (BoN) to support them in developing an instant payment system like Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for Namibia, a statement said.
- This strategic partnership aims to enhance digital financial services and bolster real-time Person-to-Person (P2P) and Merchant payment transactions (P2M) in the African nation.
- Through this collaboration, BoN will gain access to best-in-class technology and insights from NIPL, enabling the creation of a similar platform in Namibia for the digital welfare of its citizens, the statement added.
- NPCI International CEO Ritesh Shukla said, "By enabling this technology, the country will gain sovereignty in the digital payments landscape and stand to benefit from enhanced payment interoperability and improved financial access for underserved populations."
- Bank of Namibia Governor Johannes Gawaxab said "Our objective is to enhance accessibility and affordability for underserved populations, achieve full interoperability of payment instruments by 2025, modernize the financial sector, and ensure a secure and efficient National Payment System."

- Once live, the platform will facilitate digital transactions in Namibia, driving financial inclusion and reducing cash dependency by catering to underserved populations. This collaborative effort seeks to offer essential and affordable financial services to all, with a particular focus on rural and informal sectors.

India, Nigeria agree to early conclusion of local currency settlement

- India and Nigeria have agreed to an early conclusion of a local currency settlement system agreement to further strengthen economic ties between the two countries.
- According to the department of commerce, a seven-member delegation from India led by Additional Secretary in the commerce ministry Amardeep Singh Bhatia visited Abuja, Nigeria for the second session of India-Nigeria Joint Trade Committee (JTC) on April 29-30. It was held after a gap of five years.
- Both sides have identified several focus areas to enhance bilateral trade and mutually beneficial investments.
- The sectors include crude oil, natural gas, pharmaceuticals, unified payments interface (UPI), local currency settlement system, power and renewable energy, agriculture and food processing, education, transport, railway, aviation, and MSMEs development.
- A local currency settlement system between the two countries would help in promoting the use of Indian Rupee and Nigerian Naira for cross-border transactions.
- There are several Indian companies present in Nigeria in telecom, hydrocarbons, textiles, chemicals, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, plastics, IT and auto sectors.
- Indian automobile companies have a significant presence in Nigeria.
- India's main exports to Nigeria include machinery and instruments, drugs, pharma and fine chemicals, transport equipment, electronic goods, and manufacture of metals. Imports mainly include petroleum, crude and products, non-ferrous metals, wood and wood products, and cashew nuts.
- The bilateral trade stood at USD 11.85 billion (exports \$5.2 billion and imports \$6.7 billion) in 2022-23. The trade was about \$15 billion in 2021-22.
- Further, a senior commerce ministry official delegation also visited Australia and New Zealand.

Ukraine Introduces AI-Generated Spokesperson For Foreign Ministry

- The spokesperson's name, **Victoria Shi**, is a combination of the words "victory" and the Ukrainian phrase for artificial intelligence, "shtuchniyintelekt."
- She was developed by the **Game Changers team**, renowned for their virtual-reality content related to the ongoing war in Ukraine.
- Notably, Shi's appearance and voice are modeled after **Rosalie Nombre**, a singer and former contestant on Ukraine's version of "The Bachelor," hailing from the now Russian-controlled city of Donetsk.

26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting Held In New Delhi

- The 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting was held in New Delhi today. Secretary (East) Jaideep Mazumdar co-chaired the meeting with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, Albert Chua. Singapore is the Country Coordinator of India for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations. The meeting was attended by Senior Officials and representatives of all ASEAN Member States and Timor Leste which holds Observer Status in ASEAN.
- During the meeting, the gamut of ASEAN-India relations was reviewed across the three pillars of engagement - political-security, economic and socio-cultural. The Senior Officials also discussed the implementation of the Prime Ministers' 12-Point Proposal announced at the 20th ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta last year to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Views on regional and global issues of mutual interest were also exchanged.
- Preparations for the ASEAN-India Summit to be held later this year in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic were also discussed. The ASEAN side appreciated India's continued support to ASEAN and the ASEAN-led architecture in the region.

Scientists discover world's deepest blue hole in Mexico

- According to reports, researchers may have stumbled upon what could potentially be the deepest blue hole on Earth—an intriguing underwater sinkhole whose depths appear seemingly endless!

Recently published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, a study unveils the staggering dimensions of the Taam Ja' Blue Hole, nestled within Mexico's Chetumal Bay. Fresh measurements from a December diving expedition reveal its unfathomable descent to a depth of 1,380 ft, nearly rivalling the height of the iconic Trump Tower in Chicago! Such profound depths hint at the possibility of undiscovered marine life thriving within this abyss, awaiting exploration.

- This newfound blue hole, plunging 1,380 ft deep, eclipses its predecessor, the Sansha Yongle Blue Hole (also known as the Dragon Hole) in the South China Sea, by an impressive 480 ft, as per the reports.
- These submerged abysses stand as geological wonders. Crafted by glacial runoff, blue holes (scientifically termed Karst formations) are essentially submerged vertical caves, sprawling hundreds of feet downward and sideways, creating unbelievable sapphire sinkholes.
- Yet, delving into these depths poses challenges. The absence of oxygen and the presence of hazardous hydrogen sulphide gas demand specialised gear and expertise for exploration. Such restricted access turns it into a mystery, waiting to be uncovered for future scientific inquiry.
- Discovered in 2021, the initial depth readings of Taam Ja' Blue Hole using echo-sounders only penetrated to 900 ft, leaving much to obscure solutions. However, a subsequent dive, armed with advanced tools, provided deeper insights. This expedition, focused on exploring the environment of Taam Ja' Blue Hole, made use of a state-of-the-art CTD (conductivity, temperature, and depth) profiler. This sophisticated instrument, connected to a 1,640-foot cable, continuously relayed real-time water data to the surface.
- However, even with this sophisticated apparatus, researchers couldn't reach the bottom. The cable halted at 1,380 ft, possibly encountering an underwater ledge or strong currents. Their quest to definitively reach the abyss's nadir persists!
- Scientists speculate that the bottom may house a labyrinthine network of caves and passages, potentially interconnected. This concealed realm could harbour unseen life forms, flourishing in the darkness.
- The ramifications are staggering. Some suggest that Taam Ja' Blue Hole might act as an underwater analog of a black hole, serving as a gateway to concealed ecosystems, perhaps spanning vast epochs.
- This speculation isn't entirely unfounded. In 2012, researchers investigating blue holes in the

Bahamas discovered distinctive bacteria thriving in complete darkness. This discovery suggests that extreme environments could harbor life forms equipped to endure in extraordinary ways, providing fascinating insights into potential extraterrestrial life.

India surpasses Japan to become third-largest solar power generator in 2023

- In a significant milestone for renewable energy, India has overtaken Japan to become the third-largest solar power generator in the world in 2023, according to a recent report by global energy think tank Ember. This achievement underscores the rapid deployment of solar energy in India and reflects the nation's determination to combat climate change while meeting rising electricity demands.
- The report, which highlights India's ascent in the global solar power landscape, says the country now generates 5.8% of its electricity from solar power, surpassing Japan and ranking only behind China, the United States, and Brazil. According to the report, India was ninth in solar energy deployment in 2015, but ambitious policies and consistent investments have propelled the nation to the third spot in less than a decade.
- In 2023, solar energy accounted for a record 5.5% of global electricity production. In India, solar energy's contribution rose from 0.5% of the country's electricity in 2015 to 5.8% in 2023. This rapid growth aligns with global trends as solar power maintains its position as the fastest-growing electricity source for the 19th consecutive year.
- India's remarkable achievement is attributed to several factors. The country recorded the fourth-largest increase in solar power generation globally in 2023, with an addition of 18 terawatt hours (TWh). This growth was preceded by China (+156 TWh), the United States (+33 TWh), and Brazil (+22 TWh). Together, these four nations accounted for 75% of global solar growth in 2023.

Mumbai and Delhi feature among the World's Top 50 Wealthiest cities, surpassing Washington DC

- In the ever-evolving global economic landscape, certain cities stand out as magnets for success, attracting wealthy investors seeking abundant opportunities. Henley and Partners, a leader in residence and citizenship planning, recently unveiled a list of the World's Wealthiest Top 10 cities and Rising Wealth Hubs, highlighting cities

that attract high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) with liquid investable wealth of USD 1 million or more.

Mumbai and Delhi's Rise

- Mumbai and Delhi's inclusion in the top 50 wealthiest cities underscores India's economic progress and urban development. On the list they ranked above, Washington, DC the capital city of the World's richest country. These cities have become magnets for HNWIs, offering a blend of economic opportunities and cosmopolitan lifestyles.

Global Wealth Centers

- Mumbai and Delhi join other global financial hubs, such as New York, London, and Tokyo, in the list of top 50 wealthiest cities. These cities offer upscale living options and serve as centers for trade, commerce, and innovation.
- New York leads the pack, boasting 349,500 millionaires and a wealth exceeding \$3 trillion. The Bay Area tech hub, Tokyo, Singapore, London, Los Angeles, Paris, Sydney, Hong Kong, and Beijing complete the top 10. These cities offer diverse opportunities and amenities, attracting affluent individuals and businesses.
- Global Wealth Report: New York, Bay Area, and Tokyo Among Top 10 Wealthiest Cities
- These cities are magnets for high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs), offering lucrative opportunities and luxurious living.
- New York: The Financial Capital: New York boasts some of the most luxurious residential avenues, with Manhattan's 5th Avenue commanding top prices. It is home to the world's largest stock exchanges by market capitalization.
- The Bay Area: Tech Titans' Haven: The Bay Area hosts tech giants like Airbnb, Apple, and Netflix, making it a hub for innovation and wealth creation.
- Tokyo: Corporate Giants' Base: While Tokyo is home to corporate giants like Hitachi and Sony, it has a relatively low number of billionaires compared to other top cities.
- Singapore: Business-Friendly Oasis: Singapore's reputation as a business-friendly city has made it the world's fastest-growing family office hub.
- London: A Tale of Wealth Erosion: London, once a hub for millionaires and billionaires, has seen a decline in wealth growth and outward migration.
- Los Angeles: The Entertainment Epicenter: Los Angeles, known for its entertainment industry, boasts affluent neighborhoods like Beverly Hills and Malibu.
- Paris: Europe's Wealth Hub: Paris is home to Europe's wealthiest entrepreneurs and is poised to become Europe's top financial center post-Brexit.

- **Sydney: Growth and Affluence:** Sydney has witnessed significant wealth growth in the last two decades, attracting over 1,500 millionaires annually.
- **Hong Kong: Wealth and Business Prowess:** Hong Kong is known for its wealthy business leaders and remains a key player in the global stock market.
- **Beijing: A Billionaire's Playground:** Beijing boasts a large number of billionaires and is home to some of the world's largest corporations.
- **Asia Pacific's Ascendancy:** Asia Pacific emerges as a wealth hotspot, with five cities among the top 10 wealthiest. Singapore stands out, climbing two spots and poised to surpass Tokyo as Asia's wealthiest city. Singapore's allure lies in its business-friendly environment, attracting over 3,400 migrating HNWIs in 2023 alone.
- **China's Economic Surge:** China's economic prowess is evident, with five mainland cities, including Beijing, Shenzhen, Hangzhou, and Guangzhou, among the fastest-growing for millionaires. Beijing's millionaire population surged by 90% in the last decade, propelling it into the top 10 for the first time.
- **London's Decline:** In contrast, London, once a wealth epicenter, has slipped to 5th place due to sluggish wealth growth and outward migration. Los Angeles, however, has climbed two spots to 6th place, experiencing a notable 45% growth in its wealthy population.
- **Market Dynamics:** The report attributes the growth in wealthy cities to strong financial market performance and technological advancements. However, it cautions against geopolitical uncertainties, citing the impact of the war in Ukraine on Moscow's millionaire population.
- **Future Outlook:** Investment migration programs in cities like New York, Singapore, and Sydney are attracting wealthy individuals seeking diversification and secure havens. The report anticipates Dubai's rise in the ranking, with Abu Dhabi also showing promising growth rates.
- **The 2024 World's Wealthiest Cities Report** highlights a shifting global wealth landscape, with Asia Pacific emerging as a powerhouse. While traditional wealth centers like New York retain dominance, the rise of cities like Bengaluru underscores the changing dynamics of global wealth distribution. As cities compete to attract the world's affluent, investment migration programs and favorable policies play a crucial role in shaping the future of global wealth hubs.
- **UNITED NATIONS:** India has contributed USD 500,000 to the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund, underscoring its unwavering commitment to support multilateral efforts in the global fight against the scourge of terrorism.
- India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj on Tuesday handed over to Under Secretary General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov the country's voluntary financial contribution of half a million dollars towards the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (CTTF).
- "India places great significance on the mandate and the work undertaken by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in building the capacity of member states to effectively deal with the threat of terrorism. The latest contribution reaffirms India's unwavering commitment to supporting multilateral efforts led by the United Nations in the global fight against the scourge of terrorism," a statement by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN said.

Nepal climber Kami Rita Sherpa climbs Mt Everest for 29th time, breaks own record

- Kami Rita Sherpa, also known as 'Everest man,' embarked on the Spring Season Everest expedition from Kathmandu, accompanying a team of approximately 28 climbers. Seven Summit Treks organised the expedition to conquer the world's highest peak.
- According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Kami Rita has scaled Everest nearly every year since his first climb, totalling 29 ascents now.
- In 2020, the south side of Everest in Nepal was closed to climbers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but a partial reopening in 2021 allowed Kami Rita to achieve his 25th summit in May 2021.
- In 2023, Kami Rita completed his 27th ascent of Everest, tying the record with fellow guide Pasang Dawa Sherpa. However, by May 2023, Kami Rita surpassed this record by completing his 28th climb of Everest.
- Everest, known as Sagarmatha in Nepal, is 8,848.86 meters above sea level, making it the tallest mountain peak on Earth.
- In 2020, a joint initiative involving Chinese and Nepalese land surveyors reported that Everest's height had increased from the previously recorded 8,848 meters determined by the Survey of India in 1954.
- On May 29, 1953, New Zealand's Edmund Hillary and Nepali Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, originally

India Contributes \$500,000 to UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund

from Tibet, became the first to reach the summit of Everest.

India to join hands with Oman for research on sharks and rays in Arabian Sea

- In a move to boost research and conservation of sharks and rays in the Arabian Sea, India will join hands with Oman for collaborative research works and capacity building in elasmobranch research.
- As part of this, marine experts from both countries will gather at ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi to attend a joint workshop from May 13 to 22 for mutual knowledge-sharing on elasmobranch taxonomy, fisheries management, and conservation.
- "This workshop is a joint venture between the CMFRI and the Marine Science and Fisheries Centre, Directorate General of Fisheries Research of the Sultanate of Oman as part of a research linkage between India and Oman.
- The workshop will lay the foundation for a collaborative future in marine research between the two countries and open avenues for regional management and conservation of iconic resources such as sharks and rays in the Arabian Sea
- CMFRI is the national marine scientific authority for CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). For more than a decade, the institute has been running a research programme on sharks and rays in Indian waters, leading to developing policy advisories, conservation plans and species-specific database on several shark and ray species of the Indian EEZ.
- During the workshop, participants from both countries will share their knowledge and experience on working with sharks and rays in their respective regions.
- The research team from Oman will be headed by Dr Khalfan Al Rashdi, Director of Aquaculture Center, Directorate General of Fisheries Research, Sultanate of Oman who is also the leader of the Rays Project of Oman.
- The Indian research team will be headed by Dr Shoba Joe Kizhakudan, Head, Finfish Fisheries Division and Principal Investigator of CMFRI's national project on elasmobranch. She was invited by Oman in September 2023, to review the work being done on the Rays project of Oman and to offer technical advice for preparing necessary documents such as Non-Detrimental Findings (NDFs) for CITES-listed species and field identification guide for rays.

- The workshop is coordinated by the India-Shark & Ray Lab of the Finfish Fisheries Division of CMFRI.

EU Adopts Groundbreaking Legislation Combatting Violence Against Women

- On May 7, the European Union formally adopted groundbreaking legislation designed to combat violence against women across its 27 member states. This legislation includes measures against forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and cyber violence, marking a significant step in enhancing women's rights and safety within the EU.

Key Provisions of the Legislation

- The newly enacted law aims broadly to protect women from gender-related violence, encompassing a variety of offenses.
- Notably, it criminalises acts such as online stalking and harassment, the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and incitement to violence or hatred. Offenses under this law are punishable by imprisonment, with terms ranging from one to five years, depending on the severity of the crime.
- Additionally, if the victim is a minor or has a close familial relationship with the perpetrator (such as a spouse or ex-spouse), the law allows for enhanced penalties.

Dubai launches long-term Dubai Gaming Visa for gamers, content creators & developers

- In a bid to position itself as a global leader in the gaming industry, Dubai has launched the Dubai Gaming Visa under the ambitious Dubai Program for Gaming 2033 (DPG 2033). This long-term residency initiative aims to attract talented gamers, content creators, and industry professionals worldwide, marking a significant step toward making Dubai a central hub for gaming innovation.

The Dubai Program for Gaming 2033 (DPG 2033)

- The DPG 2033 is a comprehensive initiative by the Dubai government to transform the city into a global gaming powerhouse by 2033. This program includes strategies to attract international talent, nurture local expertise, and create a supportive ecosystem for gaming innovation. The program aims to create 30,000 new jobs in the gaming sector and contribute an estimated \$1 billion to Dubai's GDP by 2033.

Key Objectives of DPG 2033

- **Attracting International Talent:** The Dubai Gaming Visa seeks to bring skilled gamers, developers, content creators, and other professionals to strengthen the local industry.
- **Fostering Local Talent:** The program focuses on developing local talent through specialized educational programs, workshops, and events.
- **Building a Supportive Ecosystem:** DPG 2033 provides funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs and startups.
- **Promoting Esports:** By hosting tournaments and leagues, Dubai aims to become a leading destination for esports.
- **Encouraging Innovation:** The program supports research and development in the gaming sector, fostering new technologies and games.
- **Benefits of the Dubai Gaming Visa in 2024**
- The Dubai Gaming Visa offers numerous advantages for individuals and the gaming industry, making Dubai a prime destination for gaming professionals.

For Individuals

- **Long-term Residency:** Provides stability and security for those looking to build a career in Dubai's gaming industry.
- **Creative and Talented Accreditation Certificate:** Recognizes expertise and commitment to the gaming sector.
- **Career Opportunities:** Offers job opportunities, potential for high salaries, and career advancement.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Grants access to a vibrant community of gamers, developers, and industry leaders.
- **State-of-the-Art Infrastructure:** Dubai's world-class gaming facilities and advanced technology provide an ideal environment for gaming professionals.
- **Tax Benefits:** The tax-free environment maximizes earnings.

For the Gaming Industry

- **Attracting Global Talent:** Boosts the quality and diversity of the local gaming industry.
- **Promoting Innovation:** An influx of skilled professionals fosters a culture of innovation.
- **Economic Growth:** Generates significant revenue and creates thousands of jobs, contributing to Dubai's economic development.
- **Global Recognition:** Enhances Dubai's reputation as a dynamic and innovative city.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Promotes cultural understanding and appreciation within the gaming community.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Age:** Applicants must be at least 25 years old.

- **Experience:** Proven expertise in the gaming industry, whether as a professional player, content creator, developer, or in other relevant roles.
- **Documentation:** Comprehensive gaming-related CV, a copy of the passport, and optionally, educational qualifications and proof of community contributions.

PhonePe UPI payments launched in Sri Lanka

- Bengaluru-based PhonePe has partnered with LankaPay and launched PhonePeUPI payments in Sri Lanka, a facility that can spur Indian tourism in the island nation and provide a boost to the local economy.
- At an event to mark the collaboration, PhonePe said its app users travelling to Sri Lanka can make payments using UPI (Unified Payments Interface) across LankaPay QR merchants.
- The transactions will be facilitated by the UPI and LankaPay National Payment Network. Users can scan LankaQR code to make secure and quick payments without carrying cash or calculating currency conversions. The amount will be debited in Indian currency, showing the currency exchange rate.

India and Britain Reaffirm Commitment to FTA at Annual Strategic Dialogue

- India and Britain have reaffirmed their commitment to conclude a mutually beneficial free trade agreement (FTA) at the annual UK-India Strategic Dialogue here, as the two sides reflected the "good progress" on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review.
- Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, who is on a visit to the UK, held discussions with his counterpart, Sir Philip Barton, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Friday. After their meeting, the FCDO said the two leaders reviewed the progress made on the UK-India 2030 Roadmap since the last strategic dialogue in January last year and looked ahead to the next phase of bilateral cooperation.
- "The two reflected on good progress on the 2030 Roadmap since the last review, noting key areas where the UK and India have worked together to tackle some of the world's biggest challenges," the FCDO said in a statement.

Chabahar Port deal with Iran sparks sanctions warning for India from its 'good friend' US

- India and Iran signed a 10-year agreement to manage the Chabahar Port, enhancing regional connectivity and providing an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- The US warned of potential sanctions for dealing with Tehran, but stated it would let India address its foreign policy objectives.
- The deal strengthens bilateral relations and facilitates trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia, with plans to integrate the port into the International North South Transport Corridor. India's investment in Chabahar's infrastructure aims to improve trade routes and access to Central Asian markets.

World's First 6G Device Launched in Japan

- A Japanese consortium has released the world's first high-speed 6G prototype device.
- It will be 20 times faster than 5G and transmit data at a whopping 100 gigabits per second (Gbps).
- This 6G prototype device is a result of a collaboration of leading companies, including DOCOMO, NTT Corporation, NEC Corporation, and Fujitsu.
- These tests were conducted over a distance of 328 feet (100 meters).
- At present, 5G has a theoretical maximum speed of 10 GB/s. Its average speed is around 200 megabits per second (Mbps) for T-Mobile users in the US.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Receives First Stamp Released Commemorating Completion Of 200 Years Of Indian Origin Tamils In Sri Lanka

- Indian spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar received the first stamp released commemorating the completion of 200 years of Indian Origin Tamils in Sri Lanka. Governor of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka Senthil Thondaman presented the stamp to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.
- Speaking at the event, Mr. Thondaman said the stamp is a way to attain recognition for the community which has been neglected for decades. He thanked the Indian government as well as the Sri Lankan government for the assistance given to the IOT community.

Elon Musk Launches Starlink in Indonesia

- Elon Musk, the renowned entrepreneur behind SpaceX, has officially launched Starlink in Indonesia. This initiative aims to bridge the connectivity gaps in the country by providing high-speed satellite internet services.
- Starlink, a constellation of low Earth orbit (LEO) satellites, is set to revolutionize internet access in regions with limited or no connectivity. Indonesia, an archipelago with over 17,000 islands, faces significant challenges in providing internet connectivity to its remote and rural areas.
- Traditional infrastructure development is often hindered by the country's unique geography. Starlink's satellite-based system can bypass these limitations, ensuring even the most isolated communities gain access to reliable internet.

India to Facilitate First-Ever Focused Working Group Discussions on Antarctic Tourism

- In a move to regulate tourism in Antarctica, over 350 participants from nearly 40 nations are meeting in Kochi, Kerala, with India playing a pivotal role in facilitating the discussions, the Ministry of Earth Sciences said on Tuesday.
- The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), which started on May 20 and will run through May 30, are being organized by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat.
- The ATCM and CEP are high-level global annual meetings conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty, a multilateral agreement of 56 Contracting Parties signed in 1959.
- During these meetings, member countries of the Antarctic Treaty discuss issues pertaining to the science, policy, governance, management, preservation and protection of Antarctica.
- The CEP was established under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Madrid Protocol) in 1991. It advises the ATCM on environmental protection and conservation in Antarctica.
- India has been a consultative Party to the Antarctic Treaty since 1983. With the other 28 Consultative Parties, India has a crucial role in governing Antarctica's scientific exploration and environmental protection.

- It has the right to propose and vote on decisions and resolutions made during the ATCM in matters of administration, scientific research, environmental protection, and logistical cooperation.
- Further, it can establish research stations, conduct scientific programmes and logistic operations, enforce environmental regulations and access scientific data and research findings shared by Antarctic Treaty members.
- With the number of tourists visiting Antarctica increasing significantly over the past few years, tourism has become a front-burner issue, making it crucial that comprehensive regulations be framed to ensure the sustainable and responsible exploration of this unique and pristine region.

World Bank Report: 'Water For Shared Prosperity'

- The World Bank's report, 'Water For Shared Prosperity,' unveiled at the 10th World Water Forum, delineates the critical role of water in fostering equitable societies amidst global water access disparities exacerbated by population growth, urbanization, and climate change. It highlights the urgency of comprehensive strategies to ensure inclusive water security worldwide.
- Shared prosperity, as per the World Bank, involves bolstering economic well-being, particularly for marginalized segments, through four interconnected building blocks: Health and Education, Jobs and Income, Peace and Social Cohesion, and Environment.
- 197 million lack safe drinking water; 211 million lack basic sanitation.
- 450 million reside in high-poverty, low-water-access areas.
- Less than half of schools in low-income countries have water access.
- The forum is crucial for elevating water issues on the political agenda and fostering actionable solutions.

EU Approves World's First Major AI Law

- The EU Commission will enforce the AI Act with the authority to impose fines of up to €35 million (\$38 million) or 7% of a company's annual global revenue, whichever is higher. This stringent measure underscores the EU's commitment to robust AI regulation.
- Although the AI Act introduces tough restrictions, these will not be immediate. There is a 12-month delay before the requirements take effect. Existing

generative AI systems, like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, have a 36-month transition period to achieve full compliance.

- The AI Act's agreement signals a new regulatory reality. The next crucial step is its effective implementation and enforcement, ensuring that the legislative framework translates into practical and beneficial outcomes for AI technology and its users.
- The AI Act categorizes AI applications based on their risk levels. It bans "unacceptable" applications such as social scoring, predictive policing, and emotional recognition in sensitive environments like workplaces and schools. High-risk AI systems, including autonomous vehicles and medical devices, are subject to rigorous evaluation to protect health, safety, and fundamental rights. The Act also addresses AI applications in finance and education to prevent bias.

World's Highest Observatory Inaugurated in Chile by University of Tokyo

- The University of Tokyo has inaugurated the Atacama Observatory (TAO), which holds the Guinness World Record for the highest observatory in the world. TAO, located 5,640 meters above sea level on the summit of Cerro Chajnantor in Chile's Antofagasta Region, is a tribute to human creativity and determination.
- TAO is powered by a 6.5-meter optical-infrared telescope, which is intended to solve the universe's riddles. This cutting-edge equipment will investigate the fundamental nature of the cosmos, adding to our ever-expanding understanding of the universe we live in.
- TAO's location was carefully chosen due to its excellent atmospheric conditions. With little water vapor in the atmosphere, the observatory provides an exceptional vantage position for monitoring mid-infrared wavelengths, which are normally absorbed by water vapor at lower altitudes.
- TAO's building was a huge endeavor requiring 26 years of rigorous planning and execution. Takashi Miyata, director of the Atacama Observatory and manager of TAO development, acknowledged the enormous technical and political hurdles.
- To reduce the dangers of altitude sickness for construction workers and astronomers, particularly during nighttime operations when symptoms can exacerbate, a base facility has been built in San Pedro de Atacama, about 50 kilometers from the top. This facility enables remote control of the telescope, ensuring the safety

and well-being of personnel involved in TAO operations.

- TAO is conveniently positioned near the ALMA (Atacama Large Millimeter/Submillimeter Array) radio telescope, one of the world's greatest astronomical projects involving a global consortium of nations. This proximity establishes a collaborative hub for astronomical study, encouraging collaboration and synergy among scientists from all around the world.
- With the establishment of TAO, the University of Tokyo has cemented its position at the vanguard of astronomical investigation, setting the door for new discoveries and furthering our comprehension of the wide cosmos.

10th World Water Forum Opens in Bali, Indonesia

- In his opening remarks, **Indonesian President Joko Widodo** highlighted the vulnerability of 500

million small farmers, who contribute 80 percent of the world's food, to drought by 2050. He emphasized the importance of global collaboration in tackling water-related challenges.

- The 6 days Fair (20 - 25 May 2024) and the Six days expo (20 - 25 May 2024), will be among the highlight of the 10th World Water Forum. Not only to enliven the forum, the fair and expo will also provide an unique platform for the forum's participant and public to further enhance water dialogues and awareness of water related issues and solutions.
- The forum, attracting over 50,000 participants, has significantly enlivened Bali. Nearly 200 meetings and side events, along with numerous cultural activities, have provided delegates with enriching experiences. Indonesian Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy **Uno Sandi** noted the event's role in bolstering Indonesia's reputation as a world-class MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) destination.



GEOGRAPHY and ENVIRONMENT

Apple faces allegations of using 'blood minerals' from war-torn Democratic Republic of the Congo

- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has warned United States tech giant Apple to desist from using what it calls "blood minerals" drawn from the impoverished Central African country or face legal action.
- In an April 22 letter addressed to Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook, American and French lawyers representing the DRC accused the company of buying minerals that are illicitly transported from the DRC to Rwanda. These minerals' origins are purportedly concealed, allowing them to infiltrate the global technology supply chain. The DRC government says it will seek legal redress if the company continues with the practice.
- "Apple has affirmed that it verifies the origins of minerals it uses to manufacture its products...It says that the tin, tungsten, tantalum – the 3Ts – and gold that its suppliers purchase are conflict free and do not finance war. But those claims do not appear to be based on concrete, verifiable evidence," the letter stated.
- The claims against Apple have been documented in a 53-page report by Amsterdam & Partners, the law firm representing the DRC government.
- The report is titled Blood Minerals: Everyone sees the massacres in Eastern Congo, but everyone is

silent. The laundering of DRC's 3T Minerals by Rwanda and by private entities.

- The letter to Apple states that "it has become clear to us that year after year, Apple has sold technology made with minerals sourced from a region whose population is being devastated by grave violations of human rights. The iPhones, Mac computers and accessories that Apple sells to its customers around the world rely on supply chains that are too opaque, and that are tainted by the blood of the Congolese people.
- The DRC's mineral-rich eastern region, home to tantalum, tin, tungsten, and gold (collectively known as 3T or 3TG), has been plagued by violence for decades.
- Tensions escalated in late 2021 when rebels from the March 23 Movement (M23) began recapturing territory, exacerbating conflict over mineral resources.
- These minerals are known as blood minerals, because all the wars in eastern DRC have involved access to mineral resources, in the forests and villages inhabited by indigenous and local communities, where women and children are either deprived of their villages and fields, raped, killed or mutilated, or forced to work in the mines. None of this would be possible without foreign companies like Apple taking illicit advantage of the unrest by stepping up mineral smuggling, despite the regional and international instruments in place

First case of walrus dying from bird flu recorded in Arctic

- The first case of a walrus dying from bird flu has been detected on one of Norway's Arctic islands, a researcher has said.
- The walrus was found last year on Hopen island in the Svalbard archipelago, Christian Lydersen, of the Norwegian Polar Institute
- Tests carried out by a German laboratory revealed the presence of bird flu, Lydersen said. The sample was too small to determine whether it was the H5N1 or the H5N8 strain.
- Bird flu was still a "bird adapted virus" which is transmitted by birds like ducks and geese. The sporadic infection and spread of bird flu in mammals was likely due to mammals ingesting infected dead birds and living in colonies in close contact with other animals.
- Walrus, which can grow to a weight of two tonnes, eat mainly fish and shellfish, but sometimes also consume marine birds.

Study finds 'oldest evidence' of Earth's magnetic field in rocks from Greenland

- Rocks uncovered from Greenland have been found to bear the "oldest evidence of Earth's magnetic field," according to new research.
- Scientists found these rocks to be about 3.7 billion years old, and the strength of the magnetic field to be at least 15 microtesla. This was comparable to the strength of Earth's magnetic field today, they said.
- The fact that it's similar in strength as today's field implies whatever is driving Earth's magnetic field has not changed massively in power over billions of years.
- The team explained that iron particles in these rocks effectively act as "tiny magnets" that can detect and record the Earth's magnetic field. The rocks were uncovered from the Isua Supracrustal Belt in Greenland. Previously estimated to be at least 3.5 billion years old, the lifetime of the planet's magnetic field may now extend by another 200 million years, according to the study.
- That's important because that's the time when we think life was emerging," said co-lead author Benjamin Weiss, a professor of planetary sciences, MIT. The team described their estimate as a "more accurate and reliable assessment than previous studies which used individual crystals." "If the Earth's magnetic field was around a few hundred million years earlier, it could have played a critical role in making the planet habitable.

- The magnetic field is, in theory, one of the reasons we think Earth is really unique as a habitable planet," said Nichols. "It's thought our magnetic field protects us from harmful radiation from space and also helps us to have oceans and atmospheres that can be stable for long periods of time." The findings may shed light on the planet's early conditions that helped life take hold, the researchers said.
- The Earth's magnetic field is powered by its molten iron core, slowly churning up electric currents in a self-generating "dynamo", and extending out and around the planet like a "protective bubble". While today, the field is powered in this manner, it's thought that the inner core had not yet formed so early in the planet's evolution.

Recent studies suggest more ice on the Moon within exploitable depths

- A recent study reveals evidence for enhanced possibility of water ice occurrence in the polar craters of the Moon. The study is carried out by the scientists of Space Applications Centre (SAC)/ISRO, in collaboration with researchers at IIT Kanpur, University of Southern California, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, and IIT (ISM) Dhanbad (Chakraborty et al., 2024). It suggests that the amount of subsurface ice in the first couple of meters is about 5 to 8 times larger than the one at the surface in both poles.
- As such, drilling on the moon to sample or excavate that ice will be primordial for future missions and long-term human presence. Moreover, the study also suggests that the extent of water ice in the northern polar region is twice that in the southern polar region. As for the origin of this ice, the study confirms the hypothesis that the primary source of subsurface water ice in the lunar poles is outgassing during volcanism in the Imbrian period. The results also conclude that the distribution of water ice is likely governed by Mare volcanism and preferential impact cratering.
- The research team used seven instruments comprising radar, laser, optical, neutron spectrometer, ultra-violet spectrometer, and thermal radiometer onboard the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter to understand the origin and distribution of water ice on the Moon.
- Accurate knowledge of the distribution and depth of water ice occurrence in the lunar poles, as presented in the investigations, is crucial for constraining the uncertainties in selecting future landing and sampling sites for missions aimed at exploring and characterizing lunar volatiles.

- This result also supports a previous study of SAC, ISRO pointing out the possibility of the presence of water ice in some of the polar craters, utilizing polarimetric radar data from the Chandrayaan-2 Dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar instrument (Putrevu et al., 2023). Alongside, the presented comprehensive understanding of the occurrence of water ice in the lunar poles, in this study, is crucial for supporting ISRO's future in-situ volatile exploration plans on the Moon.

Venezuela Becomes First Country to Lose All Glaciers

- The primary driver behind glacier loss is indisputably **global warming, fueled by the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere**. Human activities, notably the burning of fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution, have significantly elevated GHG levels. These gases trap heat, leading to rising global temperatures and accelerated glacier melting.

Impact of Glacial Loss

- The disappearance of glaciers carries profound ecological and societal implications. Glaciers serve as vital freshwater reservoirs, particularly during dry periods, sustaining local communities, flora, and fauna. Their meltwater also regulates downstream temperatures, crucial for aquatic ecosystems. Furthermore, melting glaciers contribute to rising sea levels, albeit to varying degrees depending on their size.
- For nations like Venezuela, glacier loss represents not only an environmental crisis but also a cultural tragedy. Glaciers hold deep cultural significance, shaping regional identities and supporting activities like mountaineering and tourism. The loss of these icy landmarks reverberates beyond environmental concerns, profoundly affecting communities' way of life.

India to host delegation from Kenya, discuss cheetah sourcing

- INDIA IS likely to host a delegation of Kenyan officials later this month to explore the possibility of sourcing cheetahs from the east African country for the next phase of Project Cheetah, sources aware of developments said.
- The Gandhi Sagar wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was chosen as the second site for reintroduction of cheetahs last year.
- The authorities will host the Kenyan delegation to primarily discuss their willingness to translocate

cheetahs to India, the terms of such a translocation, including the number of cheetahs they are willing to part with. As part of Project Cheetah, India plans to introduce eight to 14 cheetahs annually for five years, subject to availability.

- In December last year India expressed its desire to source cheetahs from Kenya during a visit of their President William Ruto. The visit of the Kenyan delegation might include a trip to the Gandhi Sagar sanctuary to assess the on-ground preparations made by the Madhya Pradesh forest department.
- A five-member team from South Africa too visited the Gandhi Sagar sanctuary and the Kuno national park in MP. Sourcing cheetahs from South Africa for introduction in Gandhi Sagar is also under consideration.
- As of now, there are 27 cheetahs in Kuno - 13 adults and 14 cubs. Ten cheetahs have died so far owing to illnesses and infections.
- Deaths caused by infections is one of the key reasons India is looking towards Kenya as a potential source of the big cats.

Marine heatwaves trigger intense coral bleaching in Lakshadweep

- Researchers at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) reported widespread bleaching of coral reefs in the Lakshadweep Sea due to marine heatwaves.
- Extensive surveys across Lakshadweep islands revealed a significant percentage of hard coral species undergoing serious bleaching due to prolonged marine heatwaves since late October 2023.
- Marine heatwaves, considered rare extreme weather events, are extended periods of abnormal ocean temperatures exceeding the 90th percentile of regional ocean temperatures based on historical data. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), such heat levels massively risk coral bleaching, endangering the region's diverse marine ecosystems.
- Senior scientist at CMFRI, K.R. Sreenath, warned of an unprecedented biodiversity crisis due to multispecies mortality if the situation escalates. Shelton Padua, another senior scientist at CMFRI, attributed the marine heatwaves primarily to excessive heat atmospheric transfer and shifts in ocean currents. Besides corals, these heatwaves also threaten other vital marine habitats like seagrass meadows.
- The ecological damages can lead to local marine food web collapse, impacting numerous marine species. Dr. Sreenath emphasized that the marine heatwaves could cause substantial economic losses

by disrupting ecosystem services essential to livelihoods, tourism, and fisheries.

- 'Coral bleaching' is an environmental phenomenon wherein coral reefs lose their vibrant colors and turn white. This phenomenon typically occurs when corals are stressed due to changes in conditions such as temperature, light, or nutrients.
- The stress causes corals to expel the symbiotic algae living in their tissues, causing them to turn white, hence the term 'bleaching'. Although bleached corals are not dead, they are at a higher risk of dying. This event is a major concern because it impacts marine biodiversity and ecosystems, given that coral reefs support a wide variety of sea life.

New Catfish Species 'GlyptothoraxPunyabratai' Discovered In Arunachal Pradesh

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research-National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBFGR) has announced a groundbreaking discovery in the pristine waters of Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- A new species of catfish, *Glyptothoraxpunyabratai*, has been unearthed by ICAR-NBFGR researchers in the Brahmaputra River drainage system.
- The species, named after the esteemed founder director of ICAR-NBFGR, Dr. Punyabarata Das, honors his pioneering contributions to fisheries research.
- The discovery, detailed in the scientific journal *Ichthyological Exploration of Freshwaters*, outlines the collection of *Glyptothoraxpunyabratai* from Tung Stream, a tributary of the Tissa River.
- This significant finding underscores the rich biodiversity of the region and the imperative for ongoing exploration and conservation initiatives.
- The holotype and paratype specimens of the newfound species are now housed at the National Fish Museum-cum-Repository of ICAR-NBFGR in Lucknow, as reported.
- Dr. Uttam Kumar Sarkar, Director of ICAR-NBFGR, reaffirmed the institute's dedication to exploring remote and underexplored regions, particularly in the northeastern states.
- This discovery reinforces the critical need for sustained exploration and conservation endeavors to safeguard our natural heritage.

World's biggest permafrost crater has a warning for Earth

- In the remote reaches of Russia's Far East, a gaping hole in the Earth's surface continues to grow,

servicing as a stark reminder of the impacts of climate change.

- The Batagaika crater, the world's largest permafrost crater, is expanding at an alarming rate due to the thawing of the permafrost, a phenomenon catalysed by global warming.
- Permafrost is a type of ground or soil that remains frozen at or below the freezing point (0 degrees Celsius or 32 degrees Fahrenheit) for two or more consecutive years. It is found in regions where the temperature remains consistently cold throughout the year, typically in high-latitude regions near the poles, such as in the Arctic and subarctic regions.
- The crater, located in the Sakha Republic, is a one-kilometre-long gash that reaches depths of up to 100 metres. It began forming in the 1960s after deforestation led to the melting of the underground permafrost, causing the land to sink.
- Over the years, the crater has continued to expand, earning it the local nickname 'the cave-in'.
- Russia is warming at least 2.5 times faster than the rest of the world, leading to the melting of the long-frozen tundra that covers about 65% of the country's landmass. This rapid warming is releasing greenhouse gases stored in the thawed soil, contributing to the acceleration of global warming.
- The thawing permafrost has already had devastating effects on northern and northeastern Russia, causing infrastructure damage such as buckling roadways, splitting houses, and disrupting pipelines. The problem is further exacerbated by increasingly intense wildfires.

Climatisation caused by commercialisation has reduced forest governance to carbon sinks

- "Climatisation of forests" refers to the trend where forests are increasingly valued primarily for their role as carbon sinks, often at the expense of recognizing their broader ecological and social significance.
- This reflects a global shift in political attention and financial support towards primarily valuing forests for their capacity as carbon sinks, diminishing their intrinsic role for ecological and social welfare.
- "International Forest Governance: A Critical Review of Trends, Drawbacks, and New Approaches" was produced by the Science-Policy Programme (SciPol) of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO).
- It is the first global synthesis report on international forest governance in the last 14 years.

- The report analyses developments in international forest governance since 2010, when the IUFRO-led Global Forest Expert Panel (GFEP) published its last global assessment.

India highlights Forest Conservation and Sustainable Forest Management initiatives at the 19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

- India participated in the 19th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), held at the UN Headquarters in New York from May 6th to 10th May 2024. During the session, India highlighted the Country's significant advancements in forest conservation and sustainable forest management which led to consistent increase in forest cover over the past fifteen years. Globally, India ranks third in the net gain, in average annual forest area, between 2010 and 2020.
- India shared the high priority the Country provides towards biodiversity and wildlife conservation, having expanded the network of protected areas to over a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and other wildlife habitats. The recent celebrations marking 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant underscore India's commitment to species conservation and habitat protection. India also highlighted the creation of the International Big Cat Alliance, another important step aimed to protect and conserve the seven big cat species around the world through collaborative international efforts.
- India also shared the introduction of the 'Green Credit Program', designed to incentivize entities to take up tree plantation and restoration of degraded forest lands, which aims to further strengthen climate action initiatives.
- Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led Initiative under UNFF at Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organizations and held discussions on forest fire management and forest certification. The recommendations from this initiative were presented by India during UNFF 19.
- The Ministry also hosted a side event on 'Principles and Strategies for Landscape Integrated Fire Management through Collaborative Governance' in partnership with the Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, Portugal, the Korea Forest Service, and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) at the UNFF 19 at New York.

- The UNFF 19 culminated in a declaration to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation and to prevent land degradation, including the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the achievement of the Global Forest Goals.
- The Indian delegation was led by Shri Jitendra Kumar, Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.

2024 World Wildlife Crime Report

- The 2024 World Wildlife Crime Report was released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on May 13, 2024. This report provides insights into the illegal wildlife trade that occurred between 2015 and 2021.
 - The rhino and pangolin were the animal species most affected:
 - **Rhino Horn Market:** Largest at 29%
 - **Pangolin Scales Market:** Second largest at 28%
 - **Elephant Ivory Market:** Third largest at 15%
- Additional affected species include eels, crocodilians, parrots, cockatoos, carnivores, turtles, tortoises, snakes, seahorses, and other animals constituting various smaller percentages.

Key Findings: Plant Species

Cedars and other Sapindales were the most affected plant species:

- Cedars and Sapindales Market: Largest at 47%
- Rosewoods Market: Second largest at 35%
- Agarwood and other Myrtales Market: Third largest at 13%

Other affected plant species include golden chicken fern, orchids, and several others.

Seizures of Biodiversity Products

- Corals: 16% of seizures
- Crocodilians: 9%
- Elephants and Bivalve Molluscs: Each 6%

Various other species also accounted for numerous seizures, reflecting the diversity of the illegal wildlife trade.

Commodity Seizures

- Coral Pieces: 16% of all seizures
- Live Specimens: 15%
- Animal Product Medicines: 10%
- Other commodities included animal meat, shells, small leather products, and various others constituting smaller percentages.

Giant whale returns after disappearing for over 100 years

- The giant blue-grey sei whales have made a triumphant return to the waters off Argentina's

Patagonian coast, more than a century after relentless hunting drove them to the brink of extinction in the region.

- During the 1920s and 1930s, whaling ships operating along the shores of Argentina and beyond decimated sei whale populations, causing their
- disappearance from the area.
- However, global bans on commercial whaling implemented in recent decades have paved the way for their remarkable recovery.
- They disappeared because they were hunted, they did not become extinct but were so reduced that no one saw them.
- In this case, it took over 80 years for them to have appreciable numbers for people to realize they were there.
- Sei whales, known for their massive size and distinctive blue-grey coloration, breed every two to three years, which has contributed to the slow but steady replenishment of their population over the past century.

NASA Captures Yin-Yang Crater On Turkey's Mount Nemrut

- NASA's International Space Station recently took a unique picture of a strange hole on Mount Nemrut in Turkey, which is a dormant stratovolcano. As seen in the picture, the crater was split in half, making it look like the Chinese yin-yang sign.
- The height of Mount Nemrut is 9,672 feet (2,948 meters), and it is where the Eurasian and Arabian tectonic plates meet. The volcano erupted last time it was very active in 1650, creating a big caldera that is 5.3 miles (8.5 km) across and almost 2,000 feet (610 m) deep. A study done in 2012 found that this caldera was mostly made by a single big eruption about 250,000 years ago.
- The crater's eastern half had smaller blasts that caused lava flows to solidify on one side. Along time, water filled up the other side of the caldera, making a lake in the vent. This mountain's stark difference between the two sides is most clear when snow covers it, making it look like the yin-yang symbol.
- The huge eruption also made a big lava flow that blocked a river and formed Lake Van, which is Turkey's biggest lake, on the eastern side of the mountain.

Sariska Tiger Reserve: Supreme Court Orders Mine Closures

- The Supreme Court of India told the Rajasthan government on May 15 to close 68 mines that are

less than one kilometer from the Sariska Tiger Reserve.

- This decision is part of a larger attempt to keep illegal mining out of the important habitat for tigers, which has been a problem since the 1990s.
- The court's ruling backs up rules from the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and the Environment Protection Act of 1986, which both say that quarrying is not allowed near tiger reserves.
- The Sariska Tiger Reserve is in the Indian state of Rajasthan, in the district of Alwar.
- It became a wildlife reserve in 1955 and was declared a tiger reserve in 1978.
- All of Sariska's tigers had been killed by poachers, by 2004.
- In 2008, attempts to reintroduce tigers began. This was India's first successful move of tigers from Ranthambore.
- There are the remains of medieval temples and a fortress in the reserve.
- Sariska is home to many animals besides tigers, including leopards, sambars, and chitals.
- Sariska is part of India's Project Tiger initiative.
- The reserve covers approximately 800 square kilometers.

A large study called "Climate Change in the Indian Mind, 2023" shows that a lot of people in India are worried about climate change.

- The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the Centre for Voting Opinion & Trends in Election Research (CVoter) did the poll in September and October 2023. The results show that 91% of those who answered agree that global warming is real.
- The study shows a lot of worry about the effects of climate change. 59% of those who answered said they are "very worried." 52% of people agree that human actions are the main cause of global warming, while 38% say that natural changes in the environment are to blame.
- A lot of people are worried about the risks of global warming: 83% think it will hurt plants and animals. 82% are afraid for Indian people. – A big part of the population thinks that severe weather changes, like extreme heatwaves and storms, will happen. 71% of those who answered think that global warming has a big effect on their local weather, and 76% think that it has a big effect on the monsoons.
- People have strong opinions about what the government does and how it does it: a large majority (78%+) say that the Indian government should do more to fight global warming. About

86% of people strongly support policies that aim to reach Net Zero emissions by 2070, as agreed upon at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference.

'Doomsday glacier' melting at alarming rate, scientists warn

- The Thwaites Glacier in Antarctica, often referred to as the "Doomsday Glacier," is melting at an accelerated pace, raising serious concerns among scientists about its potential impact on global sea levels. The glacier, one of the largest in Antarctica, has the capacity to significantly increase sea levels, potentially flooding coastal regions worldwide.
- The Thwaites Glacier holds enough ice to raise sea levels by about three meters (approximately ten feet) if it were to collapse entirely. Scientists fear that such an event could happen within the next few decades if current trends continue.
- In addition to rising sea levels, the melting of the Thwaites Glacier could trigger further instability in the Antarctic ice sheet. This could lead to even more significant contributions to global sea-level rise as other glaciers and ice shelves in the region become destabilized.

La Nina to emerge by July, more rainfall during August-September

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) recently said that the upcoming monsoon season in India would have above-normal rainfall. They said this was because "favourable" La Nina conditions were expected by August and September. The IMD also said that El Niño conditions have been getting weaker since the beginning of the year.

Understanding El Niño and La Nina

- El Niño and La Nina are important climate events that happen as part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle and change the way the weather works around the world.
- These events happen because the ocean and the climate are interacting in complicated ways.
- The main thing that these interactions affect is the temperature of the water in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

- When El Niño happens, the trade winds weaken, which makes the water warmer on the top all across the equatorial Pacific.
- La Nina, on the other hand, has stronger trade winds and cooler ocean temperatures because more cold, nutrient-rich water rises to the surface.

La Nina conditions

- La Niña is the opposite of El Niño. It is marked by cooler-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean close to the equator.
- This event changes weather patterns around the world, generally making it rain more in Southeast Asia, Australia, and South America and dry out in the southwestern U.S. La Niña events happen about every 3 to 5 years on average.
- They can last for 9 to 12 months and are linked to storms in the Atlantic that are stronger than usual and colder winters in the northwest U.S. It also tends to strengthen the jet stream in the Pacific, which changes the paths of storms across North America.

G7 urges major economies: Net zero by 2050, emissions peak by 2025

- The leaders of the G7 have recently kept their word to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.
- Along the same lines, the government of Albanese has put forward a plan to create a Net Zero Economy Authority in order to encourage more investment in green technologies. Following the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, which tried to keep global warming below 1.5°C as required by the Paris Agreement, there has been a rise in net zero commitments.

Net Zero Emissions

- Net zero means balancing the amount of greenhouse gases released with the same amount stored or offset so that the temperature has no effect at all. This idea came about when people realized that cutting down on emissions alone is not enough to stop climate change.



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams set to fly into space for a third time next month

- Boeing's Starliner first crewed spacecraft to be piloted by Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams

is expected to be launched between June 1 and June 5 after the flight was postponed earlier this month due to a technical snag.

- Williams, 58, will fly into space for the third time aboard the test flight.

- A statement from NASA said: “Mission managers from NASA, Boeing, and ULA (United Launch Alliance) continue to evaluate a path forward toward launching the agency’s Boeing Crew Flight Test to the International Space Station.
- The teams are now working toward a launch opportunity at 12:25 p.m. on Saturday, June 1, with additional opportunities on Sunday, June 2, Wednesday, June 5, and Thursday, June 6.”
- Work continues to assess Starliner performance and redundancy following the discovery of a small helium leak in the spacecraft’s service module, the statement said.
- Starliner will carry Williams and Butch Wilmore to the International Space Station, marking what could be a momentous and long-awaited victory for the beleaguered Boeing programme.
- An attempt to launch the first crewed test flight for the International Space Station from Cape Canaveral in Florida was postponed on May 6 after a technical snag was discovered moments before the take-off.
- NASA will also conduct a Delta-Agency Flight Test Readiness Review to discuss the work that was performed since the last CFT launch attempt on May 6 and to evaluate issue closure and flight rationale ahead of the next attempt as part of NASA’s process for assessing readiness, the statement said.
- The statement said Williams and Butch Wilmore continued practising in Starliner simulators to prepare for flight, and the crew, which remains quarantined, will fly back to NASA’s Kennedy Space Centre in Florida closer to the new launch date.
- The mission has been delayed for several years because of setbacks in the spacecraft’s development.
- If it is successful, it will become the second private firm able to provide crew transport to and from the ISS, alongside Elon Musk’s SpaceX.
- Such a scenario – with both SpaceX’s Crew Dragon and Starliner flying regularly – is one for which the US space agency NASA has long waited.

Setu unveils Sesame, India's first domain-specific LLM for BFSI sector

- Setu, a leading Indian fintech company and part of the Pine Labs Group, on Tuesday unveiled Sesame, India’s first Large Language Model (LLM) specifically designed for the banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sector.
- Developed in collaboration with indigenous AI research firm Sarvam AI, the company said this marks a "ChatGPT moment" in financial services.

- The unveiling took place at Adbhut India, an event organised by the non-profit People+ai, in the presence of Nandan Nilekani (co-founder and director of EkStep Foundation), Shankar Maruwada (co-founder and chief executive officer of EkStep Foundation), Tanuj Bhojwani (head of People+ai), and other prominent figures in fintech, AI, and digital public infrastructure.
- Sesame leverages the rich data ecosystem enabled by India's digital infrastructure to power various features. These include improved credit underwriting, fraud detection, loan monitoring, upsell or cross-sell, and personal finance advisory.
- Setu and Sarvam AI have together created Sesame to be both domain- and region-specific by training it on custom data highly relevant to India’s BFSI sector. This includes combining a domain-specific LLM with delivery models.
- This allows enterprise customers to harness the vast amounts of financial data available both internally and externally in a compliant manner. Setu’s vision is to empower BFSI customers to make smarter, faster credit decisions. It also aims to provide hyper-personalised financial services to its customers across their entire lifecycle.

Robotic transport system': Nasa announces plans to build first railway system on Moon

- American Space Agency NASA is planning to develop the first lunar railway system for efficient payload transportation on the Moon.
- NASA shared an official blog post mentioning the long-lasting robotic transport system which will play a major role in the daily operations of a sustainable lunar base envisioned for the 2030s. This lunar railway system is part of NASA's Moon to Mars initiative and mission concepts such as the Robotic Lunar Surface Operations 2 (RLSO2).
- There is a need for a solution to transport regolith mined for ISRU consumables (H2O, LOX, LH2) or construction materials, as well as moving payloads around the lunar base and to/from landing zones or other outposts.
- To resolve transportation needs, NASA introduced FLOAT, i.e., Flexible Levitation on a Track.
- *What is the FLOAT system?*
- The FLOAT system will utilise unpowered magnetic robots that levitate over a 3-layer flexible film track, i.e., a graphite layer that enables robots to float over tracks with the help of diamagnetic levitation passively. A flex-circuit layer generates electromagnetic thrust to propel robots along tracks controllably and an optional thin-film solar panel layer generates power when in sunlight for the base.

- FLOAT robots don't have moving parts and minimise lunar dust abrasion/wear by levitating over the track, unlike lunar robots which are equipped with wheels, tracks or legs
- According to NASA's robotics expert Ethan Schaler of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, "We want to build the first lunar railway system, which will provide reliable, autonomous, and efficient payload transport on the Moon." He further said a durable long-life robotic transport system will be critical to the daily operation of a sustainable lunar base in the 2030s.
- As per NASA's initial design, FLOAT will be for machines only. The design consists of magnetic robots levitating over a three-layer movie track to reduce abrasion from dust on the lunar surface. Carts will be mounted on these robots which will move roughly 1.61 kilometres per hour. This can transport 100 tons of material a day to the NASA base.
- FLOAT will run autonomously in the dusty, inhospitable lunar environment with minimal site preparation, and its track network can be rolled up/reconfigured over time to match evolving lunar base mission requirements.

Microsoft's AI and Cloud Boost: €4 Billion Investment in France

- In a move that underscores its commitment to artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing, tech giant Microsoft Corp. has announced plans to invest a staggering €4 billion (approximately \$4.3 billion) in building cloud and AI infrastructure in France. This latest investment highlights the company's continued focus on advancing its AI capabilities and expanding its cloud services globally.
- Microsoft's investment aims to create a **vibrant AI ecosystem** in France. The company aims to **train a million people** and provide support to **2,500 startups** by 2027. This initiative aligns with France's strategic focus on developing AI as a key area of growth and innovation.
- Earlier this year, Microsoft unveiled a partnership with **Mistral AI**, a Parisian startup competing in the AI realm. The collaboration included a **€15 million investment** from Microsoft, further solidifying the company's commitment to fostering AI innovation in France.

Mangalyaan-2 unveiled: India poised to become third nation to land on Mars

- India's renowned space agency, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), is on the verge of a historic milestone: a mission to land a rover and

helicopter on Mars. This ambitious endeavour, a feat so far accomplished only by the US and China, aims to firmly establish India's place as a significant player in the realm of space exploration.

- The details about the upcoming ambitious project by Isro, named Mangalyaan-2, were made public during a presentation on National Technology Day at the Space Application Centre.
- The groundbreaking mission will be blasted off from the surface using India's heaviest rocket developed by Isro yet – the Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3).
- Bid farewell to conventional methods like airbags and ramps. Isro's rover is set to make its grand entrance on Mars with flair, courtesy of an advanced sky crane. Drawing inspiration from Nasa's triumphant Perseverance rover landing, this innovative system will delicately lower the rover onto the Martian terrain, ensuring a secure and precise touchdown even amidst challenging landscapes.
- Additionally, to navigate the fiery descent through the Martian atmosphere, Isro is developing a supersonic parachute – a pivotal component for the success of this daring mission.
- Isro plans to launch a relay communication satellite to ensure continuous communication with the rover and helicopter traversing Mars' surface, prior to the mission. Serving as a vital link between Mars and Earth, this relay satellite will ensure a steady flow of data and mission control.
- With the formidable Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3) propelling the mission towards Mars, Isro's second attempt promises to be a marvel of technological prowess. This ambitious undertaking not only showcases India's growing capabilities in space exploration but also lays the groundwork for further exploration of our celestial neighbour.
- India was the first Asian nation to reach the Martian orbit – and in its first attempt. Recent ambitious missions to the moon and mars have propelled the country among the top spacefaring nations in the world.

A series of COVID-19 variants within the Omicron JN.1 lineage, known as FLiRT, including the KP.2 and KP 1.1 variants, is rapidly spreading in the United States

- KP.2 is a descendant of the JN.1 variant of the virus. It is a sub-variant of the Omicron lineage with new mutations. FLiRT, the nickname of KP.2, is based on the letters representing two immune

escape mutations that allow the virus to evade antibodies.

- Genomic scientist Dr Vinod Scaria said: "These two mutations on the spike protein disrupt the major sites on the spike protein where antibodies bind and neutralise the SARS-CoV-2 virus. These mutations allow the virus to escape antibodies."

What do the genomic data on KP.2 from India show?

- A little more than half of the 250 KP.2 genomes sequenced by INSACOG – 128 sequences – were from Maharashtra. The highest number of KP.2 sequences were found in March.
- India has been reporting the highest proportion of KP.2 sequences in the world, global data show. KP.2 sequences made up 29% of Covid-19 sequences uploaded by India to the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID), the world's largest repository of these sequences, over the last 60 days.
- However, JN.1 continues to be the dominant variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the country. There were 679 active cases of Covid-19 in India on May 14, according to Union Health Ministry data, and one death – in Delhi – was attributed to the disease.

Scientists develop 'all-in-one' vaccine that may protect against broad range of coronaviruses

- Scientists from the world's leading universities have developed an all-in-one vaccine that they hope can protect humans against a broad range of coronaviruses, including ones that are yet to emerge.
- In a study published in the journal Nature Nanotechnology on Monday (May 6), scientists said that this vaccine works by training the body's immune system to recognise specific regions of eight different coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2 which caused the COVID-19 outbreak, and several that are currently circulating in bats and have potential to jump to humans and cause a pandemic.
- The new vaccine is based on a structure called a nanoparticle – a ball of proteins held together by incredibly strong interactions. Chains of different viral antigens are attached to this nanoparticle using a novel "protein superglue".
- Multiple antigens are included in these chains, which trains the immune system to target specific regions shared across a broad range of coronaviruses.
- Proactive vaccinology is an approach to create vaccines before outbreak of diseases. It is a process whereby scientists actively predict potential future viral threats and preemptively develop vaccines to combat them. Such predictions are based on

studies of viral genes, species, and transmission patterns.

- The strategy relies on technological advances in synthetic biology and genomics to rapidly design and produce vaccine candidates. An example of its potential impact is the rapid development of the COVID-19 vaccines, which was partly due to prior research on related coronaviruses.

Scientists developed a sheet of gold that's just one atom thick

- Meet graphene's newest metallic cousin, goldene. For the first time, researchers have created a free-standing sheet of gold that's just one atom thick.
- The development, reported in the April 16 Nature Synthesis, could someday allow scientists to use less gold in electronics and chemical reactions, says materials physicist Lars Hultman of Linköping University in Sweden. The gold sheet may also exhibit exotic properties like those found in other two-dimensional materials
- Goldene holds promise as "a great catalyst because it's much more economically viable" than thicker, three-dimensional gold, Hultman says. "You don't need as many gold atoms to get the same function."
- Gold joins a rarefied group consisting of several elements, including carbon and phosphorus, that have been formulated into 2-D sheets. While two-dimensional sheets of nonmetal elements – such as carbon-based graphene – can be prepared with relative ease, making 2-D sheets with metals such as iron and gold is harder, Hultman says. In gold's case, atoms tend to form clumps rather than flat sheets.
- Hultman and colleagues first made a three-dimensional material called titanium gold carbide, whose structure contains two-dimensional sheets of gold. Then they etched off the surrounding material with a potassium-based solution, leaving goldene behind.

Sun Releases Two Powerful Solar Flares, Causes Blackouts

- In the past week, the Sun has emitted two significant solar flares from a newly identified sunspot, AR3663, causing impacts such as radio blackouts in several parts of the world. These flares occurred within six hours of each other, signaling an increase in solar activity as part of the Sun's 11-year magnetic cycle, during which it experiences a polar reversal.
- Solar flares are powerful bursts of energy emitted from sunspots, which are temporary phenomena on the Sun's surface. These flares are caused by the

sudden release of magnetic energy due to changes in the magnetic field lines near sunspots. The intensity of solar flares is ranked by scientists from the weakest (B-class) to the strongest (X-class).

- The first of the recent flares, an X-class flare, occurred on May 2 and had significant consequences, including widespread radio blackouts across Australia, Japan, and China. Following closely, an M-class flare struck on May 3. This activity highlights the direct effect such solar phenomena can have on Earth, particularly when the Earth faces the active sunspot.

India Plans Dedicated Semiconductor R&D Wing Under ISRC

- The government has proposed the establishment of a dedicated research and development (R&D) unit under the newly envisaged India Semiconductor Research Centre (ISRC). This initiative aims to enhance semiconductor research that can transition swiftly to industrial production. This strategic move is aligned with the government's broader agenda to promote a knowledge-driven manufacturing ecosystem, with significant contributions from both private and public sectors.
- The proposed R&D wing will operate independently from other ongoing research frameworks within the ISRC, focusing specifically on rapid development cycles. The government is considering a range of funding mechanisms, including public-private partnerships (PPP) and possibly co-funded arrangements to foster intensive research activities. The importance of creating intellectual property rights (IPR) within this sector has been particularly emphasised, with aims to bolster national capabilities and innovation in semiconductor manufacturing.
- The ISRC's research focus will be on developing advanced semiconductor technologies, including next-generation chip designs, packaging, systems technologies, and novel materials and processes. Concurrently, the government plans to fortify the academic infrastructure related to semiconductors by introducing relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses. It envisions leveraging top-tier educational institutes like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay, IIT Gandhinagar, and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, to spearhead semiconductor R&D and education.

National highways to soon have self-healing roads? NHAI explores 'ingenious' methods to address issue of potholes

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is exploring an innovative technology that could potentially revolutionize road maintenance in the country. The technology involves the use of self-healing asphalt, which has the ability to address the persistent issue of potholes, a major contributor to road accidents and fatalities in India.
- The self-healing properties of this special asphalt could offer a long-term solution to the pothole problem. However, before implementing the technology on a large scale, the government plans to conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis to ensure its feasibility and effectiveness. The official added, "This can increase the lifespan of roads and practically eliminate the need for road maintenance, while bringing down traffic disruption."
- In 2022, India experienced a significant 22.6% rise in the number of road accidents caused by potholes on national highways, increasing from 3,625 in 2021 to 4,446. These accidents claimed the lives of 1,856 individuals, which is a 25.3% year-on-year increase.
- The self-healing asphalt technology works by incorporating small pieces of steel wool into the bitumen, the binding agent in asphalt. This addition makes the bitumen conductive, allowing it to be heated using an induction machine. The heating process enables the bitumen to rebind with the stones and gravel in the asphalt, effectively repairing cracks and preventing the formation of potholes.
- The road transport and highways ministry has allocated Rs 2,600 crore for road maintenance in the 2024-25 budget, which is consistent with the budgetary and revised estimates for 2023-24 and slightly higher than the Rs 2,573.66 crore spent in 2022-23.

ISRO achieves major milestone with 3D printed rocket engine test

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced a major achievement, stating it has successfully conducted a hot test of a liquid rocket engine manufactured using additive manufacturing (AM) technology, or 3D printing. This engine is intended for use in the PS4, the upper stage of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- ISRO redesigned the conventionally manufactured PS4 engine to make it compatible with additive manufacturing techniques, a process known as Design for Additive Manufacturing (DfAM). According to The Times of India, this innovative approach has yielded remarkable advantages.

- The Laser Powder Bed Fusion technique used in the manufacturing process reduced the number of engine components from 14 to a single piece, eliminating 19 weld joints," ISRO stated. This streamlined design not only significantly reduced raw material usage per engine from 565kg to a mere 13.7 kg of metal powder but also cut overall production time by 60%.
- The PS4 engine, which uses a bipropellant combination of nitrogen tetroxide as the oxidizer and monomethyl hydrazine as the fuel, was developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC). The manufacturing of the additively manufactured engine was carried out by the Indian industry partner, Wipro 3D. The hot testing was conducted at ISRO's Propulsion Complex in Mahendragiri.
- Before the successful 665-second hot test, ISRO conducted a comprehensive development program. This included detailed flow and thermal modeling, structural simulations, cold flow characterization of the proto hardware, and four successful developmental hot tests of the integrated engine for a cumulative duration of 74 seconds. These rigorous tests validated the engine's performance parameters, The Times of India reported.
- The successful hot testing of the 3D printed PS4 engine is a significant step in leveraging additive manufacturing technology for rocket engines in the future. "This paves the way for the induction of the additively manufactured PS4 engine into the regular PSLV program, ushering in a new era of advanced manufacturing techniques for India's space endeavors," ISRO added.

Black Hole Week (May 6 to 10) has made people pay more attention to NASA's Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, which will be launched in 2026.

- Most astronomers are looking forward to this project, which is meant to look for primordial black holes, which are leftovers from when the universe was first formed about 13.8 billion years ago.
- Theoretically, primordial black holes formed soon after the Big Bang. They could have been caused by changes in density in the very early universe. Unlike black holes that form when stars die, these could be very different sizes possibly as small as an atom but still have a lot of mass. Primordial black holes may have something to do with dark matter, and finding them could help us learn a lot

about physics, gravitational effects, and how the universe started.

- A major study group at the University of California, Santa Cruz, led by postdoctoral researcher William DeRocco, just put out results in the journal Physical Review D that describe the methods Roman will use to find these ancient cosmic entities. If their existence is proven, it could change a lot about how we think about the early universe and put current theories, even those put forward by Stephen Hawking, to the test. Stephen Hawking's contributions to the study of black holes, especially his theory of Hawking radiation, suggest that black holes give off radiation over time and then disappear. Hawking's theory would be challenged if primordial black holes exist and have been around for billions of years. This shows that there are still a lot of questions to be solved about black holes' properties and how long they last.

OpenAI Offers Free GPT-4o, Unveils New Capabilities

- OpenAI, a major player in the field of artificial intelligence study, recently announced big improvements to their AI models, including the release of the GPT-4o model.
- During a livestream event, Mira Murati, Chief Technology Officer of OpenAI, stated that this new model would be available for free because it is more efficient than the ones that came before it.
- People in the tech world are paying close attention to changes in AI technologies right now, especially since AI skills and uses are growing so quickly.
- The best parts of OpenAI's event were the demonstrations that showed how the ChatGPT model has grown, especially in voice and vision uses.
- Speaking of examples, the ChatGPT voice assistant showed it could read a bedtime story using different voices, feelings, and tones. This showed great progress in understanding natural language and being emotionally intelligent.
- As part of another presentation, the AI used its vision to solve a math problem that was written on paper. This showed that progress had been made in combining visual data processing with natural language technologies.

Google will now protect you against fraud with new scam call detection feature for Android

- Google unveiled an AI-powered scam call detection feature at Google I/O 2024, aimed at protecting Android users from phone scams.

- The feature, powered by Gemini Nano, analyzes conversations in real-time for fraudulent language and patterns. It operates locally on devices, ensuring privacy. Users will need to opt-in to use this proactive security tool, with more details expected later this year.
- Compatibility is currently limited to select flagship models, highlighting Google's commitment to enhancing user protection.

There has been a big spread of Hepatitis A in Kerala's Malappuram district, with about 8,000 cases and 12 deaths.

- The virus, which is known for being very contagious, usually affects kids younger than 15 years old, but it is now spreading to older people whose immune systems aren't working as well.

What is Hepatitis A?

- Hepatitis A is a liver infection caused by a highly contagious virus.
- Infected individuals can show symptoms such as jaundice, fever, and stomach pain.
- Symptoms typically appear between two to six weeks after contracting the virus.
- In 99% of cases, the infection goes away on its own and does not damage the liver permanently.
- Severe outcomes like liver failure or death are rare.

Transmission of the Virus

- The main way the Hepatitis A virus gets from feces to mouth is through contaminated food or water. It can be found in the poop of an infected person before they even show any signs, and it can still be found after symptoms have gone away. Past cases, like those in Delhi and Kanpur, were caused by broken sewer lines and letting dirty water into the water supply.

WHO Report "Action on Salt and Hypertension" Highlights Health Risks Of Excess Salt Consumption

- In its second edition study on salt benchmarks across several dietary categories, the World Health Organization (WHO) has found a major public health problem. The study shows a strong link between eating a lot of sodium and serious health problems, like a higher chance of heart disease and dying early from a bad diet.
- Almost two million of the eight million deaths a year that are linked to bad diets are caused by eating too much salt. Sodium, which is mostly found in salt, is needed to keep plasma volume steady and cells working normally. But too much of it can cause high blood pressure, heart disease,

strokes, and other serious health problems like stomach cancer, obesity, liver disease, and chronic kidney disease.

- Since sodium pulls and holds water, eating too much of it makes you hold on to more water. This extra fluid makes the blood flow go up, which puts more stress on the heart and blood vessels and raises blood pressure. High blood pressure that lasts for a long time hurts the heart and raises the risk of heart attack, heart failure, and kidney problems.

Fight against AMR: UN calls for global cooperation & agreement on pandemic treaty

- Finalising the international pandemic treaty is of utmost importance, especially as the world faces the growing health challenge of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said. She was speaking at a multi stakeholder hearing in preparation for the High-level Meeting on AMR on the margins of the General Assembly later this year.
- The call came days ahead of the 77th World Health Assembly scheduled for May 27, 2024 where the treaty draft is expected to be refined, and amid resistance from the United Kingdom government regarding certain aspects of the text.
- Regarding the latter, the UN health agency World Health Organization (WHO), has advised UK ministers to steer clear of misinformation being spread regarding the treaty, to sway their decision to block it. The treaty, as claimed by some British public personalities and some ministers, will not cede a country's sovereignty to WHO, the organisation asserted. It also dispelled "myths" regarding the deal's provisions to let WHO impose lockdown restrictions and control vaccine stocks of any nation.
- The pandemic treaty is envisioned to pull together global efforts against new pathogens that pose a danger to public health. The fight against more and more pathogens growing resistant to various classes of antibiotics, rendering them ineffective, is also a vital organ of the international health movement.

In a shocking discovery, scientists have now found microplastics in human testicles.

- The researchers at the University of New Mexico studied the testicular tissues covered by humans and dogs and found the presence of microplastics in every sample. However, microplastics were

found to be three times higher in humans in comparison to dogs.

- The study not only emphasised how plastic pollution is now entering every part of our body but also raised concerns regarding how these microscopic fragments may impact male fertility.
- Speaking to Science Alert, Environmental health scientist Xiaozhong Yu from the University of New Mexico said, "At the beginning, I doubted whether microplastics could penetrate the reproductive system. When I first received the results for dogs I was surprised. I was even more surprised when I received the results for humans."
- The researchers identified 12 different types of microplastics, among which the one which was found in abundance in both dogs and humans, was polyethylene (PE).
- Polyethylene is used in the manufacturing of plastic bottles and bags. The researchers were not able to test human tissue for sperm count, however, they checked the canine samples.
- In the canine samples, the scientists found higher levels of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic which is related to a lower sperm count in the animals.
- With this discovery, the scientists found that plastics may be contributing to decreasing sperm count worldwide.

X chromosome revival in older Women increases Autoimmune Disease risk

- The X chromosome influences biological functions and disease susceptibilities, affecting genetic disorders, autoimmune diseases, and Alzheimer's, with research offering potential new treatments and therapies.

- **X chromosome**
- It is one of the two sex chromosomes in humans, the other being the Y chromosome.
- Females have two X chromosomes (XX), while males have one X and one Y chromosome (XY).
- Encodes around 800 genes that are crucial for various biological processes.
- Plays a significant role in determining sex and influencing many physiological functions.
- Loss of function or mutations in X chromosome genes can lead to several genetic disorders.
- **Autoimmune Diseases**
- Diseases where the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own cells and tissues.
- Normally, the immune system defends against infections by targeting harmful pathogens.
- Common Autoimmune Diseases:
- Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE): Chronic inflammation affecting various body parts.
- Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA): Inflammation of joints and surrounding tissues.
- Sjogren's Syndrome: Affects glands that produce moisture, leading to dry mouth and eyes.

50,000-Year-Old Neanderthal Bones Have Remains of Human Viruses, Scientists Find

- Scientists have detected remnants of three types of viruses in 50,000-year-old Neanderthal bones. The findings, researchers say, are a first step in testing the theory that viral infections could have played a role in the extinction of Neanderthals.
- the new findings would be the oldest human viruses ever recovered, setting a record previously held by a 31,000-year-old adenovirus.



DEFENCE & SECURITY

Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo system successfully flight-tested by DRDO off the Odisha coast

- Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system was successfully flight-tested at around 0830 hrs on May 01, 2024 from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha. SMART is a next-generation missile-based light-weight torpedo delivery system, designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to enhance the anti-submarine warfare capability of the Indian

Navy far beyond the conventional range of light-weight torpedo.

- This canister-based missile system consists of several advanced sub-systems, namely two-stage solid propulsion system, electromechanical actuator system, precision inertial navigation system etc. The system carries advanced light-weight torpedo as payload along with parachute-based release system.
- The missile was launched from the ground mobile launcher. Several state-of-the-art mechanisms such as symmetric separation, ejection and velocity control have been validated in this test.

7th India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting held in New Delhi

- Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane and Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence, Indonesia, Air Marshal Donny ErmawanTaufanto, M.D.S. co-chaired the 7th India-Indonesia Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting in New Delhi on May 03, 2024. During the meeting, both sides expressed satisfaction at the expanding scope of defence cooperation between the two countries. The progress made on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives deliberated in meetings of Working Groups on Defence Cooperation and Defence Industries Cooperation was also reviewed by the co-chairs.
- In addition, the dignitaries identified means to enhance existing areas of collaboration especially in the field of defence industry ties, maritime security and multilateral cooperation.
- India and Indonesia have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and have arrived at a shared vision of the Indo-Pacific. In current times, this partnership is characterised by closed cooperation in bilateral and multilateral arena, including frequent high-level interactions. Indonesia is an important partner in India's Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific region.

Keel Laying of the First Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessel (Ex-Gsl) on 03 May 24 at Goa Shipyard Ltd

- Keel laying ceremony of the first NGOPV (ex-GSL) was held at M/s Goa Shipyard Ltd, Goa on 03 May 24. The ceremony was presided by VAdm B Siva Kumar, Controller Warship Production & Acquisition in presence of Shri B K Upadhyay, Chairman & Managing Director, GSL and other senior officials from Indian Navy and M/s GSL.
- The contracts for indigenous design and construction of 11 Next Generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (NGOPV) were concluded on 30 Mar 23 between MoD and M/s Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL), Goa and M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, with seven ships to be constructed by Lead Shipyard M/s GSL and four ships by Follow Shipyard M/s GRSE.
- The NGOPVs will be utilised for performing missions such as Anti-Piracy, Coastal Defence & Surveillance, Search & Rescue and Protection of Offshore Assets. These ships will enable Indian Navy to maintain its combat capability to protect the economic and geopolitical interests of the

nation in the Indian Ocean Region. This is yet another significant milestone in Indian Navy's pursuit towards indigenous shipbuilding and is in consonance with 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives of the nation.

Indian Naval Ships Delhi, Shakti, and Kiltan arrived at Singapore, as part of Eastern Fleet Deployment to South China Sea

- Indian Naval Ships Delhi, Shakti, and Kiltan led by RAdm Rajesh Dhankhar, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet arrived at Singapore on 06 May 24 to a warm welcome by personnel of Republic of Singapore Navy and the High Commissioner of India in Singapore. The visit is part of the Operational Deployment of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet to the South China sea. This visit is poised to further strengthen the longstanding friendship and cooperation between the two maritime nations through a series of engagements and activities.
- During the ships' stay in harbour, various activities planned to be undertaken include interactions with the High Commission of India, professional interactions with the Republic of Singapore Navy as also academia and community outreach amongst other activities, reflecting the shared values of both navies.
- The Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy have had robust relations spanning three decades of cooperation, coordination and collaboration with regular visits, exchange of best practices, and reciprocal training arrangements. The current deployment underscores the strong linkages between both the navies.

BRO celebrates its 65th Raising Day

- The BRO executes road construction and maintenance works at altitude ranging from 9,000 ft up to 19,000 ft along the Northern and Western frontiers, primarily to meet the strategic requirements of the Armed Forces. In over six decades, it has constructed over 62,214 kms of roads, 1,005 bridges, seven tunnels and 21 airfields in adverse climatic and geographical conditions along India's borders as well as in friendly countries, including Bhutan, Myanmar, Afghanistan & Tajikistan, thus contributing towards the nation's strategic objectives.
- In 2023-24, the BRO completed a total of 125 infrastructure projects worth Rs 3,611 crore. This includes the construction of Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh on Balipara-Chardwar-Tawang Road. The tunnel was dedicated to the

Nation by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently from Itanagar virtually. The BRO will soon commence the construction on 4.10-km long Shinkun La Tunnel. Once completed, this tunnel will become the world's highest tunnel at 15,800 ft bypassing Mila Tunnel in China at 15,590 ft.

- The BRO accomplished the completion of two significant airfield projects namely Bagdogra and Barrackpore, marking yet another milestone in its journey of excellence. The foundation stone for Mudh Airfield Project was laid by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh recently. The BRO aims to complete the project within just two working seasons.
- Over the few years, the BRO has witnessed an exponential surge in budget expenditure, marking a remarkable leap forward in capabilities and impact. This increased budgetary support has empowered the organisation to undertake crucial projects, accelerate critical infrastructure development, and enhance its operational readiness.
- The BRO has been at the forefront of promoting gender equality and inclusivity, offering key roles and opportunities to women. Officers like Col Ponung Doming is leading critical projects in Eastern Ladakh. Assistant Executive Engineer (Civ) Smt Nikita Chaudhary has played a pivotal role in successful completion of Sela Tunnel Project.

India- France Joint Military Exercise Shakti commences in Meghalaya

- The 7th edition of India- France Joint Military Exercise SHAKTI commenced today, at Umroi, in a fully developed and modern Foreign Training Node in Meghalaya. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 13th to 26th May 2024. The Opening Ceremony of the joint exercise was attended by H.E. Thierry Mathou, Ambassador of France to India and Major General Prasanna Sudhakar Joshi, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area. Exercise SHAKTI is a biennial training event conducted alternatively in India and France. Last edition was conducted in France in November 2021.
- Indian contingent comprising 90 personnel is being represented primarily by a Battalion of the RAJPUT Regiment besides personnel from other arms and services. Observers from the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force will also form part of the exercise. The French contingent comprising 90 personnel will be represented mainly by personnel from the 13th Foreign Legion Half-Brigade (13th DBLE).

- Aim of Exercise SHAKTI is to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake multi-domain operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate. The joint exercise will focus on operations in the semi-urban and mountainous terrain. Objectives to be achieved from the joint training are high degree of physical fitness, rehearsing and refining drills for operations at tactical level and sharing of best practices.
- Tactical drills to be practiced during the Exercise will include response to a terrorist action of capturing a defined territory, establishment of a Joint Command Post, establishment of an Intelligence & Surveillance Centre, securing of a helipad/ landing site, Small Team Insertion & Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon & Search Operations besides employment of drones and counter drone systems among others.
- Exercise SHAKTI will enable the two sides to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures of conducting joint operations. The joint exercise will facilitate developing inter-operability, bonhomie and camaraderie between armed forces personnel of the two countries. This will also enhance the level of defence cooperation, further fostering bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare organises 'Samadhan Campaign' at Bengdubi, Darjeeling

- The Department of Ex-servicemen Welfare organised 'Samadhan Campaign', its outreach programme at Bengdubi Army Camp, in Darjeeling, West Bengal. Interacting with the veterans during the Campaign, Secretary (Ex-servicemen Welfare) Dr Niten Chandra reaffirmed the government's commitment to further strengthen the welfare measures for them.
- Seeking feedback and insights into the challenges veterans come across while availing various welfare schemes of the Department, Dr. Niten Chandra directed Rajya & Zila Sainik Boards, ECHS and other agencies under the department to set-up proactive communication and collaboration mechanism in finding solutions to the problems of ex-servicemen. He reiterated the government's unwavering support for the veteran community.
- The 'Samadhan Campaign' is an initiative by the Department to honor the sacrifices made by ex-servicemen and their families, by proactively engaging with them and addressing their grievances related to the department's various welfare schemes.

- Through proactive engagement and meaningful dialogue, the campaign seeks to create a conducive environment for ex-servicemen to thrive and contribute to society positively.
- During the campaign, DG Resettlement Maj Gen SBK Singh explained about various programmes available for the resettlement of ex-servicemen. He also called upon veterans to engage in the entrepreneurship avenues available for them.
- A large number of veterans from Darjeeling, and adjoining districts of West Bengal and Bihar came to attend the Samadhan Campaign and their grievances related to SPARSH pension, healthcare among others were addressed.

12th India-Mongolia Joint Working Group meeting to bolster bilateral defence ties held in Ulaanbaatar

- The 12th Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting between the Defence Ministries of India and Mongolia took place in Ulaanbaatar on May 16-17, 2024. The meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary, MoD, India Shri Amitabh Prasad and State Secretary of MoD, Mongolia Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davagdorj. India's Ambassador to Mongolia Shri Atul Malhari Gotsurve also attended the meeting.
- During the JWG, both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing defence cooperation between the two countries. They reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and identified means to further enhance cooperation in these areas, articulating steps in this direction. Both sides also exchanged views on the current geopolitical situation.
- The Joint Secretary highlighted the potential of the capacity & capability of the Indian defence industry, and looked forward to a fruitful partnership with the Armed Forces of Mongolia. The Mongolian side exuded confidence in the capacity & capability of the Indian industry. Both sides also acknowledged the growing ties between the two countries.
- The Joint Secretary & the Indian Ambassador also called on Deputy Defence Minister of Mongolia Mr B Bayarmagnai, and discussed bilateral cooperation issues. The delegation visited a training establishment in Ulaanbaatar and reviewed the ongoing engagements.
- India enjoys age-old historical, cultural and civilisational ties with Mongolia. Both countries regard each other as 'Spiritual Neighbours'. In the modern times, values like democracy, freedom and market economy hold the two nations closer.

Second India - Australia - Indonesia Trilateral Maritime Security Workshop (Tmsw) conducted at Kochi from 15 - 17 May 24

- The 2nd edition of India - Australia - Indonesia Trilateral Maritime Security Workshop (TMSW) was conducted from 15 - 17 May 24, at INS Dronacharya, Kochi, India. The Theme of the workshop was 'Indian Ocean Region: Collaborative Efforts to Enhance Regional Maritime Security', which was chosen to discuss ongoing maritime security challenges and opportunities for collaboration between the three maritime neighbours in the region. The Workshop was conducted under the aegis of Headquarters Southern Naval Command and witnessed participation of delegates from the three participating Navies.
- The workshop was presided over by RAdm Nirbhay Bapna, ACNS (FCI), and Co-Chaired by Cmde Paul O'Grady, Commodore Flotillas from Royal Australian Navy, FAdm Heri Triwibowo, Assistant for Operations to CIC Indonesian Fleet Command from TNI (AL) and Cmde Manmeet S Khurana, Cmde (Foreign Cooperation) from Indian Navy. During the Workshop, discussions were centered on a wide array of topics, canvassing present day opportunities and challenges in the IOR, including Information Exchange mechanisms and capabilities of IFC-IOR, Maritime Domain Awareness, non-traditional and illicit maritime activities, Maritime Law enforcement, capability enhancement and capacity building, avenues for enhancing interoperability and cooperation etc.

CDS Gen Anil Chauhan attends Exercise Cyber Suraksha - 2024

- Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Gen Anil Chauhan attended 'Exercise Cyber Suraksha - 2024', on May 22, 2024, and underscored the importance of strengthening India's cyber defence capabilities.
- The comprehensive cyber defence exercise is being conducted by Defence Cyber Agency from 20 - 24 May 2024. It aims to further develop Cyber Defence Capability of all Cyber security organisations and promote synergy amongst all stakeholders. It focusses on enhancing collaboration and integration among participants from various military and prominent national organizations.
- The CDS highlighted the critical need for jointness among all stakeholders in the cyber domain and praised the initiative for fostering a collaborative environment to tackle emerging cyber threats. He

commended the participants and staff for their dedication and efforts in organizing the Exercise.

- Exercise Cyber Suraksha – 2024 aims to empower participants by enhancing their cyber defence skills, techniques and capabilities; share best practices, and work towards a unified and robust cyber defence posture. It will promote jointmanship and synergy in planning and preparation of a Cyber Defence Framework. The event reaffirms the commitment of the Indian Armed Forces to safeguarding national security in the increasingly important cyber domain.

“Olive Green - Going Green” Indian Army receives First Hydrogen Bus

- Displaying a firm resolve towards finding green and sustainable transport solutions, the Indian Army has collaborated with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for demonstration trials of Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus technology. The Indian Army is known for its commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Indian Army and the IOCL in presence of General Manoj Pande, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) and Mr Shrikant Madhav Vaidya, Chairman of Indian Oil. During the event, one Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus was received by the Indian Army. This marks the commencement of mutually beneficial partnership between Indian Army and IOCL. The MoU emphasised the commitment to fostering innovation and advancing sustainable transport solutions for the future.
- Hydrogen Fuel Cell technology offers a clean and efficient alternative by converting Hydrogen gas into electricity through an electro-chemical process. The process leaves water vapour as the only by product, thus ensuring zero emission.
- The Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus has a seating capacity of 37 passengers. It promises an impressive mileage of 250-300 km on a full 30 kg onboard tank of Hydrogen fuel.
- Notably, on 21st March 2023, the Indian Army became the first government entity to ink an MoU with National Thermal Power Corporation Renewable Energy Limited for installation of Green Hydrogen based Microgrid Power Plants along the Northern Borders. A pilot project is being setup at Chushul, where a 200 Kilo Watt Green Hydrogen based Microgram will provide 24x7 clean electricity to troops deployed in inhospitable terrain and extreme climatic conditions.
- With a focus on innovation and environmental responsibility, the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Bus

endeavour between Indian Army and IOCL represents a significant stride and pave the way for a cleaner and greener transport solutions.

RudraM-II air-to-surface missile successfully flight-tested by DRDO from Su-30 MK-I off the Odisha coast

- Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight-tested the RudraM-II air-to-surface missile from Su-30 MK-I platform of the Indian Air Force (IAF) off the coast of Odisha at around 1130 hours on May 29, 2024. The flight-test met all the trial objectives, validating the propulsion system and control & guidance algorithm. The performance of the missile has been validated from the flight data captured by range tracking instruments like electro-optical systems, radar and telemetry stations deployed by Integrated Test Range, Chandipur at various locations, including the on-board ship.
- RudraM-II is an indigenously-developed solid-propelled air-launched missile system meant for Air-to-Surface role to neutralise many types of enemy assets. A number of state-of-the-art indigenous technologies developed by various DRDO laboratories have been incorporated in the missile system.
- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh congratulated DRDO, IAF and industry on the successful test-flight of RudraM-II. The successful test has consolidated the role of the RudraM-II system as a force multiplier to the Armed Forces, he said.

Delivery Of Sixth Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 20 (YARD 130)

- The delivery of ‘Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge, LSAM 20’, 6th Barge of 11 x ACTCM Barge Project, built by MSME Shipyard, M/s Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane for Indian Navy, was undertaken on 29 May 24 at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai for NAD(Karanja). The Induction Ceremony was presided over by Cmde Nadella Ramana, GMR, ND(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. Induction 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 the 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.



APPOINTMENTS

UNICEF India Welcomes Kareena as National Ambassador

- UNICEF India's commitment to children's rights and well-being is unwavering, and the appointments of Kareena Kapoor Khan and the Youth Advocates signify a renewed dedication to this noble cause. With their collective efforts, the organization aims to create a brighter future for children, where their rights, safety, and development are prioritized and upheld.
- As Kareena Kapoor Khan embarks on this new journey, her influence and passion for children's rights will undoubtedly inspire others to join the movement, creating a ripple effect that resonates across the nation and beyond.

Appointment of Subodh Kumar (IAS) as Director in Ministry of Ayush

- Subodh Kumar (IAS), a 2010-batch Indian Administrative Service officer of Tamil Nadu cadre, has been appointed as Director in the Ministry of Ayush. The appointment, effective from the date of assuming charge, is initially until October 8 or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Presently, Kumar is on 'Compulsory wait' in the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

- According to an order issued by the Department of Personnel (DoPT) on May 3, Subodh Kumar has been selected for the position. The order instructs his immediate release from his current assignment with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries and to assume his new role in the Ministry of Ayush.

NASA Appoints New Chief for Artificial Intelligence

- NASA has given a new role to David Salvagnini as the agency's Chief Artificial Intelligence (AI) Officer. This is an addition to his current job as Chief Data Officer. The appointment shows NASA's commitment to using AI technology responsibly.
- NASA is developing ways to use emerging AI technology for its goals and missions. AI can help analyze images from Earth science, search for data on planets outside our solar system, schedule communications for Mars rovers, and more.
- Before Salvagnini, NASA's Chief Scientist Kate Calvin served as the acting official for responsible AI. With Salvagnini leading AI efforts, NASA aims to embrace new technology responsibly for space exploration and scientific discoveries that benefit humanity.



AWARDS

Dr. Bina Modi Honoured for Outstanding Contribution to Corporate Social Responsibility

- Since 2015, Dr. Modi has been actively engaged in supporting the marginalized farmer community in Andhra Pradesh through multifaceted interventions. These initiatives encompass healthcare provisions, access to clean drinking water, ecological balance through plantations and biodiversity parks, and empowerment of farmers through training and education on sustainable agricultural practices.

- The Whitley Gold Award recognizes Dr. Barman's exceptional impact in reversing the decline of the Hargila population. Her collaborative initiatives, in partnership with local wildlife NGO Aaranyak, have led to a quadrupling of the stork population, with numbers now exceeding 1,800. Dr. Barman's project focuses on community-driven conservation and aims to bolster the number of Greater Adjutant breeding pairs, with a special emphasis on empowering local women as advocates for conservation.

Purnima Devi Barman Gets the 'Green Oscar' Whitley Gold Award 2024

UNESCO Guillermo Cano Prize 2024 Awarded to Palestine Journalists in Gaza

- Established in 1997, the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize recognizes individuals

who have made exceptional contributions to the defense and promotion of press freedom, especially in the face of danger. Named after Colombian journalist Guillermo Cano Isaza, the

prize honors his legacy and is funded by various foundations and organizations committed to press freedom.

2024 Pulitzer Prize

Category	Winner
Public Service	Pro Publica (Joshua Kaplan, Justin Elliott, Brett Murphy, Alex Mierjeski, and Kirsten Berg)
Investigative Reporting	Hannah Dreier (The New York Times)
International Reporting	Staff of The New York Times
Editorial Writing	David E. Hoffman (The Washington Post)
Breaking News Photography	Photography Staff of Reuters
Feature Photography	Photography Staff of Associated Press
Audio Reporting	Staff of the Invisible Institute and USG Audio

Book, Drama, and Music Category

Category	Winner
Fiction	Night Watch by Jayne Anne Phillips
Drama	Primary Trust by Eboni Booth
History	No Right to an Honest Living: The Struggles of Boston's Black Workers in the Civil War Era by Jacqueline Jones
Biography	King: A Life by Jonathan Eig Master Slave Husband Wife: An Epic Journey from Slavery to Freedom by Ilyon Woo
Memoir and Autobiography	Liliana's Invincible Summer: A Sister's Search for Justice by Cristina Rivera Garza
Poetry	Tripas: Poems by Brandon Som
Music	Adagio (For Wadada Leo Smith) by Tyshawn Sorey
General Nonfiction	A Day in the Life of Abed Salama: Anatomy of a Jerusalem Tragedy by Nathan Thrall

Chandrakant Satija Honoured with Global Excellence Award 2024

- In a prestigious ceremony held at the Sahara Star Hotel in Mumbai on May 12th, Chandrakant Satija, the renowned educationist and Founder/CEO of Chandra Admission Consultants, was honored with the Global Excellence Award 2024. The award, presented by the famous Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra, recognized Satija as the Most Trusted Admissions Consultant in the Vidarbha Region.
- With over 21 years of experience in the education sector, Chandrakant Satija has dedicated himself to providing quality education, career counseling, and admission guidance to students. His unwavering commitment has earned him the trust of parents not only in Vidarbha but also in adjoining cities of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

Jenny Erpenbeck's 'Kairos' Wins International Booker Prize

- German author Jenny Erpenbeck and translator Michael Hofmann have won the prestigious International Booker Prize for their novel "Kairos." The book, which tells the story of a tangled love affair during the final years of East Germany's existence, beat out five other finalists from a pool of 149 submitted novels.
- The **International Booker Prize** recognizes fiction from around the world that has been **translated into English** and published in the UK or Ireland. The **£50,000 (\$64,000) prize money** is divided equally between the author and the translator, celebrating their collaborative efforts in bringing literary masterpieces to a wider audience.

Uttar Pradesh's Arti Receives Amal Clooney Women's Empowerment Award from King Charles III

- Arti, an 18-year-old woman from the Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, has been honored with the prestigious Amal Clooney Women's Empowerment Award by King Charles III of the United Kingdom. The award ceremony, held at the iconic Buckingham Palace in London, England, celebrated Arti's inspiring journey as an e-rickshaw driver and her role in empowering other young women in her community.
- The Amal Clooney Women's Empowerment Award, named after the renowned English barrister Amal Clooney, is sponsored by the British charity Prince Trust International. Established by King Charles when he was the Prince of Wales, the Trust recognizes and honors the remarkable achievements of young women who have overcome significant obstacles to make a lasting positive impact on those around them.

Indian Peacekeeper Receives UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award

- Major Radhika Sen, an Indian military peacekeeper serving with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), has been awarded the prestigious 2023 United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award. This award recognizes her dedication and efforts in promoting the principles of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security.
- During her deployment from March 2023 to April 2024, Major Sen served as the Commander of MONUSCO's Engagement Platoon for the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion. In this role, she led mixed-gender engagement patrols and activities in a volatile environment, building trust with conflict-affected communities, including women and children.



OBITUARIES

Renowned Indian singer Uma Ramanan passed away

- Uma's musical journey began under the tutelage of Pazhani Vijayalakshmi, where her talent flourished from a young age. Her prowess in classical music propelled her to victory in numerous inter-college competitions, earning her accolades and awards.
- Additionally, Uma was a skilled dancer trained under Padma Subrahmanyam, showcasing her versatility as an artist. Uma Ramanan's musical prowess extended beyond live performances to the realm of playback singing. She made a significant impact in the film industry with her soulful rendition of SV Venkatraman's song 'Mohanan Kannan Murali' in the 1977 movie 'Sri Krishna Leela.'
- Collaborating with esteemed musicians such as Deva, MSV, Shankar-Ganesh, and Ilaiyaraaja, Uma delivered timeless hits like 'Bhoopalam Isaikkum,' 'AanandhaRaagam,' and 'Kanmani Nee Vara,' among others. Her contributions to the world of music remain cherished, with her melodies etched in the hearts of listeners. As fans fondly remember her soul-stirring performances and iconic songs, Uma Ramanan's legacy continues to inspire generations of music lovers.

Sahitya Akademi award-winning Urdu litterateur Salam Bin Razzaq passes away at 83 in Navi Mumbai

- Razzaq won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for Urdu literature for his acclaimed short stories collection, 'Shikasta Buton Ke Darmiyan', in 2004.
- Born in 1941 at Panvel in Raigad district, Razzaq had a very humble beginning in life. He was deeply inspired by the trials and travails of the common masses which reflected in his writings, both prose and poetry.
- Over his long literary career spanning more than six decades, Razzaq was decorated with honours like the Sahitya Akademi Award, Ghalib Award, Maharashtra Urdu Sahitya Akademi Award, and many more.
- Many of Razzaq's popular characters in his literary narratives were based on the commoners around him, encountering and conquering ordinary problems in life in their quest for survival. He shot to relevance in the 1970s, when Urdu fiction was receding in popularity.
- Some of Razzaq's literary creations include 'NangiDopahar Ka Sipahi', 'Muabbir', and 'Zindagi Afsana Nahin', among others.

Punjabi poet Padma Shri Surjit Patar passes away at 79

- Patar's poetic works include 'Hawa VichLikhe Harf', 'HanereVichSulagdiVaranmala', 'Patjhar Di Pazeb', 'Lafzaan Di Dargah' and 'Surzameen'.
- Surjit Patar was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2012 for his contributions to literature and education. He served as the president of the Punjab Arts Council and had previously held the position of president at the Punjabi SahitAkademi. Throughout his illustrious career, Patar received prestigious awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award, PanchnadPuruskar, Saraswati Samman, and the Kusumagraj Literary Award.

First pig kidney transplant recipient dies two months after surgery

- Richard Slayman, 62, passed post genetically modified pig kidney transplant. Richard was suffering with end-stage kidney disease.
- In 2018, he had a human kidney transplant, but that was not a success, it began to fail after five years.
- Xenotransplantation involves transplanting living cells, tissues, or organs from one species to another, typically from animals to humans.

Canadian Nobel-winning author Alice Munro dies aged 92

- Awarded the International Booker Prize for her body of work in 2009, and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013
- Munro's first story, The Dimensions of a Shadow, was published in 1950.
- Munro was three times awarded the Governor General's Award for fiction, the first for Dance of the Happy Shades, a collection of stories published in 1968. Who Do You Think You Are (1978) and The Progress of Love (1986) also won Canada's highest literary honour.
- Her short stories were often published in the pages of prestigious magazines, such as The New Yorker and The Atlantic. Her last collection of work, Dear Life, appeared in 2012.

Veteran Cong leader and former Gujarat governor Kamla Beniwal dies at 97

- Apart from Gujarat, she also served as governor of Tripura and Mizoram.
- A seven-time MLA, Beniwal also remained the deputy chief minister of Rajasthan, apart from holding other positions in the state government.



SPORTS

Amul Becomes Lead Sponsor for USA and South Africa in T20 World Cup 2024

- Amul, one of India's iconic diary brands with a global footprint, as their sponsor for the T20 World Cup 2024, starting June 2 in the USA and the West Indies.
- Sri Lanka, former champions of the T20 World Cup, will become the third team after South Africa and USA to be sponsored by Amul at the showpiece T20 tournament.

India to host World Junior Badminton Championships 2025 in Guwahati

- The tournament is scheduled to take place at the Badminton Association of India's National Centre of Excellence located in Guwahati, Assam.
- The tournament, encompassing both team and individual competitions, is scheduled to take place at the Badminton Association of India's National Centre of Excellence, located in the capital city of Assam.

- The National Centre of Excellence was inaugurated in August 2023 and features 14 courts, an internationally standardized gymnasium and accommodates up to 4,000 spectators. It has previously hosted the BWF Super 100 tournament and Guwahati Masters in 2023.
- This marks India's second time hosting the World Juniors, following the event in Pune back in 2008.
- India has previously hosted major badminton championships, including the 2009 BWF World Championships in Hyderabad and the 2014 BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals in New Delhi.

Japan Triumphs at the AFC U-23 Asian Cup, Secures Olympic Berth

- The 6th edition of the AFC U-23 Asian Cup was held in Qatar from April 15 to May 3, 2024, with 16 teams from across Asia vying for the coveted title. The tournament served as a crucial qualification event for the upcoming Paris Olympics, with the top three teams earning automatic spots.
- Japan emerged as the champions, clinching the gold medal, while Uzbekistan secured

the silver medal. The bronze medal went to Iraq, who defeated Indonesia in the semi-finals.

- Uzbekistan's captain, Jaloliddinov, received the Fair Play Award, while their goalkeeper, Nematov, was named the Best Goalkeeper of the Tournament. Iraqi striker Ali Jasim claimed the Top Goalscorer honor with four goals, and Japanese team captain Fujita was crowned the Most Valuable Player of the Tournament.

Real Madrid Clinches 36th La Liga Title

- Real Madrid has amassed an impressive 87 points, establishing an unassailable lead of 13 points over their nearest competitor, Girona. Goals from Brahim Diaz, Jude Bellingham, and Joselu propelled Los Blancos to victory against Cadiz, ensuring they clinched their 36th La Liga title.
- The La Liga, or the Campeonato Nacional de Liga de Primera División, is the premier men's professional football league in Spain. Established in 1929 with 10 teams, it has grown to become one of the most popular and prestigious club-based football tournaments globally.

Yuzvendra Chahal Creates History to Become First Indian Bowler to 350 T20 Wickets

NO	PLAYER NAME	WICKETS
1	DJ Bravo	625
2	Rashid Khan	572
3	Sunil Narine	549
4	Imran Tahir	502
5	Shakib Al Hasan	482
6	Andre Russell	443
7	Wahab Riaz	413
8	Lasith Malinga	390
9	Sohail Tanvir	389
10	Chris Jordan	368
11	Yuzvendra Chahal	350

World wrestling body suspends Bajrang Punia until end of 2024 after NADA's suspension

- Wrestling's world governing body (UWW) has suspended Bajrang Punia till the end of this year following NADA's decision to hand him a provisional suspension for refusing to undergo a dope test.
- However, despite being well aware of NADA's order, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) sanctioned close to Rs 9 lakh for his training abroad. Bajrang, one of the country's most successful wrestlers, was suspended by NADA on April 23 after being served a whereabouts failure notice on April 18.

Colin Munro has announced his retirement from international cricket after missing out on New Zealand's T20 World Cup 2024 squad.

- Munro played one Test, 57 ODIs and 65 T20Is for New Zealand. He excelled in the shortest form

scoring three centuries, including a 47-ball hundred against West Indies in 2018 which was a New Zealand record at the time. He also has made a 14-ball half-century against Sri Lanka which remains a Black Caps record and is the fourth fastest in T20I cricket.

Japan defeated Pakistan to win the 30th Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy

- The Japanese men's hockey team defeated Pakistan to claim its first Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy. In the final, the match ended at 2-2 after the end of the normal. In the penalty shoot-out, Japan defeated Pakistan by 4-1.
- The Pakistani team, also popularly called the Green Shirts, was appearing in the final of the Azlan Shah for the 10th time. It last played the final in 2011, which it lost to Australia. Pakistan has won the Sultan Azlan Shah trophy three times.
- Sultan Azlan Shah is considered a prestigious Hockey tournament in Asia that has attracted the world's top men's national hockey teams.
- India has been a regular participant in the Sultan Azlan Shah Tournament.

- India has won the Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy 5 times in 1985, 1991, 1995, 2009, 2010.
- This time, the Indian team skipped the tournament as they were more focused on preparing for the 2024 Paris Olympics, which start on 26 July 2024. Also, the quality of the team participating in this year's Sultan Azlan Shah trophy was low. For better match practice for the Indian men's hockey team, Hockey India decided to send the team to take part in the Pro-League being held in Europe.

United Nations Declares May 25 as World Football Day

- The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 25th May as the World Football Day, by adopting a resolution during the 80th plenary meeting of the General Assembly in New York. The year 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the first international football tournament in history with the representation of all regions as part of the 1924 Summer Olympic Games, held in Paris. The resolution was passed unanimously by the 193-member General Assembly.
- Taher M. El-Sonni, Permanent Representative of the State of Libya to the United Nations, introduced the draft resolution under Sport for development and peace: building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal during the meeting. The Assembly later adopted the resolution proclaiming 25 May as World Football Day.

Sunil Chhetri Announces Retirement from International Football

- One of India's best-known sporting icons, Sunil Chhetri, has announced that he will retire from international football after India's match against Kuwait at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on 6 June 2024.
- This ends the illustrious career of Secunderabad-born Sunil Chhetri, who is currently the captain of the Blue Tigers (the Indian men's football team nickname). He wears Jersey No. 9 of the Indian men's football team.
- Sunil Chhetri's Contribution and Records
- Sunil Chhetri is considered to be the face of Indian football. During his illustrious career, he has created many records.
- He made his professional debut with Mohun Bagan club in 2002. He also played for the USA's Major League Soccer team, Kansas City Wizards, in 2010 and for the reserve team of Sporting CP in the Portuguese football league in 2012.
- Sunil Chhetri played his first international match for India in 2005 and scored his first goal for the

senior India national football team against Pakistan.

- He was made captain of the Blue Tigers in 2012 and will retire as the captain of the Indian team in his final match against Kuwait.

Deepthi Jeevanji Sets World Record, Wins Gold At World Para Athletics Championships

- Indian para athlete Deepthi Jeevanji on Monday set a world record of 55.06 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category, at the ongoing Para Athletics World Championship 2024 in Kobe, Japan.
- After clocking 55.06 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category, Jeevanji bagged a gold medal. In the qualifying round, Jeevanji secured her place in the finals of the women's 400m T20 heat, setting a new Asian record with a time of 56.18 seconds.
- In the Asian Para Games 2023, Jeevanji delivered an electrifying performance, winning a gold medal in the women's 400m T20 event. She secured the top podium finish ahead of Thailand's OrawanKaising, who achieved her personal best time of 59.00 seconds but still had to settle for silver. Japan's NiinaKanno bagged a bronze by clocking her personal best of 59.73 seconds.
- Meanwhile, para athlete Yogesh Kathuniya won a silver medal in the men's F56 category discus throw with a throw of 41.80 meters at the Para Athletics World Championship 2024.
- Earlier at the Para Athletics World Championship 2024, India's Preethi Pal won a bronze medal in the women's 200m T35 category, bringing India's tally to two medals after Day 3.
- Additionally, Nishad Kumar, a Tokyo 2020 Paralympics silver medalist, made India proud in the men's high jump T47 final with an incredible season-best mark of 1.99 meters. Ram Pal also delivered an impressive performance, finishing sixth with his season-best jump of 1.90 meters.

IOC Launches 'Let's Move India' Campaign To Inspire People To Celebrate Athletes At Paris Olympics

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has announced the launch of 'Let's Move India', an initiative to inspire people to celebrate the athletes participating in the upcoming Olympic Games in Paris. The move invites people from across the country to join the movement through a digital challenge on social media.
- According to a press release, young people can take part in a series of regional school initiatives to coincide with Olympic Day on June 23. Starting today, people are encouraged to recreate their

favourite athlete celebrations or create their own, aiming to inspire and celebrate the Olympians heading to Paris 2024, who will be representing their 1.4 billion compatriots from July 26.

- The IOC has joined forces with Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medallist, and an IOC Athletes' Commission member, and together, they will extend invitations to schools across the nation to join the movement, as part of the Olympic Values Education Programme.

Dipa Karmakar Becomes First Indian Gymnast To Win Gold In Asian Senior Championships

- Leading gymnast Dipa Karmakar made history on Sunday by becoming the first Indian to win a gold medal at the Asian Senior Championships, clinching the title in the women's vault.
- Competing in Uzbekistan's capital, the 30-year-old Dipa achieved an average score of 13.566 in the vault final on the competition's last day. North Korean gymnasts Kim Son Hyang and Jo Kyong Byol secured the silver and bronze medals with scores of 13.466 and 12.966, respectively.
- Dipa, who narrowly missed a medal with a fourth-place finish in the vault final at the 2016 Rio Olympics, had previously won a bronze medal in the same event at the 2015 Asian Championships. Ashish Kumar had also won a bronze medal in the individual floor exercise at the 2015 Asian Championships.
- Earlier on Friday, Dipa Karmakar competed in the all-around category in Tashkent, finishing 16th with a score of 46.166, just falling short of earning an Olympic quota for India in gymnastics for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

- Emma Malabuyo of the Philippines, who secured third place with a score of 50.398, claimed the only Olympic quota available at the Tashkent meet.
- Dipa competed in three out of the four qualification events: Cairo, Baku, and Doha. She reached the finals in all three competitions but was unable to secure a podium finish. In Cairo, she finished fifth, and in both Baku and Doha, she narrowly missed the podium, finishing fourth in each event.

ICC Players of the Month for April 2024 Announced

- Hayley Matthews, the West Indies captain, has been named the ICC Women's Player of the Month for her exceptional all-round performances that spearheaded the West Indies' success in Pakistan across both ODI and T20I series.

KKR Lifts Their Third Trophy In IPL

- In Cricket, Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) lifted their third trophy in the Indian Premier League (IPL) with a crushing eight-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a completely one-sided final. Having lost the toss, KKR produced a clinical effort with the ball to dismiss SRH for 113, the lowest-ever total in an IPL title clash.
- KKR chased down the target of 114 with as many as 57 balls to spare. For KKR, Venkatesh Iyer was the top scorer with an unbeaten 52 runs followed by Rahmanullah Gurbaz who scored 39 runs.
- Earlier, SRH were all out for 113 runs in 18.3 overs. For SRH, skipper Pat Cummins was the highest scorer with 24 runs. For KKR, Andre Russell scalped 3 wickets. Mitchell Starc was declared Player of the Match.



IMPORTANT DAYS

1 May: International Labour Day or May Day

- International Labour Day is also known as Labour Day or May Day. It is celebrated globally every year on the 1st of May. In India, Labour Day is referred to as Antarrashtriya Shramik Diwas or Kamgar Din. What is the history behind celebrating this day etc.

1 May: Maharashtra Day

- It is also known as Maharashtra Diwas in Marathi. It is a state holiday in Maharashtra. The state of Maharashtra was formed from the division of the Bombay State on 1 May 1960.

1 May: Gujarat Day

- It is a state holiday in Gujarat. The state of Gujarat was formed on 1 May 1960.

2 May- World Tuna Day

- It is observed on 2 May and is established by the United Nations (UN) to raise awareness about the importance of tuna fish.

3 May - Press Freedom Day

- Every year Press Freedom Day or World Press Freedom Day is observed on 3rd May to evaluate press freedom around the world and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

4 May - International Firefighter's Day

- International Firefighter's Day is observed every year on 4 May. It was instituted on January 4, 1999, after a proposal via email out across the world due to the deaths of five firefighters in a bushfire in Australia. Therefore, this day is observed to recognise and honour the sacrifices that firefighters make to ensure that their communities and environment are as safe as possible.

7 May - World Athletics Day

- World Athletics Day is observed on 7 May to raise awareness about sports among youth, in schools and institutions to promote athletics as the primary sport. And to introduce new talent and youngsters in the field of athletics.

7 May - World Asthma Day (First Tuesday of May)

- World Asthma Day is observed every year on the first Tuesday of May to spread awareness and care about asthma in the world. An annual event is organised by the Global Initiative for Asthma. Asthma is a chronic inflammation of bronchitis causing cough, breathlessness, chest tightness etc.

8 May - World Red Cross Day

- World Red Cross Day is observed every year on 8 May to commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder of the Red Cross. Let us tell you that the founder of the Red Cross was Henry Dunant as well as the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He was born in Geneva in 1828. He became the first recipient of the 1st Nobel Peace Prize.

8 May - World Thalassaemia Day

- World Thalassaemia Day or International Thalassaemia Day is observed every year on 8 May in honour of all patients suffering from Thalassaemia and for their parents who have never lost hope for life, despite the burden of their disease. This day also encourages those who struggle to live with the disease.

9 May - Rabindranath Tagore Jayanti

- As per drikpanchang, the 25th day of Boishakh currently overlaps with either the 8th May or 9th May on the Gregorian calendar. As per the Gregorian calendar, it is observed on May 7 May in other states. He was born on 7 May 1861 in Kolkata. He was one of India's top artists, novelists, authors, Bengali poets, humanists, philosophers etc. In 1913, he was honoured with Nobel Prize in Literature.

9 May- Maharana Pratap Jayanti

- The occasion of Maharana Pratap Jayanti honours the illustrious and valiant rule of Chittor's first birthday. He was a legendary warrior, the pride of Rajasthan, and a force to be feared. He was Rana Udai Singh II, the Mewar king's son.

10 May- World Lupus Day

- Every year on May 10, people worldwide observe World Lupus Day. Its purpose was to make us more aware of the fact that the seemingly unrelated symptoms are actually signs of a chronic, crippling autoimmune disease.

11 May - National Technology Day

- Every year National Technology Day is observed on 11 May to highlight the important role of Science in our daily lives and encourage students to opt for science as an option for a career. On this day Shakti, the Pokhran nuclear test was held on 11 May 1998.

12 May - International Nurses Day

- Every year International Nurses Day is celebrated on 12 May to commemorate the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birthday. This day also celebrates the contribution done by nurses to society around the world. On this day the International Council of Nurses organisation produces an International Nurses kit to educate and assist health workers globally with a different theme every year.

12 May - Mother's Day (Second Sunday of May)

- Mother's Day is celebrated every year on the second Sunday of May to honour motherhood and is observed in different forms throughout the world. Mother's Day was founded by Anna Jarvis who had given the idea of celebrating Mother's Day in honour of mothers and motherhood in 1907. Nationally this day was recognised in 1914.

15 May - International Day of Families

- International Day of Families is observed every year on 15 May. Family is the basic unit of society. This day provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the issues related to families and to increase knowledge about the social, economic and demographic processes that affect them.

16 May- National Dengue Day

- The day is observed (16 May) with the recommendation of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. Dengue is prevalent across the country. This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, awareness campaigns, rallies, etc. regarding Dengue is not

organised in the country but can be spread through online.

17 May - World Telecommunication Day

- World Telecommunication Day is observed every year on 17 May. It marks the founding of ITU when the first International Telegraph Convention was signed in Paris on 17 May 1865. It is also known as World Telecommunication and International Society Day. Since 1969, it has been celebrated annually.

17 May - World Hypertension Day

- This day is celebrated by World Hypertension League (WHL) on 17 May annually. The day promotes awareness about hypertension and encourages people to prevent and control this silent killer epidemic.

17 May - National Endangered Species Day (Third Friday in May)

- Every year on the third Friday in May National Endangered Species Day is celebrated annually to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation and restoration efforts for all imperilled species. Endangered Species Act 1973, focuses on the protection of wildlife and threatened species.

18 May - World AIDS Vaccine Day

- Worlds AIDS Vaccine Day or HIV Vaccine Awareness Day is observed every year on 18 May. This day marks the efforts of thousands of researchers, scientists, and health professionals who have contributed to the process of finding safe and effective AIDS medicine. It is also an opportunity to educate communities about the importance of preventive HIV vaccine research.

18 May - International Museum Day

- International Museum Day is observed on 18 May every year to raise awareness about the museum and its role in society. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) created International Museum Day in 1977. The organisation suggested a proper theme every year which may include globalisation, bridging cultural gaps and care for the environment.

18 May - Armed Forces Day (Third Saturday of the May)

- Armed Forces Day is celebrated on the third Saturday of every May. This day is celebrated to pay tribute to the men and women who served in the United States Armed Forces.

21 May - National Anti-Terrorism Day

- National Anti-Terrorism Day is observed every year on May 21 to spread awareness about the violence caused by terrorists and also in memory of former Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi, who passed away on this day.

21 May- International Tea Day

- The world observes International Tea Day on May 21. It aims to recognise the contributions of the tea industry and promote fair trade and investment in the area. Also, International Tea Day includes giving recognition to tea and the people who work in the tea business.

22 May - International Day for Biological Diversity

- International Day for Biological Diversity is observed on 22 May every year to increase awareness and understanding of the issues of biodiversity.

May 23 - World Turtle Day

- It is observed annually on May 23 to spread awareness regarding protecting turtles and tortoises and also their disappearing habitats across the world. The day promises a better future where humans and turtles can coexist peacefully.

27 May - National Memorial Day (last Monday of May)

- Memorial Day is observed every year on the last Monday of May. This year it falls on May 29. The day honours and remembers the fallen American Military personnel.

30 May- Goa Statehood Day

- Goa, a beautiful state on the west coast of India is celebrating its 36th Statehood this year. In 1976, the Goa Assembly issued a resolution seeking complete statehood; it was later recognised on May 30, 1987.

30 May- Hindi Journalism Day

- The first newspaper in the Hindi language, Udamtand, was published on May 30. Pandit Jugal Kishore Shukla started it as a weekly newspaper from Calcutta on May 30, 1826.

31 May - Anti-Tobacco Day

- Anti-Tobacco Day or World No Tobacco Day is observed on 31 May every year across the globe to make people aware and educate them about the harmful effects of tobacco on health which causes cardiovascular diseases, cancer, tooth decay, staining of teeth etc.



1. **Who was recently awarded the title of Grandmaster by the International Chess Federation?**
 - A. Rikite Rao
 - B. Vaishali Ramesh Babu
 - C. Bibhav Verma
 - D. RameshbabuPraggnanandhaa
2. **Jeremiah Manele has recently been appointed as the Prime Minister of which country?**
 - A. Maldives
 - B. Solomon Islands
 - C. Singapore
 - D. Namibia
3. **On which of the following date World Press Freedom Day is celebrated every year?**
 - A. 1st May
 - B. 2nd May
 - C. 3rd May
 - D. 4th May
4. **A report called, "Recipe for a Livable Planet: Achieving Net Zero Emissions in the Agrifood System" recently released by?**
 - A. FAO
 - B. World Bank
 - C. IMF
 - D. EU
5. **Darfur Crisis recently seen in news is associated with which of the following country?**
 - A. Sudan
 - B. DR Congo
 - C. Nigeria
 - D. Egypt
6. **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) located in which state?**
 - A. Kerala
 - B. Karnataka
 - C. Maharashtra
 - D. Madhya Pradesh
7. **Largest Solar Energy-Producing Country:**
 - A. China
 - B. Japan
 - C. USA
 - D. India
8. **Which of the following date observed as 'World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day'?**
 - A. 7th May
 - B. 8th May
 - C. 9th May
 - D. 10th May
9. **Sphygmomanometer used to measure:**
 - A. Blood sugar
 - B. Blood Pressure
 - C. Body temperature
 - D. Platelet count
10. **Minamata Convention associated with:**
 - A. Bird conservation
 - B. Coral bleaching
 - C. Mercury Pollution
 - D. Biomedical Waste
11. **The President of the United Arab Emirates presented the First Class Independence Medal to the Ambassador of which country?**
 - A. India
 - B. Pakistan
 - C. Paraguay
 - D. Portugal
12. **Strait of Hormuz connects which water bodies?**
 - A. Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
 - B. Black sea and sea of Azov
 - C. Baffin Bay and Labrador Sea
 - D. Red sea and Gulf of Aden
13. **TAK-003 is a live-attenuated vaccine for which disease?**
 - A. Dengue
 - B. Typhoid
 - C. Measles
 - D. Cervical cancer
14. **Kanwar Lake recently in news is located in which of the following state?**
 - A. Odisha
 - B. Andhra Pradesh
 - C. Chhattisgarh
 - D. Bihar
15. **World Hydrogen Summit 2024 held in**
 - A. Rotterdam
 - B. Ottawa
 - C. Canberra
 - D. Paris
16. **General Tu Lam was recently elected the new President of which country?**
 - A. Vietnam
 - B. Kenya
 - C. Thailand
 - D. Mongolia
17. **Report titled 'Water For Shared Prosperity' recently released by:**
 - A. UN Water

- B. UNEP
- C. UNDP
- D. World Bank

18. What is India's rank in Solar Power Capacity globally?

- A. 2nd
- B. 3rd
- C. 4th
- D. 5th

19. Headquarter of International Criminal Court (ICC) located in:

- A. Hague
- B. Vienna
- C. Paris
- D. Luxemburg

20. World Turtle Day, celebrated annually on:

- A. 23rd may
- B. 24th May
- C. 25th May
- D. 26th May

21. Which country will host the AFC Women's Asia Cup 2026?

- A. India
- B. Japan
- C. Malaysia
- D. Australia

22. Who is the oldest Indian woman to conquer Mount Everest recently?

- A. Jyoti Ratre
- B. Soni Kumari
- C. Ashalata Sinha
- D. Arunima Choudhary

23. Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary located in which of the following state?

- A. Andhra Pradesh
- B. Telangana
- C. Karnataka
- D. Maharashtra

24. Phawngpui National Park is located in which state?

- A. Manipur
- B. Arunachal Pradesh
- C. Mizoram
- D. Meghalaya

25. Which Indian-origin professor was recently awarded the prestigious Shaw Prize in Astronomy?

- A. Srinivas R. Kulkarni

- B. Ashok Mohanty
- C. Vivek R Ranjan
- D. Chandrakant R Narayan

26. In which country is the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 being organized?

- A. USA
- B. Japan
- C. Netherlands
- D. China

27. Mount Nemrut recently seen in news is located in which of the following country?

- A. Egypt
- B. Turkey
- C. Germany
- D. Indonesia

28. Chabahar Port, which was in the news recently, is located in which country?

- A. Pakistan
- B. Qatar
- C. UAE
- D. Iran

29. Fatah-II' Rocket recently seen in news is associated with which of the following country?

- A. Iraq
- B. Iran
- C. UAE
- D. Pakistan

30. Which England cricketer recently announced his retirement from international cricket?

- A. Jos Buttler
- B. Adil Rashid
- C. Moeen Ali
- D. James Anderson

31. Iglu-S very short-range air defense weapons (VSHORAD) is associated with which of the following country?

- A. Russia
- B. Israel
- C. France
- D. USA

32. Who has become the first Indian male wrestler to secure quota for Paris Olympics 2024?

- A. Aman Sehrawat
- B. Vivek Chopra
- C. Deepak Dahiya
- D. Bajrang Punia

33. Recently, the government of India has announced humanitarian assistance worth \$ 1 million to which country?
- A. Palestine
B. Somalia
C. Kenya
D. DR Congo
34. In which state is the 7th edition of the India-France joint military exercise 'Shakti' being organized?
- A. Uttarakhand
B. Assam
C. Rajasthan
D. Meghalaya
35. IUCN status of Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) is:
- A. Vulnerable
B. Near threatened
C. Critically Endangered
D. Endangered
36. Where is the Senior Nationals Sailing Championship 2024 being organized?
- A. Mumbai
B. Chennai
C. Cuttack
D. Visakhapatnam
37. Who has made the record of climbing the world's highest peak Mount Everest the most number of times?
- A. Pasang Dawa Sherpa
B. Kami Rita Sherpa
C. Lhakpa Sherpa
D. None of these
38. Which state's tourism department India's first astro tourism campaign named 'Nakshatra Sabha'?
- A. Uttar Pradesh
B. Himachal Pradesh
C. Uttarakhand
D. Rajasthan
39. The recent cyclone 'Remal' has been named by which country?
- A. Bangladesh
B. Oman
C. Pakistan
D. Iran
40. What is the rank of India in recently released World Press Freedom Index 2024?
- A. 146th
B. 156th
C. 166th
D. 176th
41. Recently, which state government has imposed a one-year ban on gutkha and pan masala?
- A. Uttar Pradesh
B. Madhya Pradesh
C. Telangana
D. Kerala
42. Where is the National Jute Board headquarter is located?
- A. Kolkata
B. Mumbai
C. Chennai
D. Delhi
43. Where was the International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS-2024) held recently?
- A. New Delhi
B. New York
C. Vienna
D. Paris
44. Archaeologists have recently discovered a 7000-year-old pre-historic settlement in which country?
- A. Serbia
B. Bulgaria
C. Romania
D. Croatia
45. With which of the following company Indian Army signed an agreement for hydrogen fuel cell bus?
- A. Adani Green
B. IOCL
C. HPCL
D. BPCL
46. Bhavanisagar Dam recently seen in news located in which of the following state?
- A. Kerala
B. Andhra Pradesh
C. Tamil Nadu
D. Karnataka
47. Who is the chairman of DRDO whose tenure has been extended by one year?
- A. Dr. Sameer V Kamat
B. A K Rastogi
C. Abhinav Jain
D. S. Somnath
48. When is World Hunger Day observed every year?
- A. 26 May

- B. 27 May
- C. 28 May
- D. 29 May

49. Atacama Observatory (TAO) located in which country?

- A. Argentina
- B. Bolivia
- C. Uruguay

- D. Chile

50. Which of the following is not a official language of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) ?

- A. Russian
- B. Chinese
- C. Hindi
- D. None

ANSWERS

1. Answer B

The International Chess Federation has awarded the title of Grandmaster to India's young chess player Vaishali Ramesh Babu. Vaishali is the third Indian woman Grandmaster after Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli. Vaishali had achieved the 2500 ELO points required for Grandmaster in the Llobregat Open tournament in Spain last year.

2. Answer: B

Jeremiah Manele has been appointed as the new Prime Minister of Solomon Islands located in the South Pacific. Jeremiah Manele got 31 votes in the voting process involving 49 MPs.

3. Answer C

Every year on May 3, World Press Freedom Day is celebrated across the world. The 31st edition of World Press Freedom Day is being celebrated in the year 2024. In the year 1993, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to celebrate May 3 as Press Freedom Day.

4. Answer B

The World Bank's recent report, "Recipe for a Livable Planet: Achieving Net Zero Emissions in the Agrifood System", has emphasized on significant potential for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the agrifood sector, which currently accounts for about a third of all global emissions.

5. Answer A

UN has said that people have been eating 'grass and peanut shells' in Darfur due to hunger crisis in Sudan. Darfur is a region of western Sudan, bordering Libya, Chad, and the Central African Republic.

6. Answer C

Maharashtra plans to relocate tigers to the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur district

7. Answer A

China was the country with the largest energy production from solar. The United States ranked second by a wide margin, with roughly half of China's production. India and Japan were third and fourth in the ranking, respectively

8. Answer B

Every year on May 8th, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day honors the efforts of these humanitarian societies, including the IFRC, the largest of its kind. Originating from the 14th International Conference of the Red Cross in 1938, the date marks the birth of Jean Henri Dunant, founder of the Red Cross.

9. Answer B

A sphygmomanometer also known as a blood pressure monitor, or blood pressure gauge, is a device used to measure blood pressure, composed of an inflatable cuff to collapse and then release the artery under the cuff in a controlled manner, and a mercury or aneroid manometer to measure the pressure.

10. Answer C

Adopted in 2013 at Kumamoto (Japan) and came into force in 2017. 1st global legally binding treaty to protect human health and environment from adverse effects of mercury.

11. Answer C

UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan awarded the First-Class Medal of Independence to Jose Aguero Avila, Ambassador of the Republic of Paraguay to the UAE, on the occasion of the end of his tenure as ambassador to the country.

12. Answer A

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow channel, approximately 30 miles wide at the narrowest point, between the Omani Musandam Peninsula and Iran. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman.

13. Answer A

Developed by Japan's pharma company Takeda, TAK-003 is a live-attenuated vaccine containing weakened versions of the four serotypes of the virus that cause dengue.

14. Answer D

Located in Begusarai district, Bihar, it is a freshwater natural wetland. Draws water from confluence of Gandak, Bia and Kareh river. Bihar's first Ramsar site recognised as wetland of international importance in 2020.

15. Answer A

World Hydrogen Summit 2024 held in Rotterdam, Netherlands. It was organised by Sustainable Energy Council in partnership with Netherlands government.

16. Answer A

Vietnam's communist parliament publicly voted in To Lam, the minister of public security, as the country's new president

17. Answer D

World Bank released report titled 'Water For Shared Prosperity'. Report was released at 10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia.

18. Answer D

India ranks 5th in Solar Power Capacity globally.

19. Answer A

ICC is a permanent international court established to investigate, prosecute and try individuals accused of committing crime of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and crime of aggression. Headquarters: The Hague, Netherlands.

20. Answer A

World Turtle Day, celebrated annually on May 23, aims to raise awareness about the unique lifestyle and habitats of turtles and tortoises.

21. Answer D

Australia and Uzbekistan have been confirmed as the hosts of the 2026 and 2029 editions of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Women's Asian Cup, respectively

22. Answer A

Jyoti Ratre, an entrepreneur and fitness enthusiast from Madhya Pradesh, has become the oldest Indian woman to conquer Mount Everest. The 55-year-old mountaineer reached the summit on 19 May 2024. Became the oldest Indian woman to summit Mount Everest, reaching an altitude of 8,848.86 meters.

23. Answer A

It lies in Kuppam and Palmaner Ranges of Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. It is the only sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh known for harboring Asian elephants.

24. Answer C

A rare hemi-parasitic terrestrial plant (Phtheirospermum lushaiorum) has been found in Phawngpui National Park of Mizoram. Lushaiorum is named after "Lushai" tribe of Mizoram.

25. Answer A

Srinivas R. Kulkarni, an Indian-origin U.S. scientist and brother of renowned author Sudha Murty, has been awarded the prestigious Shaw Prize in Astronomy for 2024.

26. Answer C

Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, Bhupinder Singh Bhalla addressed the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in Rotterdam, Netherlands on May 15, 2024, highlighting India's strategic vision and capabilities in the domain of renewable energy and green hydrogen production.

27. Answer B

NASA's International Space Station recently took a unique picture of a strange hole on Mount Nemrut in Turkey, which is a dormant stratovolcano. As seen in the picture, the crater was split in half, making it look like the Chinese yin-yang sign.

28. Answer D

Chabahar Port is a seaport in Chabahar located in southeastern Iran, on the Gulf of Oman. It serves as Iran's only oceanic port, and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

29. Answer D

Pakistan did a successful test launch of the "Fatah-II" guided multi-launch rocket system. Pakistan's weaponry is getting better, and this event is a big step in that direction.

30. Answer D

James Anderson has announced he will retire from international cricket after England's first Test of the summer at Lord's, against West Indies.

The Indian Army will be able to defend itself better in the air after getting more Russian Igla-S very short-range air defense weapons (VSHORAD).

31. Answer A**32. Answer A**

Aman Sehrawat has become the first Indian male wrestler to secure a quota place for the 2024 Paris Olympics. Asian champion Sehrawat secured a Paris quota in the men's 57kg freestyle category at the World Wrestling Olympic Qualifiers in Istanbul, Turkiye.

33. Answer C

India pledges \$1 million in humanitarian aid to Kenya to alleviate the aftermath of deadly floods, claiming 267 lives and displacing over 380,000 people.

34. Answer D

The 7th edition of the joint military exercise 'Shakti' between India and France commenced in Umroi, Meghalaya, marking a significant collaboration in enhancing tactical capabilities. Exercise "Shakti" is a biennial training event conducted alternatively in India and France.

35. Answer A

Red Panda Small arboreal mammal found in high-altitude forests of Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar, and China. Habitat: Temperate forest of Himalayas (Sikkim, West Bengal, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh). IUCN status: Endangered Wildlife Protection Act: Schedule I CITES: Appendix I

36. Answer A

The Senior Nationals Sailing Championship 2024 is being organized at Mumbai Port. It is being organised by the Indian Naval Watermanship Training Centre (INWTC), Mumbai from 12 to 18 May 2024. Indian Navy Sailing Association (INSA) is also cooperating in this.

37. Answer B

A Nepali Sherpa guide has made history by climbing the summit of Mount Everest, the world's highest peak, for a record 30th time. Kami Rita Sherpa, 54, completed the amazing feat on May 22, reaching the 8,849-metre summit by the traditional southeast ridge route, Nepalese tourism official Khim Lal Gautam said.

38. Answer C

The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board has teamed up with Starscapes, an astro-tourism company, to introduce Nakshatra Sabha, aimed at offering offers a comprehensive astro-tourism experience.

39. Answer B

The name Remal, meaning 'sand' in Arabic, was chosen by Oman

40. Answer B

World Press Freedom Index 2024 Announced, India Ranked 159th Out of 180 Countries.

41. Answer C

Telangana has banned the manufacture, storage, distribution, transportation, and sale of gutkha and pan containing tobacco and nicotine for one year. This action, announced by the Commissioner of Food Safety, aims to protect public health and curb the consumption of harmful substances

42. Answer A

National Jute Board is governed by National Jute Board Act 2008. It was framed by the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India and enacted by the Parliament on February 12, 2009. The headquarter is located in Kolkata.

43. Answer C

ICONS 2024 was held at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna from 20 to 24 May 2024.

44. Answer A

Archaeologists have recently discovered a 7000-year-old pre-historic settlement near the Tamiš River in northeastern Serbia. The settlement is believed to date back to the late Neolithic period and spans roughly 11-13 hectares, surrounded by four to six ditches.

45. Answer B

The Indian Army has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to develop and deploy hydrogen fuel cell technology in its heavy-duty mobility vehicles

46. Answer C

Inscriptions found at Sri Madhava Perumal Temple, which has largely remained submerged by Bhavanisagar dam, revealed a 1000 years old trade route. It is one of the world's largest earthen dams.

47. Answer A

Dr Samir Kamat was due to retire on 31 May 2024. His term has been extended till 31 May 2025. The extension to Dr Kamat comes after the government, in an unusual move, gave a one-month extension to Army Chief Manoj Pande.

48. Answer C

World Hunger Day is observed on May 28 every year. The day was started by The Hunger Project in 2011.

49. Answer D

World's Highest Observatory Inaugurated in Chile by University of Tokyo.

50. Answer C

Official language: Russian and Chinese.

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