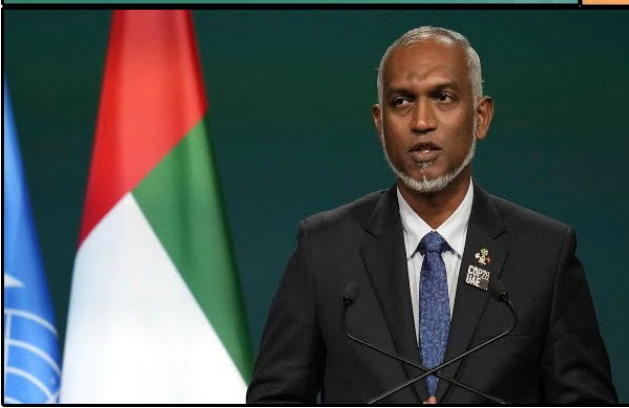
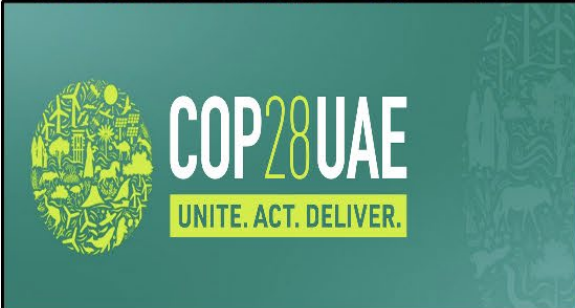




Shankar School of Banking

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DECEMBER – 2023

NATIONAL NEWS

Scheme for providing Drones to the Women Self Help Groups

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved Central Sector Scheme for providing Drones to the Women Self Help Groups (SHGs), with an outlay of ₹1261 Crore for the period from 2024-25 to 2025-26.
- ★ The scheme aims to provide drones to 15,000 selected Women SHGs from 2023-24 to 2025-2026 to provide rental services to farmers for agriculture.
- ★ The scheme seeks to empower women Self Help Groups (SHGs) and bringing new technologies through drone services in agriculture sector.
- ★ The scheme approves holistic interventions by converging the resources and efforts of Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (DA&FW), Department of Rural development (DoRD) and Department of Fertilizers (DoF), Women SHGs and Lead Fertilizer Companies (LFCs).
- ★ Central Financial Assistance of 80% of the cost of drone and accessories/ancillary charges up to a maximum of ₹Eight Lakh will be provided to the women SHGs for purchase of drones.

Smriti Zubin Irani Launches ‘Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication’

- ★ Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister of Women and Child Development (MWCD) launched a ‘Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication’ in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- ★ The guide, titled “Gender-Inclusive Communication”, was prepared by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in collaboration with UN WOMEN and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- ★ Guide provides recommendations and examples on use of Gender-Inclusive language that avoids bias towards a particular sex or social gender and is less likely to convey or amplify gender stereotypes.
- ★ The guide covers the use of language in English, Hindi, and other Regional languages, based on the “Handbook on Combatting Gender Stereotypes” by Supreme Court of India and other national and global best practices customized to suit the requirements of the Indian citizens.
- ★ The guide also includes a checklist for gender-related revisions and key resources for further reference.
- ★ The guide is intended to assist in gender-inclusive writing, review, and translation of documents and communications by government officials, civil servants, media professionals, educators, and other stakeholders.

24th Edition of Hornbill Festival 2023

- ★ 24th edition of the Hornbill Festival 2023 started at the Naga Heritage Village Kisama.

- ★ United States of America, Germany and Columbia are the Country Partners and Assam as Partner state for this year 2023.
- ★ The opening ceremony of the 10-day festival will start at Kisama.
- ★ Ambassador of USA to India, Eric Garcetti, Ambassador to British High Commissioner to India Alex Ellis, Ambassador of Colombia to India, Dr. Victor Echeverri Jaramillo and German Consul General Kolkata, Barbara Voss will grace the inaugural function as Honoured Guests of the festival.
- ★ For the first time, there will be an exhibition featuring the Mithun, the State animal and Tenyi Vo, a native breed of pig from the rural Nagaland.
- ★ In addition, Nagaland Beekeeping and Honey Mission is launching the first 'Bee tourism' to showcase Nagaland's rich beekeeping tradition and unique practices carried out across the state.

Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission.
- ★ The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover the period of five (5) years commencing April 1, 2026.
- ★ Article 280(1) of the Constitution lays down that the modalities for setting up of a Finance Commission to make recommendation on the distribution of net proceeds of taxes between the Union and the States, allocation between the States of respective shares of such proceeds; grants-in-aid and the revenues of the States and measures needed to supplement the resources of the Panchayats during the award period.
- ★ The measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State.

National Conference on Energy Transition in India

- ★ Union Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy Shri R.K. Singh inaugurated a two-day National Conference on "Energy Transition in India – Road Travelled and Opportunities Ahead" in Gandhinagar.
- ★ Organized as a part of the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024, the event is being attended by more than 250 Indian and foreign representatives of power and renewable energy sector.
- ★ The two-day conference will focus on scaling up renewable energy, generation and consumption by considering challenges related to grid integration, financing tools and developing supporting infrastructure.
- ★ The main objective of this conference is to move forward with an ambitious vision of promoting clean energy and facilitating the energy transition.
- ★ India is committed to reducing the emission intensity of its GDP by 45 percent by 2030 compare to 2005 level.
- ★ Gujarat is also the first state in the country to issue policies on renewable energy providing incentives for the development of renewable energy.

Uttar Pradesh Government Signs MoU with CSIR and DRDO

- ★ Uttar Pradesh is focusing on connecting the proposed Bulk Drugs Park in Lalitpur with technology along with research and innovation to provide high-quality and affordable medicines and medical devices.
- ★ The Uttar Pradesh government has given approval for the establishment of the state's first Pharma Park in Lalitpur district, located in Bundelkhand.
- ★ For this, the government has linked big institutions of the Government of India like the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) with the Bulk Drug Park and made them its knowledge partners.
- ★ The Bulk Drugs Park in Lalitpur is being developed according to international standards, aligning with Chief Minister Yogi's vision.
- ★ The government has allocated a budget of ₹1560 crore for the development and provision of necessary facilities to investors in Lalitpur Pharma Park.

World's First Portable Hospital 'Aarogya Maitri Aid Cube'

- ★ The World's first portable hospital, 'Aarogya Maitri Aid Cube' was unveiled in Gurugram.
- ★ Designed indigenously under the Project 'BHISHM', the modular trauma management and aid system is made up of 72 detachable mini-cubes, each being a specialized station for emergency response and humanitarian efforts.
- ★ It can handle bullet injuries, burns, head, spinal and chest injuries, minor surgeries, fractures and major bleeding.
- ★ It can treat as many as 200 patients.
- ★ These cubes are light and portable, and can be rapidly deployed anywhere, from airdrops to ground transportation.
- ★ The mobile hospital is part of India's message of health for all and assisting other nations during their times of crises.

Biodiversity Park to Foster Ecosystem Education and Green Practices

- ★ A Delhi government school has established the first-of-its-kind biodiversity park to promote the ecosystem and provide students with hands-on learning experiences in agriculture, farming, nature, and greenery.
- ★ The biodiversity park is located at Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Defence Colony, Delhi.
- ★ Open to the public, people can visit the park during the winter season.
- ★ The park features a diverse range of plant life, including native Indian flowers, various rose varieties, an Amrapali mango tree, different types of curry leaves, lemon trees, and plants imported from Telangana and South Africa.
- ★ The initiative to create the biodiversity park is a collaboration between the Delhi Department of Education (DoE) and the tourism department.
- ★ This biodiversity park is the first-of-its-kind in Delhi schools, showcasing a novel approach to integrating environmental education and practical learning.

- ★ The tourism department is responsible for executing the project, highlighting inter-departmental co-operation for educational and environmental initiatives.
- ★ The park is set to have 113 different species of plants suitable for winter, summer, and all-season growth.

Meta and Karnataka to Collaborate For Online Safety Training

- ★ Meta, the parent company of Instagram and Facebook, has entered into a two-year partnership with the Karnataka government with an aim to focus on digital education and online user safety for students in Karnataka.
- ★ The Karnataka government is working on launching a comprehensive blueprint to equip students with digital skills, enhancing their employability.
- ★ Under the partnership, Meta will collaborate with the IT-BT Ministry to jointly develop a WhatsApp chatbot for delivering information services across various government departments.
- ★ The primary objectives include streamlining citizen communication and creating a digital safety chatbot for citizen awareness.
- ★ In July 2023, the state government deployed a chatbot for the first time to receive applications from citizens for its flagship Gruha Lakshmi scheme.
- ★ As part of the collaboration, Meta will conduct awareness sessions in 100 colleges and universities across Karnataka.
- ★ The awareness sessions and content curation will be aimed at the target audience between 18-24 years of age, focusing on digital awareness.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik Unveils Ama Bank

- ★ Odisha Chief Minister (CM) Shri Naveen Patnaik has inaugurated Ama Bank, a banking initiative aimed at providing services through Customer Service Points (CSP).
- ★ Ama Bank is part of the financial inclusion program and aims to cover 4,373 unbanked gram panchayats in Odisha.
- ★ The initiative will be implemented in phases, with 750 panchayats receiving banking services through CSP outlets in the first phase.
- ★ The remaining panchayats are scheduled to be covered by March 2024.
- ★ The CSP Plus banking outlets will play a crucial role in empowering people, especially in providing credit for small businesses.
- ★ These outlets are expected to offer 15 banking services, and special provisions will be made to provide doorstep services to specific groups such as the elderly, differently-abled persons, and pregnant women.
- ★ The Odisha government in collaboration with 6 public sector banks has come up with the “Ama Bank” scheme for providing banking services to all unbanked gram panchayats.
- ★ As part of the initiative, the government will provide rent-free banking space for 5 years, facilitating the establishment and sustainability of Ama Bank outlets.

Delhi Government Launched Motor Vehicle Aggregator Scheme

- ★ Delhi Government has introduced the Delhi Motor Vehicle Aggregator and Delivery Service Provider Scheme.
- ★ The scheme mandates a complete transition to electric vehicles (EVs) for all cab aggregators and delivery service providers by 2030.
- ★ The policy applies to all aggregators offering passenger transport services in Delhi.
- ★ It also includes those engaged in delivery services, including e-commerce vehicles.
- ★ Interested parties must register with the government within 90 days from the date of notification.
- ★ The licence will be valid for 5 years.
- ★ Violations of the policy will result in fines, with a penalty of ₹5,000 for each instance.
- ★ Multiple violations may incur fines of up to ₹100,000 per instance.

Tamil Nadu Government to Setup Footwear Park

- ★ The Tamil Nadu (TN) government has planned to set up a footwear manufacturing park at an outlay of ₹400 crore on a 250-acre land.
- ★ The industrial project would generate 20,000 new jobs in Ranipet district.
- ★ Chief Minister Stalin announced this after virtually inaugurating a footwear manufacturing facility set up at an investment of ₹400 crore by JR One Footwear Pvt Ltd at Eraiyur in Perambalur district, about 250-km south of Chennai.
- ★ Through public-private partnerships, Stalin stated that the government also planned to set up industrial parks on 50-acre land for the leather and footwear industries in Tamil Nadu.

Ministry of Tourism Launches National Best Tourism Village

- ★ Ministry of Tourism has launched National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and the National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024 to strengthen the promotion and development of Rural Tourism in the country.
- ★ The earlier version of the National Best Tourism Village Competition 2023 recognized 35 villages all over India in the Gold, Silver and Bronze categories.
- ★ For the enhancement of Rural Tourism in India the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India launched the comprehensive National Strategy and Roadmap for the Development of Rural Tourism in India, along with the National Strategy for the Promotion of Rural Homestays.
- ★ The Ministry has initiated the implementation of the National strategies in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management.
- ★ The competition was launched on World Tourism Day and the applications for the competitions are open from 15 November to 31 December, 2023.

India Internet Governance Forum 2023

- ★ 'India Internet Governance Forum 2023' will be held in New Delhi.

- ★ The forum is a multi-stakeholder platform bringing together representatives from various groups to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet.
- ★ The theme of the event is Moving Forward – Calibrating Bharat’s Digital Agenda.
- ★ Electronic and IT Ministry stated that the event is an effort to discuss issues such as building a secure, trusted and resilient cyberspace for Bharat, Enabling Innovation for India’s Developmental Goals, Bridging Divides and Calibrating Bharat’s Digital Agenda.
- ★ The India Internet Governance Forum is an initiative associated with the UN Internet Governance Forum.

Panchayati Raj Ministry Launches “Gram Manchitra” App

- ★ In a strategic move to enhance spatial planning at the Gram Panchayat level, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj introduced the Geographic Information System (GIS) application known as “Gram Manchitra”.
- ★ “Gram Manchitra” serves as a unified Geo Spatial platform, providing a comprehensive view of developmental works across various sectors.
- ★ It enables Gram Panchayats to visualize and plan for projects effectively, offering a decision support system for the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).
- ★ Complementing “Gram Manchitra”, the Ministry has introduced “mActionSoft”, a mobile-based solution designed to capture photos with Geo-Tags, incorporating GPS coordinates.
- ★ The assets geo-tagged using the “mActionSoft” application seamlessly integrate with “Gram Manchitra”, offering an enhanced visualization of developmental works in Gram Panchayats.

PM Modi Unveil the Statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Rajkot Fort in Maharashtra’s Sindhudurg district.
- ★ Modi paid homage to the rich maritime heritage of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who constructed several coastal and sea forts, including the Sindhudurg Fort.
- ★ The Maratha empire founder’s seal inspired the new naval ensign that was adopted last year when PM Modi commissioned the first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant.

J & K Reservation and Reorganization (Amendment) Bill, 2023

- ★ Lok Sabha has passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation-Amendment Bill-2023 and Jammu-Kashmir Reorganisation-Amendment Bill-2023.
- ★ The bill proposes to increase the number of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly from 107 to 114.
- ★ Out of these 114 seats, 24 seats will be reserved for the people of the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).
- ★ In the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, 24 seats were reserved for the people of POK and the effective strength of the Assembly was 83.

- ★ The bill proposes to raise the effective strength of the legislative assembly of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir from existing 83 to 90.
- ★ The number of seats for the Jammu region is proposed to be increased from the present 37 to 43.
- ★ The number of seats for the Kashmir region is proposed to be increased from the present 46 to 47.
- ★ The bill gives the power to the lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir to nominate 2 members of the Kashmiri migrant community to the Legislative Assembly.
- ★ At least one nominated member shall be a woman.
- ★ These two bills seek to amend certain provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 and Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004 respectively.

Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit in Dehradun

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the two-day Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit at Forest Research Institute, FRI in Dehradun.
- ★ The main objective of this summit is to establish Uttarakhand as a new center of investment.
- ★ Addressing the investors on this occasion, Mr. Modi said, the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit is a golden opportunity to invest in the state.
- ★ The Prime Minister said that there has been rapid development of the road, rail and air sector in Uttarakhand, which will make it easier for industrial groups to invest in the state.
- ★ Referring to the tourism sector, there is immense potential for investment in tourism in Uttarakhand.
- ★ On this occasion, the Prime Minister also launched the House of Himalayas Brand of the women's self-help groups of the state.

India will have 4,500 Vande Bharat Trains by 2047

- ★ Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced that Indian Railway system is growing the fastest in the world.
- ★ The Minister said that 23 Vande Bharat trains are running in the country and the mission is to run 4,500 Vande Bharat trains by 2047.
- ★ Railway budget in 2013-14 was 29 thousand crore rupees and now it is 2 lakh 40 thousand crore rupees.
- ★ Mr Scindia said, Government is also working towards ensuring that carbon emission from trains is reduced to net zero in coming years.
- ★ The world's highest railway bridge is being built in Jammu and Kashmir. He informed that the first section of the Bullet Train will start within three years.

Ministry of Railways Launched Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

- ★ The Ministry of Railways has launched the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme for the development of stations on Indian Railways.

- ★ So far, 1309 Stations as appended have been identified for development under this scheme.
- ★ The Ministry of Railways also envisages exploration of various models for the development and maintenance of railway stations including Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC), non-EPC modes and a minuscule number of stations under Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode.
- ★ Further, the development and upgradation of Railway Stations is complex in nature involving safety of passengers and trains.
- ★ It requires various statutory clearances such as fire clearance, heritage, tree cutting, airport clearance etc.

Ministry of Textiles to host 'One Bharat Sari Walkathon' in Mumbai

- ★ The Ministry of Textiles will organize the country's largest ever 'One Bharat Sari Walkathon' in India's financial capital, Mumbai.
- ★ The event aims to promote the handloom sari culture in India by inviting participation of women across the country to showcase their ways of wearing saris and thus present India as a country of "Unity in Diversity".
- ★ It will also promote the spirit of traditional textile and support the idea of "Vocal for Local" and will raise awareness about fitness among women and to encourage them lead healthier lives.
- ★ In this celebration of cultural diversity and empowerment, enthusiastic participation of more than 5000 women including leading professionals, women from the music industry and many more are set to join the event adorned in their distinctive traditional attire.
- ★ Previously, the Sari Walkathon was organized in Surat.

The Hump WWII Museum

- ★ Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister (CM) Pema Khandu and US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti inaugurated 'The Hump WWII Museum', the 2nd museum in Asia dedicated to the fallen airmen of the Allied Forces during the WWII at Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh.
- ★ The pilots of the Allied Forces nicknamed the air-route from airfields in Assam to those in Yunnan in China 'The Hump' because their aircraft had to navigate deep gorges and then quickly fly over mountains rising beyond 10,000 feet.
- ★ In 2016-17, the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) had deployed a team for 30 days in search of remains of unaccounted-for US airmen.
- ★ There are approximately 400 US airmen missing in India, most of whose remains are believed to be located in the Himalayan mountains in the North East, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh.

India to host 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference

- ★ Invest India, the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of the Government of India, and the current President of the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), under the aegis of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), is set to host the 27th World Investment Conference (WIC).
- ★ It will be held at the India International Convention and Expo Centre, Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.

- ★ The theme for the conference is “Empowering Investors: IPAs Pioneering Future Growth”.
- ★ Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal will deliver the keynote address on the Role of Trade and Investment in the Decade of Action.
- ★ The Minister will also chair a closed-room roundtable of Private Equity.
- ★ Shri Goyal will also launch the Experience India Centre (EIC), showcasing the best of India’s offerings across services, technology, and products through a variety of technologies, including virtual reality, augmented reality, interactive touch screens, and projection mapping.

Scheme and Web-portal for National Awards for e-Governance 2024

- ★ The Web portal (<http://www.nceg.gov.in>) for National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2024 was launched.
- ★ The formal launching was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG).
- ★ The Central Ministries/Departments as well as the Principal Secretaries (AR) and (IT) and the DCs/DMs of all the 28 States and 8 UTs of India as well as Award Winners of NAeG 2023 were invited for the launch ceremony in hybrid mode.
- ★ The web portal for National Awards for e-Governance 2024 has been made live on 08 December 2023.
- ★ The advertisement in this regard has also appeared in newspapers on 2nd December 2023 and the last date for submission of nominations is 29 December 2023.
- ★ The National Awards for e-Governance Scheme is recognized amongst the most competitive and prestigious digital governance awards schemes in the country and objective of the Scheme is to recognize and promote excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives.

Lakadong Turmeric from Meghalaya Receives GI tag

- ★ Meghalaya’s Lakadong turmeric has been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- ★ It is considered to be one of the world’s best varieties of turmeric, with a curcumin content of around 6.8 to 7.5%.
- ★ It is darker in colour and is grown organically without the use of fertilisers.
- ★ It is found in the Lakadong area of Jaintia Hills, and has high curcumin content.

Energy Conservation named 4E Wave Launched

- ★ 4E Wave has been launched by Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shri R.K. Singh.
- ★ It is a student-led National Movement for Energy Conservation.
- ★ It was launched in the presence of Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir Shri Manoj Sinha.
- ★ The movement aims to raise awareness of energy conservation among communities and individuals, as well as to encourage sustainable activities.

- ★ 4E Wave comprises four essential components:
 - Eco-friendliness
 - Economy
 - Education, and
 - Empowermentare these components
- ★ It's a youth-led initiative that encourages people all throughout the country to support energy conservation.

Telangana Chief Minister Launches Free Bus Rides For Women

- ★ Chief Minister of Telangana, Revanth Reddy launched Maha Lakshmi Scheme and Rajiv Aarogyasri Scheme enhanced to ₹10 lakh in Hyderabad.
- ★ The scheme allows girls, women, and transgender persons of all ages, domiciled in Telangana, to travel free of cost in TSRTC buses.
- ★ According to the guidelines issued for the implementation of the scheme by the State government, these sections can travel free of cost anywhere within the borders of the State.
- ★ The Rajiv Arogyasri Scheme provides financial protection to families living below the poverty line.
- ★ It offers up to ₹10 lakh in a year for the treatment of serious ailments requiring hospitalisation and surgery and also financial coverage up to ₹10 lakh for high end procedures, according to the Rajiv Aarogyasri Health Care Trust.

Gujarat Government Enters into MoU with AAI

- ★ Gujarat, the State government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to develop 11 new greenfield airports and expand 9 existing ones.
- ★ Though an estimate for these projects have not been drawn, each airport is likely to cost ₹1,500-3,000 crore.
- ★ Ankleshwar, Morbi, Rajpipla, Botad, Dwarka, Dhordo, Rajula, Dahod, Ambaji, Dholavira and Palitana have been identified for the development of greenfield airports.
- ★ As per the agreement with the AAI, Gujarat government will provide the necessary land and other utility services like electricity and water needed for the airports.
- ★ The government stated that it will also explore possibilities of three additional greenfield airports at Vadnagar, Siddhpur and Kevadia.
- ★ Apart from the greenfield airport development, the state government is also looking at brownfield development of nine airports.

Finance Ministry Allocates ₹10,000 Crore as Urgent Aid NREGS

- ★ The finance ministry has released ₹10,000 crore in urgent assistance to meet unexpected enhanced expenditure under the rural job guarantee scheme until the first batch of supplementary demands for grants is approved by parliament at its next session.

- ★ The unusual move came after 95% of the FY24 budgetary outlay of ₹60,000 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was exhausted well before the commencement of the winter session of parliament.
- ★ The urgent funds, released to the rural development ministry, will form a part of the additional ₹28,000 crore that could be allocated for the scheme in the first batch of supplementary demands for grants for FY24.
- ★ The budget for FY24 had trimmed the MGNREGS outlay by a third to ₹60,000 crore from the revised estimate of ₹88,400 crore for FY23.
- ★ However, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had pledged more funds for the scheme if required.

Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme Launched

- ★ The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme.
- ★ The national forest certification scheme offers voluntary third-party certification designed to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.
- ★ The scheme includes forest management certification, tree outside forest management certification, and chain of custody certification.
- ★ It can provide market incentives to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management and agroforestry practices in their operations.
- ★ Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will act as the scheme operating agency and will be responsible for overall management of the scheme.
- ★ The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India will accredit the certification bodies which will carry out independent audits.

The 29th Kolkata International Film Festival

- ★ Kolkata International Film Festival was organized by the Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal.
- ★ Israeli film 'Children of Nobody' won the Best Film Award under International Competition in Innovation Moving Images.
- ★ It is directed by Erez Tadmor.
- ★ 219 films from 39 countries were screened at different locations across Kolkata.
- ★ Carlos Daniel Malave won the Best Director award. Anjan Dutta's 'Chalchitro Ekhon' won the Special Jury Award.
- ★ Director duo Sharmistha Maity and Rajdeep Paul's 'Mon Potongo' won the award for the best film under the Bengali Panorama category.

Cabinet Approves declaration of Surat Airport as an International Airport

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to declare Surat Airport as an International Airport.

- ★ Surat Airport will not only become a gateway for international travellers but also facilitate seamless export-import operations for the thriving diamond and textile - industries.
- ★ This strategic move promises to unlock unprecedented economic potential, making Surat a key player in the international aviation landscape and fostering a new era of prosperity for the region.
- ★ Surat, a rapidly growing city in India, has demonstrated remarkable economic prowess and industrial development.
- ★ With a surge in passenger traffic and cargo operations, the airport's international designation will provide a crucial support for regional development.

Himachal Government Started 15 Day “Him Mahotsav”

- ★ Himachal Pradesh is going to organise a 15-day ‘Him Mahotsav’ from 16 December to 30 December, in New Delhi.
- ★ This Mahotsav will create a marketing platform for the state.
- ★ The objective of the Him Mahotsav is to provide a platform to artisans and craftsmen to showcase their talents and products.
- ★ To popularise these, artisans have been involved in showcasing traditional Himachali clothes with the help of fashion designers.
- ★ Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) will be the nodal department for the ‘Him Craft Mahotsav’. The Rural Development Department will be the partner for the ‘Him Craft Mahotsav’.
- ★ Himachal's crafts like Naati, Chamba Rumal, Kullu and Kinnaur shawls and Kangra miniature paintings are being showcased.

Kashi Tamil Sangamam 2023

- ★ The second phase of Kashi Tamil Sangamam will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the Namoo Ghat, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The Government of India started this program as part of “Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav” to promote the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat.
- ★ The second phase of Kasi Tamil Sangamam will be held from December 17 to 30, 2023.
- ★ Around 1400 people (7 groups of 200 persons each) representing different sectors from different parts of Tamil Nadu are expected to participate in this event.
- ★ These 7 groups are named after the seven sacred rivers of India.
- ★ Students (Ganga), teachers (Yamuna), professionals (Godavari), spiritual people (Saraswati), farmers and artisans (Narmada), writers (Sindhu) and traders and businessmen (Kaveri).
- ★ The Ministry of Education, Government of India, is the nodal agency for this event.
- ★ IIT Madras and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will act as the implementing agency.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates Diamond Bourse

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the world's largest corporate office centre, ‘Surat Diamond Bourse’ (SDB).

- ★ This SDB office complex is designed for the global landscape of rough and polished diamond trading.
- ★ Located within the Diamond Research and Mercantile City, Surat Diamond Bourse is part of Prime Minister Modi's flagship projects.
- ★ Surat Diamond Bourse will be the world's largest and modern centre for international diamond and jewellery trading.
- ★ This SDB will be a global hub for trading in rough and polished diamonds as well as jewellery.
- ★ It has a modern customs clearance facility for import and export. Besides, there are also facilities like a jewellery mall, international banking and safe deposit box for retail jewellery business.
- ★ This building has been constructed on 35.54 acres (67 lakh square feet) at a cost of ₹3400 crore.

Kuno Forest Festival

- ★ The five-day Kuno Van Mahotsav was celebrated in Ranipura village on the outskirts of Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ Madhya Pradesh is organising the first edition of Kuno Van Mahotsav from 17 to 21 December.
- ★ The event also aims to advocate cheetah conservation by highlighting the diverse flora and fauna and the importance of the Kuno Forest.
- ★ It also includes local arts and crafts, folk music, dance forms and adventure sports.
- ★ 50 specially designed Swiss tents equipped with modern amenities have been installed in Ranipura for the festival.

NHAI Launched ERS Mobile App

- ★ NHAI has unveiled the NHAI ERS (Emergency Response System) Mobile Application.
- ★ This mobile application facilitates the smooth relay of dispatch-related information to on-road units.
- ★ With this technology, NHAI aims to enhance communication and coordination during emergency situations, ultimately bolstering the efficiency of emergency response teams.
- ★ This mobile application represents a progressive step towards a more connected and responsive emergency infrastructure.

World's Largest Yoga Center

- ★ World's largest yoga center has been constructed in Varanasi.
- ★ This yoga center has been named 'Swarveda Mahamandir'.
- ★ This yoga center was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ 20,000 people can sit for meditation at a time in this center.
- ★ The construction work of Swarveda Mahamandir started in the year 2004.
- ★ The seven-story Swarveda Mahamandir is spread over 68000 square feet.
- ★ It symbolizes the wonderful harmony of craft and cutting-edge technology.

- ★ It is a spiritual temple dedicated to Swarveda.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi addressed the audience and expressed his optimism about the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

NTPC Group Achieves 300 Billion Units Electricity Generation

- ★ NTPC Group has achieved the fastest ever 300 Billion Units (BU) electricity generation.
- ★ This milestone was achieved in just 262 days in FY 2023-24, which is 18 days early compared to the last financial year.
- ★ In FY 2022-23, the company had crossed 300 BU generation on 05 January 2023.
- ★ On a standalone basis, 256 BU generation has been recorded from NTPC stations in FY 2023-24.
- ★ This accomplishment reinforces NTPC's commitment to delivering reliable and affordable power to the Nation.
- ★ The company is committed to achieve 60 GW of Renewable Energy capacity by the year 2032.
- ★ Along with power generation, NTPC has also ventured into various new business areas including e-mobility, Waste-to-Energy, Green Hydrogen solutions and has participated in the bidding for power distribution of Union Territories.

PMBJP Achieved Their Target of ₹1000 Crore in Sales in FY 2023-24

- ★ Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) has created another landmark in the history of generic medicines in the country by selling medicines worth ₹1000 Crore this year.
- ★ This achievement was made possible only by the people of the country, who have saved approximately 5000 crores by purchasing medicines from Jan Aushadhi Kendras which is present in more than 785 districts of the country.
- ★ This substantial growth is a testament to PMBI's commitment to serving more communities and reaching a broader audience.
- ★ Hon'ble Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech, 2023 has announced the opening of 25,000 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) across the country.
- ★ Accordingly, the Government has set a target to open 25,000 Janaushadhi Kendras across the country by March, 2026.

Kiren Rijiju Launches India's Maiden Winter Scientific Arctic Expedition

- ★ Union Minister Kiren Rijiju flagged off India's first-ever winter science expedition to the Arctic region.
- ★ India's first-ever winter science expedition to the Arctic region has been flagged off by the Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju.
- ★ Indian scientific expeditions to the Arctic during the winter will allow researchers to conduct unique scientific observations during polar nights, where there is no sunlight for nearly 24 hours and sub-zero temperatures.

- ★ A team of four scientists started the journey to India's research station in the NyAlesund town on the Brogger peninsula.
- ★ Athulya R, Girish B S, Prashant Rawat, and Surendra Singh are the members of this team.
- ★ The first batch of the maiden Arctic winter expedition comprises researchers from the host NCPOR, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi; Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune; and Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru.

India's First Himalayan AirSafari

- ★ The Uttarakhand government is set to transform tourism by launching India's first-ever Himalayan AirSafari using gyrocopters, compact and agile aircraft.
- ★ The first trial flight of gyrocopters was successfully conducted at Bairagi Camp, Haridwar, marking a significant milestone in the initiative.
- ★ The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board is collaborating with Rajas Aerosports and Adventures Pvt Ltd to introduce gyrocopters as an innovative way for tourists to explore the state's picturesque landscapes.
- ★ Germany-supplied state-of-the-art gyrocopters have been procured for the Himalayan Air Safari initiative.
- ★ Initial operations will be led by expertly trained German pilots.
- ★ The gyrocopters will smoothly transition between exotic locations.

Amit Shah Introduces Redrafted Criminal Bills in Lok Sabha

- ★ Union Home Minister Amit Shah introduced redrafted criminal Bills.
- ★ Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented three redrafted Bills in the Lok Sabha to replace the existing British-era criminal laws.
- ★ The new bills incorporate the changes recommended by a parliamentary committee.
- ★ The Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill (BNSS), 2023 will take the place of the Indian Penal Code of 1860.
- ★ Under the new bill, the definition of the terrorist act has been expanded.
- ★ The "economic security" and "damage or destruction of any property in India or in a foreign country used or intended to be used for the defense of India" have been included in the definition of terrorist.
- ★ The Bill retains the death penalty as punishment. It proposes that an officer above the rank of Superintendent of Police will decide whether a case will be registered under the UAPA or not.

Madhya Pradesh to Establish Prime Minister College of Excellence

- ★ Madhya Pradesh (MP) government will set up PM College of Excellence in all districts of the state.
- ★ The decision to this effect was taken at the first Cabinet meeting chaired by new Chief Minister Mohan Yadav in Bhopal, MP.
- ★ One college in every district out of a total of 570 government colleges will be upgraded by the MP government as "PM College of Excellence".

- ★ The government will spend more than ₹460 crore on the development of these colleges. In addition to this, the degree and mark sheets of students in all government and private universities will be uploaded in DigiLocker.

ICAI Unveils New CA India Logo

- ★ Vice-President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar launched this new logo of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).
- ★ The new logo has been unveiled at a recently held Global Professional Accountants Convention (GloPAC), in Gandhinagar.
- ★ It is made up of the letters 'CA' in blue with a tricolour tick mark (upside down) on a white background.
- ★ The blue colour denotes innovativeness, creativity, knowledge, trust, integrity, stability, truth, and depth.
- ★ The upside-down tick mark in tricolor has been included to symbolise the wisdom and value of the professionals.
- ★ 'India' is added to the logo, which epitomizes the Institute's commitment to the India First approach.
- ★ It also epitomizes the Institute's commitment to serve the Indian economy in the public interest.

₹5 Lakh Accident Insurance for GIG Workers

- ★ Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has announced to provide accident insurance of ₹5 lakh to gig workers from the government.
- ★ This state government has made an important announcement for gig workers like food delivery, cab, and auto-rickshaw drivers.
- ★ A meeting of co-cab, auto-rickshaw drivers and food delivery officials was attended by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy.
- ★ In this meeting, the state government provided social security to the workers in the unorganised sectors and took policy decisions in this direction.
- ★ Apart from this, many important decisions were taken for the workers of unorganised sectors, mainly.
- ★ Chief Minister Revanth Reddy assured the gig workers that the government will also provide a health cover of ₹10 lakh under the Rajiv Aarogyasri Scheme.

Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Virtually Launches 'Medtech Mitra'

- ★ Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya launched MedTech Mitra virtually on 25 December 2023.
- ★ It is a strategic initiative of the Central Government to empower MedTech innovators and advance healthcare solutions.
- ★ MedTech Mitra is a platform for emerging entrepreneurs and innovators in India.

- ★ The portal will be coordinated collaboratively by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), under the guidance of NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission.
- ★ The MedTech Mitra initiative helps people in the medical technology field work together and makes progress in healthcare.
- ★ India is taking a holistic approach to health with a vision to transform the health landscape in the country by 2047.

1467 Projects of NHAI Have Been Brought Under the Bhoomi Rashi Portal

- ★ The Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, 1467 projects of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have been brought under the Bhoomi Rashi Portal.
- ★ It is an e-governance initiative of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- ★ The portal intends to expedite the process of land acquisition for National Highways.
- ★ It acts as a single-point platform for the online processing of land acquisition notifications to accelerate highway infrastructure development projects in India.
- ★ This portal would enhance the efficiency of the land acquisition process, ensure transparency and accountability, and result in the e-transfer of benefits directly to the accounts of the beneficiaries.

Ministry of Textiles Launches “Paat-Mitro” Application

- ★ The Ministry of Textiles launched “Paat-Mitro”, a mobile application to provide important information about MSP and agronomy to jute farmers.
- ★ Rachna Shah, Assistant Secretary, Textiles Ministry, has launched it, which is available at 6 beaches.
- ★ This mobile application was developed by the Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI) during the ‘Jute Symposium’. It is available in six languages.
- ★ It will provide information about the latest agronomic practices and Minimum Support Prices (MSP); Jute Gradation Parameters, Farmer-centric schemes like ‘Jute-ICARE’, weather forecasts, etc.
- ★ Through this application, farmers will also be able to track the status of their payments for the raw jute sold to JCI under MSP.
- ★ Many latest features like Chatbot are included in this application for resolving queries.
- ★ To create awareness and popularize Jute based technical textiles, the ‘Jute Symposium’ was organized.

Ministry of Rural Development Signs MoU with Reliance Retail’s JioMart

- ★ The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Reliance Retail’s JioMart as part of its efforts to enhance the outreach of the products of self-help groups (SHGs) of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

- ★ This will bring SHGs under MoRD's SARAS collection brand onto JioMart offering a range of handlooms and handicrafts products from traditional textiles to pantry, home décor and beauty products.
- ★ This initiative will further boost MoRD's provision under the SARAS collection to be available to a larger consumer base.
- ★ JioMart will also help set-up and support them to navigate and operate their account on the marketplace.
- ★ Additionally, JioMart will jointly participate in trainings and workshops facilitated by MoRD to enable sellers to familiarise selling experience on the portal.

National Conference of Chief Secretaries

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair the conference of Chief Secretaries in Delhi from 27 December to 29 December 2023.
- ★ This is the third such conference. The first conference was held in Dharamshala in June 2022 and the second in Delhi in January 2023.
- ★ This conference is inspired by the Prime Minister's vision to implement the principle of co-operative federalism.
- ★ The National Conference of Chief Secretaries is organised to encourage participatory governance and partnership between the Central and State Governments.
- ★ This conference will further strengthen the delivery mechanism of government interventions at both rural and urban levels.
- ★ This conference will form the basis for co-operative action to achieve a better quality of life.
- ★ The main focus of the National Conference of Chief Secretaries is 'Ease of Living'.

UGC Releases Notification to Scrap MPhil

- ★ The University Grants Commission has issued a notice warning students not to pursue an MPhil degree since it is no longer recognised.
- ★ The University Grants Commission (UGC) announced that it has learned that not many universities are accepting new applications for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree.
- ★ It went on to say that an MPhil degree is no longer a recognised degree.
- ★ The announcement stressed the UGC (Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of PhD Degree) Regulations 2022, which expressly forbids higher educational institutions from conducting MPhil programmes.
- ★ The UGC had already ruled the MPhil degree to be invalid, advising higher education institutions not to offer MPhil programmes.
- ★ The notice also advises universities to take prompt action and cease accepting applications for the MPhil programme for the academic year 2023-24.

India's First Artificial City Will Be Built in Lucknow

- ★ India's first Artificial (AI) city will be built in Lucknow.

- ★ The initiative aims to create a thriving hub for artificial intelligence, integrating cutting-edge technology, research centers, and academic institutions to foster innovation and nurture the workforce of the future.
- ★ The nodal agency for this city is Uttar Pradesh Electronics Corporation Limited.
- ★ The time limit to achieve this target has been fixed in 5 years.
- ★ For the project, 40 acres of land will be given to the developer companies at the prime location of Nadarganj industrial area.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Nepal Registers First Legal Same-Sex Marriage

- ★ Nepal has become the first South Asian country to formally register same-sex marriage after the Supreme Court legalized it.
- ★ The marriage of 35-year-old woman Maya Gurung and 27-year-old gay Surendra Pandey has been legally recognized and their marriage has been registered in Dordi Rural Municipality of Lamjung district in western Nepal.
- ★ Same-sex marriage was permitted by the Supreme Court of Nepal in 2007.
- ★ In this regard, the Constitution of Nepal, adopted in 2015, also clearly states that there can be no discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

COP-28 on Climate Change

- ★ The joint world climate conference under COP-28 will be held in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December under the presidency of the Arab Emirates.
- ★ Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and UAE Special Envoy for Climate Change, has been appointed as the President of COP-28.
- ★ Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber is also the first CEO to be appointed as COP President.
- ★ The conference is expected to see intense discussions among the representatives of 200 countries on issues like adverse effects of climate change, use of fossil fuels, financial assistance to reduce methane and carbon emissions and compensation to be given from rich countries to developing countries.
- ★ The conference will attempt to address the issue of economic assistance to developing and poor countries who are bearing the brunt of the climate crisis despite contributing less to the climate crisis.

India Re-Elected to the IMO Council

- ★ India was re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) with the highest number of votes in the elections held in London for the 2024-25 biennium session.

- ★ The 33rd Assembly of the IMO Council is being held from 27 November to 6 December 2023 at the IMO Headquarters in London.
- ★ The Council is an executive body of the IMO and is responsible for monitoring the work of the organization.
- ★ India comes in the category of ten countries with the greatest interest in international maritime trade.

PM Launches Green Credit Initiative at COP28 Climate Conference

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Green Credit Initiative', a program aimed at reshaping global environmental policies.
- ★ He also launched the official portal of the Green credit initiative at COP28.
- ★ The Prime Minister highlighted the limitations of the current carbon credit system, influenced by commercial interests and lacking a sense of social responsibility, paving the way for a new philosophy embodied in the 'Green Credit' concept.
- ★ The 'Green Credit Initiative' has garnered international support, with leaders expressing enthusiasm and commitment to the cause.
- ★ Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden, praised the initiative, citing Sweden's success with the Climate Leap, reducing climate emissions by 3.3 million tonnes per year through collective action.
- ★ The program's overarching objective is to leverage a competitive market-based approach, motivating a diverse array of stakeholders to actively engage in voluntary environmental actions.

India joins Executive Committee of Codex Alimentarius Commission

- ★ India has been unanimously elected as a member representing Asian region in the Executive Committee of Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) during its 46th meeting being held at FAO Headquarters at Rome.
- ★ Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), is the food safety and quality standard-setting body created by the UN.
- ★ Executive Committee is an important arm of the CAC and the member countries have a considerable interest in getting its membership.
- ★ India would not only get an opportunity to contribute substantially in the International standard setting process for different food product categories but will also be involved in the decision making process.
- ★ The Executive Committee comprises of the Chair, three vice Chairs, six regional coordinators and seven elected representatives from the various geographical regions of Codex.
- ★ India had proposed for setting up the global standards for millets under the Additional Agendas category on the first day of the CAC meeting.

Pakistan Secures Vice Chair Post at UNESCO

- ★ Pakistan secured a significant victory over India in the UNESCO executive board election for the post of vice-chair.

- ★ The Pakistani candidate received 38 votes, while the Indian candidate received only 18.
- ★ Pakistan's victory of being elected as vice chair of the UNESCO Executive Board for 2023-2025 from the Asia Pacific Group, is being seen as a major setback for Indian diplomats in the UN.
- ★ The elected Pakistani vice chair expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support from the executive board members and all UNESCO member states.

'Garba' Dance to Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- ★ The United Nations organisation UNESCO has included Gujarat's traditional 'Garba' dance in its cultural heritage list.
- ★ Along with this, the 'Garba' dance is the 15th heritage of India to receive the status of cultural heritage of UNESCO.
- ★ 18th meeting of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage began in Botswana, an African country.
- ★ During this period, a declaration was made to include Garba dance in UNESCO's list for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) under the 2003 Convention.
- ★ Garba promotes social and gender inclusivity.
- ★ It is a dance performed by women carrying around an earthen pot on their head called "Garba", which is filled with water.

India to Extend \$250 Million Line of Credit to Kenya

- ★ India has committed a \$250 million Line of Credit to Kenya for the modernization of its agricultural sector.
- ★ The announcement came following talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto.
- ★ Modi and Ruto discussed and agreed to strengthen bilateral ties in various sectors, including defence, trade, energy, digital public infrastructure, and healthcare.
- ★ The two nations signed five agreements covering co-operation in diverse areas such as sports, education, and digital solutions.
- ★ A joint vision document was unveiled, signalling a commitment to scale up maritime engagement in the Indian Ocean region.

Sri Lanka Secures Debt Treatment Agreement

- ★ Sri Lanka has achieved an "agreement in principle" with India and the Paris Club group of creditors on a debt treatment plan.
- ★ The Agreement facilitates Sri Lanka's access to the next installment of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) nearly \$3 billion recovery package.
- ★ Sri Lanka and the Official Creditor Committee (OCC) reached an agreement on the main parameters of debt treatment.
- ★ These parameters are consistent with those of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement between Sri Lanka and the IMF.

- ★ The OCC was formed by major lenders in May 2023 in response to Sri Lanka's request for debt treatment.
- ★ It is co-chaired by India, Japan and France as chairs of the Paris Club.

UNICEF In Collaboration With India to Launch the “Green Rising”

- ★ UNICEF's Generation Unlimited, in collaboration with India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change will unveil the “Green Rising” initiative at COP28 in Dubai.
- ★ The global “Green Rising” initiative and the “Green Rising India Alliance” marks a collaborative effort involving UNICEF, Generation Unlimited, and a diverse network of public, private, and youth partners.
- ★ The main goal is to mobilize millions of young people worldwide, encouraging their active participation in green initiatives addressing and adapting to the severe impacts of climate change on their communities.
- ★ The “Green Rising” initiative focuses on engaging youth for impactful environmental actions at the grassroots level, aligning with the global effort to address the severe impacts of climate change.

India Pledges \$1 Million in Immediate Relief Aid to Papua New Guinea

- ★ India announces a \$1 million relief assistance package for Papua New Guinea for Mount Ulawun volcanic eruption.
- ★ The financial aid is designated for immediate relief and will support rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Papua New Guinea.
- ★ Ulawun is the highest mountain in New Britain and the second in the Bismarck Archipelago at 2,334 metres, and is one of the most active volcanoes in Papua New Guinea.
- ★ India in solidarity with the people of Papua New Guinea, will provide immediate relief assistance to aid rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

World's Largest Concentrated Solar Power Project during COP28

- ★ The fourth phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai has been inaugurated by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.
- ★ This marks the launch of the world's largest Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project.
- ★ Built at an investment of 15.78 billion, the 950 MW project utilises three hybrid technologies.
- ★ The three hybrid technologies used are 600 MW from a parabolic basin complex, 100 MW from a CSP tower, and 250 MW from photovoltaic solar panels.
- ★ According to Guinness World Records, the project includes the world's tallest solar tower at 263.126 metres and the largest thermal energy storage capacity with a capacity of 5,907 megawatt hours.
- ★ The project covers 44 square kilometres and consists of 70,000 heliostats that track the movement of the Sun.

- ★ The Molten Salt Receiver (MSR) on top of a solar power tower is an important element that converts solar radiation into thermal energy.

Indonesia Offers Free Entry Visa to India

- ★ The Indonesian Ministry of Tourism has decided to issue free entry visas to travellers from 20 countries to promote tourism.
- ★ He also included India in the second week of December 2023.
- ★ According to the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, free entry visas to these 20 countries will increase foreign tourist visits.
- ★ This will have many positive impacts on Indonesia's economy.
- ★ For example, domestic consumption will be boosted, investment will be attracted, and the development of the digital economy will be supported.

Sweden and United States Ink Defence Cooperation Agreement

- ★ Sweden signed a defence co-operation agreement with the United States in Washington.
- ★ It will allow the US to access all of the military bases in the Scandinavian country which is about to join the trans-Atlantic security alliance, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- ★ Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson stated that the deal will create better conditions for Sweden to be able to receive support from the US in the event of a war or crisis.
- ★ US Secretary of States, Lloyd Austin, remarked that by adding the capabilities of the Swedish armed forces to NATO, will make them stronger.
- ★ The US struck a similar deal with Sweden's neighbour, Norway, in 2021 and is currently negotiating such an agreement with two other Nordic countries, Finland and Denmark.

Flagship Nation for the IMO Green Voyage 2050 Project

- ★ India has been selected as the pioneer lead country for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Green Voyage 2050 Project.
- ★ The overall goal of the Project is to support effective implementation of the Initial IMO GHG Strategy.
- ★ It provides support to developing countries in their efforts to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from ships.
- ★ The Initial IMO Strategy sets out a clear vision and levels of ambition, one of which is to reduce the total annual GHG emissions by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008.
- ★ It is envisaged that the project will strengthen MARPOL Annex VI compliance, facilitate the sharing of operational best practices, catalyse the uptake of energy-efficient technologies and explore opportunities for low- and zero-carbon fuels.

India, South Korea, and the United States to Establish Technology Trialogue

- ★ India, South Korea and the United States (US) will start an informal trilateral technology dialogue in the first quarter of 2024 in response to China's rapid progress in critical technologies within the Indo-Pacific region.
- ★ The decision was made during the inaugural US-South Korea Next Generation Critical and Emerging Technologies Dialogue held in Seoul.
- ★ The aim of this programme is to increase co-operation in strategic and defence technologies between the two countries, including their private sector and academia.
- ★ These include semiconductor supply chains and technology, biotechnology, batteries, clean energy technology, quantum science and technology, digital connectivity, and artificial intelligence.

MoU Signed Between India and Tanzania

- ★ Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Information, Communication and Information Technology of the United Republic of Tanzania on co-operation in the field of sharing successful Digital Solutions implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation.
- ★ The MoU intends to promote closer co-operation and exchange of experiences, digital technologies-based solutions in the implementation of digital transformational initiative of both the countries.
- ★ Both G2G and B2B bilateral Cooperation in the field of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) will be enhanced.
- ★ The activities contemplated in this MoU would be financed through their administration's regular operating allocations.
- ★ MoU envisages improved collaboration leading to employment opportunities in the field of IT.

India, Oman Adopted A Vision Document

- ★ Several agreements were signed during the three-day state visit of Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq of Oman to India from 15 to 17 December 2023.
- ★ Both countries have adopted a vision document to expand their relations.
- ★ The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations covering the areas of political, security, defence, trade, economic, cultural and people-to-people relations.
- ★ Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Dhofar University of Oman was also signed.
- ★ The two sides also announced the third tranche of the Oman-India Joint Investment Fund of about ₹2,500 crore (\$300 million).
- ★ This amount will be used for investment in fast growing sectors of the Indian economy.

International Year of Camelids

- ★ The United Nations has declared the year 2024 as the International Year of the Camelids to highlight the importance of camelids in the lives of people around the world.
- ★ The International Year of Camelids 2024 aims to create awareness about the untapped potential of Camelids and strive to increase investment in the Camelids sector through research, capacity development and use of innovative practices and technologies.
- ★ These camels are found in more than 90 countries of the world.
- ★ Camelids are crucial for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations.
- ★ These creatures contribute to local communities' food security, nutrition and economic development.

Chief Guest at Republic Day 2024

- ★ The French President Emmanuel Macron will attend the Republic Day celebrations in 2024 as the Chief Guest.
- ★ India has sent a formal invitation to Macron in this regard.
- ★ Emmanuel Macron will be the sixth French leader to attend the 2024 Republic Day parade as Chief Guest.
- ★ India's 75th Republic Day will be celebrated in the year 2024.

United Kingdom to Implement Climate Levy on Imported Steel from 2027

- ★ The United Kingdom government follows the European Union in deciding to enforce a carbon border tax on specific commodities such as iron, steel, aluminium, ceramics, and cement, starting in 2027.
- ★ The tax amount will be determined by the volume of carbon emissions associated with the production of the imported goods and the disparity between the carbon price in the UK and the originating country.
- ★ The introduction of this tax aims to ensure that carbon-intensive products like steel and ceramics from other nations face a carbon price comparable to those produced within the UK.
- ★ The measure is designed to create a level playing field in terms of carbon pricing.
- ★ The carbon border tax is expected to instill confidence in the UK industry to invest in decarbonization efforts, aligning with the country's commitment to environmental sustainability.

WHO Has Approved the Malaria Vaccine

- ★ The World Health Organization has approved the malaria vaccine in December 2023.
- ★ This malaria vaccine has been developed by the biotechnology company Serum Institute of India.
- ★ Serum Institute has developed it in collaboration with Oxford University.
- ★ The name of this vaccine is R 21/Matrix-M.
- ★ This vaccine has been granted pre-qualification certificate by the World Health Organization.

- ★ Pre-qualification means greater access to vaccines as a vital tool to prevent malaria in children.
- ★ This is a condition for vaccine procurement by UN child rights body UNICEF.
- ★ African country Ghana will be the first country where this vaccine will be administered to children.

India-Russia Signed Kudankulam Plant Agreement

- ★ India and Russia signed agreements related to the construction of future power generation units of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu on 26 December 2023.
- ★ KNPP is being built in Tamil Nadu with technical assistance from Russia.
- ★ Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar is on a five-day visit to Russia.
- ★ In the presence of both leaders, agreements regarding nuclear energy, medicine and medical equipment were signed.
- ★ Both sides have agreed that the teams will meet by the end of January to begin talks on a free trade agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Zone.
- ★ Jaishankar will meet his counterpart Sergei Lavrov on 27 December 2023 to discuss bilateral, multilateral and international issues.

World Economic Forum Meeting

- ★ World Economic Forum meeting will be held in Switzerland in January 2024.
- ★ It will be organized in Davos, Switzerland.
- ★ This meeting will be held from 14 to 20 January.
- ★ Union Ministers Smriti Irani, Hardeep Singh Puri and Shri Ashwani Vaishnav will represent India at the World Economic Forum meeting.
- ★ A delegation of Uttar Pradesh government will also attend the World Economic Forum meeting.
- ★ This will be the first time that the state pavilion will be displayed in the North World Economic Forum meeting.

India-Italy Migration and Mobility Agreement

- ★ The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the proposal of the Ministry of External Affairs regarding signing and ratifying the Migration and Mobility Agreement between India and Italy.
- ★ Indian students wishing to gain experience after completing academic/vocational training in Italy may be permitted temporary residence in Italy for up to 12 months.
- ★ Italy has extensive provisions relating to vocational training, extracurricular and curricular internships.
- ★ These provide an opportunity for Indian students to gain exposure to Italian skill standards.
- ★ Under the Flows Decree, Italy has offered incremental reserve quotas for both seasonal and non-seasonal workers from 2023-2025.
- ★ Cooperation between the two parties against irregular migration has also been formalised through the agreement.

Consulate General of India in Auckland, New Zealand

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal to open of a Consulate General of India in Auckland, New Zealand.
- ★ Opening of Consulate General of India in Auckland would help in increasing India's diplomatic footprint and strengthen India's diplomatic representation in view of India's increasing global engagement.
- ★ This will also help promote India's strategic and commercial interests and better serve the welfare of Indian community in Auckland.
- ★ The Consulate is likely to be opened and fully operationalized within a time frame of 12 months.

BANKING, FINANCE & ECONOMICS

SEBI to Implement Regulatory Framework for Index Providers

- ★ Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) approved providing flexibility to Not for Profit Organisations (NPOs) in raising funds through the social stock exchange and also decided to introduce a regulatory framework for index providers.
- ★ SEBI will provide flexibility for fundraising by NPOs through the social stock exchange.
- ★ In this regard, the minimum issue size in case of public issuance of Zero Coupon Zero Principal Instruments (ZCZP) for NPOs on the social stock exchange will be reduced to ₹50 lakh from ₹1 crore.
- ★ Among other decisions, a regulatory framework will be introduced for the index providers to foster transparency and accountability in governance and administration of financial benchmarks in the securities market.
- ★ Starting from September 2024, all fresh investments made by Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs) will be required to be held in dematerialized (demat) form.
- ★ SEBI has announced its intention to regulate online platforms that offer fractional ownership of real estate assets.
- ★ These platforms will be registered under the framework for small and medium Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs).

Indraprastha Gas Limited Partnered with IndusInd Bank

- ★ IndusInd Bank has partnered with Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) to introduce digital rupee transactions in Delhi NCR.
- ★ The collaboration enables customers at selected IGL stations to make payments using the Digital Rupee, the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) launched by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 2022.
- ★ Through UPI interoperability, customers can scan any UPI QR using their Digital Rupee App across all IGL stations.

- ★ The bank is focused on contributing to the broader acceptance of Digital Rupee and fostering a 'cashless' economy.
- ★ The Digital Rupee solution is available on both iOS and Android platforms, ensuring a user-friendly experience.
- ★ It offers various features such as peer-to-peer (P2P) and peer-to-merchant (P2M) payments with complete UPI QR interoperability.

India Records Nearly 5-Year High Banking Liquidity Deficit

- ★ India's banking system liquidity deficit has widened to the highest in nearly 5 years on monthly goods and services tax payments.
- ★ The liquidity deficit is the amount of funds banks need to borrow from the interbank market or from the central bank.
- ★ Liquidity in the banking system refers to readily available cash that banks need to meet short-term business and financial needs.
- ★ According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the liquidity deficit stood at ₹1.74 lakh crore (\$20.90 billion).
- ★ It is highest since 2018, when it had hit ₹1.86 lakh crore.
- ★ On a given day, if the banking system is a net borrower from the RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF), the system liquidity can be said to be in deficit.
- ★ LAF refers to the RBI's operations through which it injects or absorbs liquidity into or from the banking system.

LIC Launches New Whole Life Insurance Policy 'Jeevan Utsav'

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), has launched a new individual, savings, and Whole Life Insurance plan called Jeevan Utsav.
- ★ This plan is available for age starting from 90 days to 65 years.
- ★ It gives guaranteed lifelong income and lifelong risk cover.
- ★ The minimum premium paying term is 5 years and the maximum premium paying term is 16 years.
- ★ For each policy year for which premium is paid, the Guaranteed Additions at ₹40 per thousand Basic Sum Assured shall accrue at the end of each policy year during the premium paying term.
- ★ The Plan is a Non-Linked, Non-Participating Plan.
- ★ This is a comprehensive form of life insurance providing lifetime coverage.

ADB Approves \$500 Million Loan to Maharashtra

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a loan package worth USD 500 million to improve access to quality and affordable tertiary health care and medical education in Maharashtra, India.

- ★ ADB has been working with the state government of Maharashtra to achieve its vision of providing affordable and accessible tertiary health care to all by 2030 and strengthening quality and professional medical practitioners.
- ★ The programme will initiate pivotal policy reforms to bolster tertiary healthcare services and expand medical education, particularly in underserved regions.
- ★ The Maharashtra Tertiary Care and Medical Education Sector Development Programme, financed by the ADB loan, aims to construct 4 new medical colleges with tertiary care hospitals, which will include features that are resilient to climate and disasters, gender-sensitive, and socially inclusive.
- ★ The programme also plans to augment bed capacity in state hospitals and recruit at least 500 doctors for these new institutions.

ADB Commits USD 170 Million to Transform Kochi's Water Landscape

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a significant loan of USD 170 million for the modernization of water supply services in Kochi, Kerala.
- ★ Objective of the loan is to modernize water supply services, elevate urban living standards, ensure access to clean water, and enhance climate resilience in Kochi.
- ★ The project will rehabilitate and upgrade five existing water treatment plants that have a cumulative production capacity of 325 million litres per day (MLD), as well as build a new plant with 190 MLD capacity.
- ★ To reduce loss of treated water during distribution, around 700 kilometres of pipes will be replaced and a real-time monitoring system will be introduced.
- ★ About 146,000 water metres will be replaced with high-quality and reliable metres.
- ★ The project will also improve the capacity of the service provider, including through training to improve female employment in the construction, operation, and maintenance of water supply systems.

RBI and Bank of England

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of England (BoE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for co-operation and information exchange regarding the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd. (CCIL).
- ★ Objective of the MoU is to encourage the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) to reconsider recognizing at least one of the Indian central counterparties (CCPs).
- ★ The MoU establishes a framework for the BoE to rely on the regulatory and supervisory activities of the RBI, ensuring the stability of the UK financial system.
- ★ The agreement highlights the significance of cross-border co-operation to facilitate international clearing activities and reflects the BoE's commitment to deference to other regulators' regimes.

SEBI Grants Approval to Jana Small Finance Bank for IPO

- ★ Jana Small Finance Bank has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for its initial public offering (IPO).

- ★ The IPO comprises a fresh issue of equity shares worth ₹575 crore with a face value of ₹10 each.
- ★ Additionally, there is an offer for sale of up to 4.05 million shares by existing shareholders and promoters.
- ★ Jana Small Finance Bank, upon successful listing, will become the 7th small finance bank (SFB) to be listed on the stock exchange.
- ★ These banks are among the 12 licensed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ The net proceeds from the IPO will be utilised for augmenting Jana Small Finance Bank's tier-1 capital to meet its future capital requirements.

Tata AIG General Insurance Company Launches 'Health Supercharge'

- ★ TATA AIG General Insurance Company Limited introduced "Health Supercharge" with the aim of offering a fivefold enhancement in health insurance coverage, addressing the dynamic nature of health-related uncertainties.
- ★ The new plan caters to the healthcare needs of families residing in Tier-I to Tier-IV locations, ensuring inclusivity across various geographical segments.
- ★ Tata AIG Health Supercharge offers a sum insured ranging from ₹5 lakhs to ₹20 lakhs.
- ★ Customers can choose from two plan variants, namely the Value Plan and Geo Plan, based on their geographical location.
- ★ Additional optional benefits are available to tailor coverage according to individual preferences.

Amazon Pay Introduces Video KYC Service in Sign Language

- ★ Amazon Pay has launched a video sign language Know Your Customer (KYC) service for hearing and speech impaired customers, which involves communication through sign languages, a pioneering initiative in the digital payments sector in India.
- ★ The company has rolled out the initiative that enables two-way video communication in sign-language between Amazon Pay employees and customers.
- ★ The goal is to make the KYC process effortless for those who rely on sign language, and making digital payments more inclusive.
- ★ The initiative aligns with Amazon's commitment to Digital Bharat, ensuring that its services are inclusive and accessible to all, in line with the broader vision for a digitally empowered India.
- ★ Amazon Pay has provided Indian sign language training to over 120 employees to provide video-based KYC services to customers across India.
- ★ The interactive training module, focused on equipping employees with the ability to effectively communicate with hearing and speech-impaired customers, is developed by the in-house team.

RBI Allows Banks to Open Current Accounts for Export

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) permitted banks to open additional current accounts for export proceeds in addition to special rupee vostro accounts with a view to provide greater operational flexibility to exporters.

- ★ To provide greater operational flexibility to exporters, banks maintaining a special rupee vostro account as per the provisions of the RBI circular dated July 11, 2022 are permitted to open an additional special current account for its exporter constituent exclusively for settlement of their export transactions.
- ★ In July 2022, the RBI had asked banks to put in place additional arrangements for export and import transactions in Indian rupees in view of increasing interest of the global trading community in the domestic currency.
- ★ Accordingly, authorised Indian banks must open and maintain special rupee vostro accounts of the partner trading country's banks.
- ★ These accounts keep the foreign bank's holdings in the Indian counterpart in rupees.

Union Bank of India Partners with Accenture

- ★ Union Bank of India (UBI), a leading public sector bank in India is collaborating with Accenture to design and develop a scalable and secure enterprise data lake platform with advanced analytics and reporting capabilities.
- ★ This program will boost the bank's operational efficiency and enhance its ability to offer customer-centric banking services and manage risk.
- ★ Using predictive analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, this platform will leverage structured and unstructured data from within the bank as well as from external sources to generate business-relevant insights.
- ★ The program will enable the bank to develop robust data visualization and reporting capabilities including interactive dashboards and reports for business, operational and regulatory purposes.
- ★ Employees will have access to business intelligence that can enhance customer service and operational agility across the bank's branches, contact centers and digital channels.
- ★ As a result, the bank will be able to make informed decisions and identify new data-led opportunities for value creation.

Banks and Third-Party Application Providers to Disable UPI IDs

- ★ Individuals who have not done any transactions on their UPI IDs and numbers for over a year will not be able to receive funds from January.
- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has asked banks, payment service providers and Third-Party Application Providers (TPAPs) such as PhonePe, Google Pay and others to deactivate UPI IDs and numbers of customers who have not performed any transactions for one year or more.
- ★ The NPCI has set December 31 as a deadline to deactivate UPI IDs of inactive customers.
- ★ The directive is aimed at ensuring that the money is transferred only to the intended recipients.
- ★ This initiative by NPCI is a positive step towards ensuring a hygienic payment ecosystem, which is essential for the sustainability of a cashless digital economy in India.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Collaborates with Water.org

- ★ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Ujjivan SFB) has announced a partnership with org, a global non-profit organisation that helps people get access to safe water and sanitation through affordable financing, such as small loans.
- ★ Under the partnership, Water.org will assist Ujjivan SFB in identifying areas that require financing for clean water and hygienic sanitation.
- ★ To support the cause, Ujjivan SFB will be offering loans to existing as well as new customers starting from ₹6,000 up to ₹1,00,000 to enable them to construct and/or renovate water and sanitation facilities.
- ★ Ujjivan SFB disbursed over 5,000 Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) loans worth ₹30 crore last year, enabling customers to construct the necessary sanitation facilities in alignment with the Swachh Bharat mission of the Indian government.
- ★ Through this partnership, Ujjivan SFB will further be able to provide safe drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities to 65,000 households by providing them affordable loans over the next 3 years.

Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its monetary review meeting.
- ★ This is for the fifth time in a row that the MPC has maintained the status quo.
- ★ Standing Deposit Facility rate remains - 6.25 percent.
- ★ Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate - 6.75 percent.
- ★ Real GDP growth projection for the current year 2023-24 has been revised from earlier 6.5 per cent to 7 percent.
- ★ Real GDP growth for Quarter one of 2024-25 is projected at 6.7 per cent, for Quarter 2 at 6.5 per cent and for Quarter 3 at 6.4 per cent.
- ★ The RBI Governor also said that the central bank has proposed to hike the limit of UPI transactions in hospitals and educational institutions from one lakh rupees to 5 lakhs.

SBI Card Partnered with Bharat BillPay

- ★ NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd. (NBBL), the wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), announced that it has on-boarded SBI Card, under the credit card category of Bharat BillPay.
- ★ The aim of the partnership is to simplify the way customers manage their credit card bill payments by providing them better convenience and accessibility.
- ★ SBI Card is one of the emerging and largest credit card issuers in the country, boasting a customer base of around 1.68 crore.
- ★ Through the utilisation of Bharat BillPay, SBI Card customers gain the advantage of seamlessly handling their credit card bill payments across various Bharat BillPay-supported payment channels.

- ★ This includes online platforms through banks or payment apps, as well as the extensive network of physical outlets enabled by Bharat BillPay.
- ★ The collaboration enables customers to utilise Bharat BillPay's diverse payment modes, ensuring smooth and secure transactions.

SEBI Extends Deadline for Integration of SCORES

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has extended the timeline for implementation of linking SEBI Complaint Redressal (SCORES) with the online dispute resolution platform to 01 April 2024.
- ★ Earlier, the deadline for linking both the platforms was 04 December 2023.
- ★ The market entities need to keep submitting the Action Taken Report (ATR) on SCORES within 21 calendar days from the date of receipt of the complaint.
- ★ In September, 2023 the capital market regulator had issued a circular saying that market entities will need to apply for SCORES authentication and for Application Programming Interface (API) integration.
- ★ The SCORES platform, launched in 2011, was an initiative by SEBI to provide a facilitative platform for investors to file their grievances against listed companies or registered intermediaries which are unresolved.
- ★ The complaints filed against any entity in SCORES platform shall be automatically forwarded to the concerned entity for complaint resolution and ATR submission.
- ★ Entities need to resolve the complaint and upload the ATR on SCORES within 21 calendar days of receipt of the Complaint.

ICICI Lombard Unveils MaxProtect

- ★ ICICI Lombard has introduced MaxProtect, the latest addition to its range of customer-focused products.
- ★ This product is designed to provide a cost-effective, inflation-adjusted solution to address the healthcare requirements of both individuals and families.
- ★ MaxProtect offers a choice between two customer-centric insurance plans.
- ★ Firstly, the MaxProtect Classic plan provides comprehensive coverage, ensuring robust financial protection for various scenarios.
- ★ It encompasses a range of medical services, including advanced treatments, donor expenses, hospital stays (excluding suites), unlimited sum insured reset benefits, domiciliary hospitalisation, and unlimited teleconsultation.
- ★ On the other hand, the MaxProtect Premium plan stands out for its extensive features, such as global coverage, access to air ambulance services, and a unique claim protector feature.
- ★ MaxProtect delivers a comprehensive and advanced level of protection, ranging from ₹1 crore to ₹10 crores, with an unlimited option available.
- ★ Annual premiums start at ₹9,367 for a floater policy worth ₹1 crore covering two adults, approximately equivalent to ₹26 per day, making it accessible to a broad range of customers.

Government of Madhya Pradesh and Asian Development Bank

- ★ The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$175 million loan to improve connectivity and resilience of roads in the state of Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ The loan agreement was signed by Juhi Mukherjee, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, in the Ministry of Finance, for the Government of India, and Takeo Konishi, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, for ADB.
- ★ This project will enhance connectivity in the state road network in 14 districts to enable balanced economic development in Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ In Madhya Pradesh, the ADB has supported the road development program since 2002 by upgrading more than 9,000 kilometres of state highways and major district roads.
- ★ The project will convert about 500 km of state highways and major district roads into standard two-lane roads.
- ★ These roads will include climate and disaster-resilient designs, innovative road safety elements, and features that cater to the needs of the elderly, women, children, and people with disabilities.
- ★ ADB will build the capacity of Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation Limited (MPRDC) on climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster resilience, and road safety in road network planning and management.

ADB Grants \$98 Million Loan to Horticulture Crop Farmers

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$98 million loan to improve horticulture crop farmers' access to certified disease-free planting materials, which will boost their crops' yield, quality, and resilience to climate impacts.
- ★ This project supports India's agricultural transformation.
- ★ ADB's financing will support the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program (CPP), which was announced in February 2023 to establish clean plant centers and a certification scheme that will ensure farmers can purchase disease-free planting materials from private nurseries.
- ★ The project will establish at least 6 clean plant centers dedicated to maintaining disease-free foundation materials.
- ★ These centers will feature laboratories equipped with cutting-edge diagnostic testing methods and will be staffed with experts who are trained in clean plant operating procedures and diagnostic testing protocols.
- ★ The project will also develop regulatory frameworks for the CPP, in partnership with private nurseries and researchers.
- ★ It will roll out a clean plant certification scheme, accrediting private nurseries, and testing and certifying their planting materials.

Aditya Birla Health Launches 'Activ One' Product

- ★ Aditya Birla Health Insurance Company Limited (ABHICL), the health insurance division of Aditya Birla Capital, a prominent and diversified financial services provider in India, has introduced 'Activ One'.

- ★ This streamlined and all-encompassing health insurance plan is designed to offer policyholders personalised solutions, addressing not only their health insurance requirements but also fostering their journey towards optimal well-being.
- ★ Packed with cutting-edge features like complete health returns, claim protection, no sub-limits, super reload, and super credit, Activ One stands as ABHICL's most extensive offering to date.
- ★ This all-inclusive product provides customers with a singular solution for both their health assurance and health insurance requirements.
- ★ It empowers policyholders to reclaim their entire premium by adopting an active and healthy lifestyle.
- ★ This feature ensures that policyholders receive coverage for all specified non-medical expenses associated with hospitalization.

AIIB Signed MoU with United Nations Development Programme

- ★ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in promoting sustainable infrastructure development and address development challenges in Asia.
- ★ AIIB is a multilateral development bank whose mission is financing the “Infrastructure for Tomorrow”, infrastructure that is inclusive and sustainable socially, environmentally and economically.
- ★ UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crises, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone.
- ★ The AIIB-UNDP agreement recognizes the two parties' shared objectives in supporting national climate goals and the 2030 Agenda through financing sustainable development initiatives in common members of operations.

RBI to Develop Regulatory Framework for Oversight of Loan Aggregators

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that it will soon release a regulatory framework aimed at overseeing web-based loan comparison platforms known as web-aggregators of loan products (WALP).
- ★ WALP offers the service of aggregating loan offers from multiple lenders on an electronic platform which allows borrowers to easily compare different offers and choose the most suitable loan option available from the participating lenders.
- ★ The RBI aims to create a structured system for loan aggregation services provided by lending service providers (LSPs).
- ★ The framework aims to enhance transparency in the operations of WALPs or digital lending.
- ★ It focuses on increasing customer centricity and enabling borrowers to make informed choices.

RBI Announces Plans to Set Up Cloud Facility

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is actively working on establishing a dedicated cloud facility for the financial sector in India.

- ★ The primary objective of the proposed cloud facility is to significantly enhance the security, integrity, and privacy of data within the financial sector.
- ★ The cloud facility will be set up and initially operated by Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI.
- ★ Over time, the cloud facility will be transitioned to a separate entity, with ownership vested in financial sector participants.
- ★ This move aims to promote independence and collaboration within the sector.
- ★ The implementation of the cloud facility is planned to occur in a phased and calibrated fashion over the medium term, ensuring a systematic and controlled deployment.
- ★ The Reserve Bank Innovation Hub is set to operationalize the repository associated with the cloud facility by April 2024.

ACKO Partners with PhonePe

- ★ ACKO General Insurance and PhonePe have collaborated to provide a range of inclusive car and bike insurance products directly to users through the PhonePe platform.
- ★ This strategic partnership combines ACKO's customer-centric approach with PhonePe's extensive distribution network, ensuring convenient access to insurance as a readily available financial option for PhonePe users.
- ★ In addition, this partnership will witness ACKO expanding its product range to encompass health insurance and various other lines in the coming years.
- ★ The integration of ACKO with PhonePe is facilitated through the cutting-edge partnership API stack, crafted for modularity and smooth integration.

SEBI's Proposal to Reduce NCD Face Value from ₹1 Lakh to ₹10,000

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) proposed to permit companies to issue non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and non-convertible redeemable preference shares (NCRPS) with the face value of 10,000 as against the current system of ₹one lakh face value.
- ★ It aims to enhance the participation of non-institutional investors in the corporate bond market coupled with mitigation and management of risk to safeguard and protect the interest of such non-institutional investors.
- ★ SEBI, in the agenda 'Introduction of Regulatory Framework for Online Bond Platforms' placed before the Board in the meeting held on September 30, 2023 approved the proposal to reduce the face value from ₹10 lakh to ₹1 lakh.
- ★ The SEBI has also proposed a framework for the issuance of subordinate units in Real Estate Investment Trusts (Reits) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) to sponsors, sponsor groups, and associates.
- ★ Preference shares, more commonly referred to as preferred stock, are shares of a company's stock with dividends paid out to shareholders before common stock dividends are issued.
- ★ Redeemable preference shares are those shares that can be repurchased or redeemed by the issuing company at a fixed rate and date.

Bank of India Introduces Nari Shakti Savings Account

- ★ Bank of India (BoI) has launched an exclusive savings bank product for women named Nari Shakti Savings Account with an independent source of income.
- ★ It aims to provide them with enhanced privileges and features to support their financial empowerment.
- ★ This account comes with a comprehensive personal accident insurance cover of up to ₹100 lakhs, ensuring the safety and security of women account holders.
- ★ Women holding the Nari Shakti Savings Account can avail attractive discounts on health insurance and wellness products, promoting their overall well-being.
- ★ Nari Shakti Savings Account holders can enjoy the convenience of a free credit card, offering greater financial flexibility and convenience in transactions.
- ★ Account holders can benefit from a higher usage limit of up to ₹5.00 lakh on point-of-sale (POS) transactions, allowing them to make larger purchases with ease.

Universal Sompo General Insurance Unveils 'Muskaan'

- ★ Universal Sompo General Insurance introduced “Muskaan”, an innovative health insurance policy carefully designed to create a positive social impact and uplift domestic workers and staff.
- ★ Muskaan stands as a specialised health insurance offering dedicated support to domestic workers, providing them with effortless access to comprehensive coverage for medical needs and assistance in the event of an accident.
- ★ The product has been carefully designed to address specific essential needs of vital community members, including housekeepers, nannies or babysitters, caregivers, cooks or personal chefs, gardeners and landscapers, elderly companions, drivers and chauffeurs, and butlers.

IDFC FIRST Bank and Mastercard

- ★ IDFC FIRST Bank has introduced a youth-centric “FIRST SWYP” credit card in partnership with Mastercard.
- ★ This card can be used as a no-interest charge card and has curated features, flexible bill repayments through EMIs, a benefit-laden referral program, and exclusive and relevant merchant partnerships.
- ★ The card will address demands of new-age customers, blending benefits across their favourite categories of spends and lifestyle-related offers and innovative propositions.
- ★ The new card is the Bank’s second youth-focussed credit card.
- ★ It had earlier launched “FIRST Millennia Credit Cards”.
- ★ Cardholders can refer friends and earn benefits, starting from a waiver of annual fees to bonus rewards, movie vouchers, domestic lounge access, and more.

Reliance Industries Collaborates with DBS Bank

- ★ Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and DBS Bank India have collaborated to establish a financing programme customised to the requirements of the compressed biogas project initiated by RIL.

- ★ The financing initiative aims to support the ecosystem development for vendor partners involved in aggregating agri-residue as inputs for Reliance's CBG production plants across India.
- ★ At Reliance's 46th annual general meeting (AGM), Chairman Mukesh Ambani had informed that the company targets to establish 100 compressed biogas (CBG) plants in the next 5 years, consuming 5.5 million tonnes of agro-residue and organic waste.
- ★ The CBG plants are expected to mitigate nearly 2 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually and produce 2.5 million tonnes of organic manure.
- ★ DBS Bank is engaged as the finance partner for RIL's CBG project, providing financial support for the establishment and operation of the biogas facilities.

RBI Increases UPI Automatic Payment Limit

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the limit for automatic payments through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to ₹1 lakh per transaction from the existing ₹15,000 for certain categories, including subscription to mutual funds.
- ★ As of now, relaxation in Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) is permitted while processing e-mandates/standing instructions on cards, prepaid payment instruments and UPI (Unified Payments Interface), for subsequent recurring transactions with values up to ₹15,000.
- ★ UPI has emerged as a preferred mode of payment for a large section of the population with over 11.23 billion transactions recorded in November, 2023.

iVIS Collaborates with ICICI Bank

- ★ iVIS, a subsidiary of Magellanic Cloud, has announced its partnership with ICICI Bank for the delivery of e-surveillance services across branches.
- ★ This strategic collaboration enables iVIS to offer AI/ML and IoT technology-enabled e-surveillance services, which will include real-time video monitoring and recording, facial recognition, incident detection, reporting, and data analytics.
- ★ iVIS will strengthen the branch-level security operations of ICICI Bank, such as ATMs and cash counter operations, with real-time threat mitigation, remote security management, and automated response systems.
- ★ iVis is skilled in its e-surveillance segment, with a centre in its Hyderabad office that oversees 20,000 ATMs and banking sites across the country.

Intellect Secures ₹80-Crore Agreement with Indian Bank

- ★ Intellect Design Arena Limited, the Chennai-based FinTech company for financial and insurance clients, has signed a ₹80 crore, 5-year deal with Indian Bank to deploy Intellect's eMACH.ai powered Cash Management System.
- ★ The partnership is a pivotal moment, adding another feather to Intellect's growing footprint in the Indian BFSI industry, rendering the capabilities of a cognitive enterprise for revolutionising transaction banking.
- ★ Indian Bank, with a network of 4,900 ATMs and 5,798 domestic branches, serves over 100 million customers with 41,000 employees and \$140 billion worth of assets.

- ★ As part of the project 'INDLEAP', the Indian Bank has taken on the objective of digital transformation by leveraging technology wherever possible with transaction banking and supply chain management being the key growth engines.
- ★ Through this implementation, Intellect provides Omni-channel access across desktop and mobility.
- ★ It also provides coverage of payments across electronic and physical channels and coverage of multi-modal collections offerings for Indian corporates.

India, ADB Sign \$200 Million Loan Agreement for Uttarakhand

- ★ India and ADB have signed a \$200 million loan agreement with Uttarakhand for Power System Project.
- ★ This loan agreement is to improve the quality, efficiency, and reliability of power supply in Uttarakhand.
- ★ This loan agreement is for the Uttarakhand Climate Resilient Power System Development Project.
- ★ Asian Development Bank (ADB) will fund the project.
- ★ This will strengthen power system infrastructure in Uttarakhand.
- ★ The project involves enhancing of the power system network's capabilities.
- ★ The project will modernise Dehradun city's power network infrastructure.
- ★ The Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific will provide a \$2 million grant to support livelihood enhancement, and training activities of the project.

SBI To Sign 70 Million Euro Loc With Kfw

- ★ SBI signed 70 million euro (approximately ₹630 crore) Line of Credit (LoC) with KfW.
- ★ The LoC with German Development Bank KfW is for promoting solar project in the country.
- ★ The agreement has been signed at the bank's IFSC Gift City Branch in Ahmedabad.
- ★ LoC aims to support Solar Photovoltaics (PV) projects in India.
- ★ SBI has shown a 9.13% growth in consolidated net profit for the September quarter.
- ★ It reported a total income of more than ₹1.12 lakh crore for September quarter.

PNB Housing Finance Completes ₹1,000 Cr Loan Bookmark

- ★ PNB Housing Finance, the third largest housing finance company in India, announced that it has achieved a loan book size of ₹1,000 crore in the affordable housing segment.
- ★ It said that under its Roshni scheme for affordable housing, it aims to double the loan book by March 2025.
- ★ The scheme was launched in December 2022.
- ★ Under the Roshni scheme, the company provides loans for ticket sizes in the range of ₹5 lakh to ₹35 lakh.
- ★ It recently inaugurated its 100th Roshni branch in India, also its first all-women branch.

- ★ By March 2024, it aims to open 60 more branches for the affordable segment, taking the total to 160 branches.
- ★ Currently, at 100 branches, it is aiming to open 38 more branches for “prime” loans, taking the total of all housing finance branches close to 300 at the end of the current financial year.

Bandhan Bank to Disburse Pensions on Behalf of Indian Railways

- ★ Bandhan Bank has been authorised by RBI to disburse pensions on behalf of Indian Railways.
- ★ With this authorisation, Bandhan Bank will be allowed to give pensions to all former employees of the Ministry of Railways.
- ★ It will have access to nearly 50,000 Indian Railways retirees every year on average across all offices of Indian Railways.
- ★ The bank will quickly work with the Ministry of Railways to begin the process of giving out pensions.
- ★ The net profit of Bandhan Bank more than tripled for the quarter ended September 2023 to ₹721 crore.
- ★ The net profit increased by a huge 245%.

‘Reliance Health Global’ Insurance Policy

- ★ Reliance General Insurance Company introduced “Reliance Health Global”, a healthcare policy aimed at providing Indians with access to global healthcare.
- ★ The policy offers extensive coverage both within India and worldwide, catering to individuals with a global lifestyle.
- ★ It is designed for those seeking top-notch healthcare services globally, ensuring a seamless healthcare experience.
- ★ Substantial sum-insured coverage is up to \$1 million, providing a robust sense of security for medical treatment abroad.
- ★ Aside from covering scheduled hospitalization, the policy includes provisions for travel, accommodation, and comprehensive Visa and assistance services, addressing unforeseen situations like lost passport or emergency cash needs.
- ★ The policy covers expenses related to organ donors, providing financial support for critical medical procedures.

LIC Announces Increase in Gratuity Limit for Agents

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) has notified an increase in gratuity limit to ₹5 lakh from ₹3 lakh for LIC agents with an aim to bring substantial improvements to the working conditions and benefits for them.
- ★ The increase was affected by amending the Life Insurance Corporation of India (Agents) Regulations, 2017.
- ★ These regulations may be called the Life Insurance Corporation of India (Agents) Amendment Regulations, 2023.

- ★ These regulations came into force on the date of their publication in the Official Gazette dated 06 December 2023.
- ★ It also enabled the reappointed agents to be eligible for renewal commission, thereby providing them with increased financial stability.
- ★ Currently, LIC agents are not eligible for renewal commission on any business completed under the old agency.

Razorpay and Cashfree to Operate as Payment Aggregators

- ★ Razorpay and Cashfree have received the final authorization from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as Payment Aggregators (PAs).
- ★ Payment Aggregators (PAs) are entities that facilitate e-commerce sites and merchants in accepting various payment instruments from customers, streamlining the payment process without requiring merchants to create their systems.
- ★ PAs collect payments from customers, pool them, and transfer them to the merchants, offering a seamless transaction experience.

Government of India and Asian Development Bank

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed an agreement for a 37 billion Japanese Yen (\$250 million) loan that will continue financing the construction of the 82-kilometre Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridor.
- ★ The Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor will feature multi-modal hubs to facilitate smooth interchange with other modes of transportation.
- ★ The first tranche of the ADB loan amounts to \$500 million, with an additional \$500 million co-financed by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).
- ★ The investment project is expected to enhance urban mobility through the development of the RRTS, contributing to economic growth.
- ★ The benefits are projected to extend to women and differently-abled individuals.
- ★ This is anticipated to create economic and employment opportunities by significantly reducing travel time from 3-4 hours to about 1 hour.

IRDAI Relaxes Claim Settlement Rules- Cyclone Michaung Victims

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has raised the limits on losses for the appointment of Surveyors and Loss Assessors.
- ★ The limits have been increased for Motor Insurance to ₹1 lakh from the existing ₹50,000.
- ★ For other than motor insurance, it has been increased from the current ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh.
- ★ A surveyor and loss assessor is an insurance intermediary licensed by IRDAI to investigate, manage, quantify, validate and deal with losses (whether insured or not) arising from any contingency, on behalf of the company or the policyholder.
- ★ The regulatory changes are specifically applicable to claims arising from Cyclone Michaung and the associated heavy rains/floods.

- ★ The special dispensation is effective for a period of 2 months from the date of the circular's issuance.
- ★ Cyclone Michuung intensified into a severe cyclone after forming in the Bay of Bengal during the 2023 North Indian Ocean cyclone season.
- ★ Several areas in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh reeled under water logging conditions due to heavy rainfall in the region caused by Cyclone Michaung's landfall.

Cashfree Payments Introduces 'FlowWise'

- ★ Cashfree Payments, India's leading payments and API banking company, announced the launch of 'FlowWise' that helps Indian businesses manage payments more efficiently.
- ★ The newly introduced platform will allow businesses to easily use multiple payment services with just one setup and direct payments to different partners based on specific needs in real-time.
- ★ With FlowWise, Cashfree Payments has introduced an innovative and industry-first concept of 'self-hosted payments orchestration', allowing payment management to take place directly on the merchant's infrastructure.
- ★ It is India's first cloud-native orchestration platform and aims to improve success rate by up to 10% and cut the processing costs up to 40%.
- ★ FlowWise's self hosting feature eliminates safety concerns, making it one of the most secure, scalable and cost effective solutions for merchants.

RBI to Enable Card-On-File Tokenization

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to make Card-on-File Tokenization (CoFT) available directly to card-issuing banks/institutions.
- ★ The central bank introduced CoFT in September 2021, with implementation beginning on October 1, 2022.
- ★ According to the central bank, this will provide cardholders an extra option to tokenize their cards for numerous merchant sites using a single procedure.
- ★ Previously, a Card-on-File (CoF) token could only be generated through the merchant's application or website.
- ★ Tokenization is the process of replacing the cardholder's original card number with a substitute phrase known as a 'token'.
- ★ By transforming the clients' card numbers into tokens, this method provides greater card safety.
- ★ Tokenization substitutes a card's 16-digit number with a unique token unique to a user's card and one merchant at a time.

HDFC Life Partnered with Karur Vysya Bank (KVB)

- ★ Private sector Karur Vysya Bank Limited (KVB) and HDFC Life Insurance Company Limited (HDFC Life) have entered into a corporate agency (CA) agreement to offer life insurance products to their respective customers.

- ★ This corporate agency arrangement would enable customers of Karur Vysya Bank to avail HDFC Life's wide range of life insurance products which include solutions for protection, savings and investment, retirement and critical illness.
- ★ The collaboration is aligned with the goal of Insurance for all by 2047 set by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI).
- ★ Since HDFC Life offers claim intimation process online, customers can avail the services without stepping out of their homes.

First Anchor Investor in NABARD's Corporate Debt Market Bond Sale

- ★ Life Insurance Corp (LIC), is officially an anchor investor for an upcoming bond sale by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), marking the first such occurrence in India's corporate debt market.
- ★ LIC is the anchor investor for the ₹5,000-crore infrastructure bond sale by NABARD on 20 December 2023.
- ★ The issuer, NABARD, has a green shoe option of ₹5,000 crore in addition to the base amount
- ★ As the anchor investor, LIC will take up 30% of the bond sale, amounting to ₹1,500 crore.
- ★ Currently, LIC holds approximately 22% share in the overall bond market and 4% of the total market capitalization in Indian equities.
- ★ NABARD's bonds are rated AAA by rating agencies ICRA and India Ratings and will mature on April 2034.

PayCraft Collaborates with NSDL Payments Bank and NPCI

- ★ PayCraft Solutions Private Limited, a Mumbai-based fintech entity specializing in online and offline payments processing, has launched the One Nation Corporate Card in partnership with NSDL Payments Bank and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- ★ The One Nation Corporate Card will be offered to the Indian Customers Pan India from June End.
- ★ This innovative card, built on an indigenously developed multi-wallet platform with Transit Issuance and Processing Capability, serves as an Employee Tax Benefit instrument.
- ★ The USP of the One Nation Corporate Card is its ability to function as a National Transit Card, enabling cardholders to travel throughout India on any public transport that accepts bank-issued cards.
- ★ Built on National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) specifications with offline enabled, these cards will advance the Government of India's vision of One Nation One Card.
- ★ It also offers a valuable solution for digitizing business expenses for corporates and SMEs across the country.

State Bank of India and World Bank

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) has signed a \$165 million (over ₹1,300 crore) Line of Credit (LoC) with the World Bank for promoting rooftop solar projects in India.

- ★ The LoC is specifically aimed at supporting grid-connected rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) projects in both residential and institutional sectors.
- ★ In September 2023, SBI announced that it plans to make home loans with rooftop solar installations mandatory for residential projects funded from the bank's long-term climate action funds drawn down from multilateral agencies.
- ★ SBI is planning to make it mandatory for builders to make rooftop solar installations if the project is funded from the bank's green funds.

Bandhan Bank Receives Mandate to Collect Revenue on Assam Government

- ★ Bandhan Bank has obtained a mandate to oversee revenue collection on the Assam government's e-GRAS portal.
- ★ This will enable people of Assam to make their tax payments as well as non-tax payments through the Government Receipt Accounting System Portal (GRAS).
- ★ This initiative aims to streamline transactions, making them more accessible and paperless for the people of Assam.
- ★ Through Assam e-GRAS portal, a citizen can pay to 70 various departments for a range of services offered by them.
- ★ In the fiscal year 2022-23, the total collection through the Assam e-GRAS portal reached nearly ₹16,000 crore.
- ★ Government Receipt Accounting System (GRAS) is a web application, which provides facility to the citizens, business community to pay taxes and non-tax receipts to the government electronically.
- ★ Assam eGRAS provides 24 × 7 facility and the citizens of Assam can generate e-challan for required services and make online payments anytime from anywhere.

Axis Bank Partnered with American Express

- ★ Private sector lender Axis Bank has tied up with American Express and launched an Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on the American Express network.
- ★ With this partnership, Axis Bank customers can now enjoy the local and global benefits of the American Express network.
- ★ The Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on American Express network is packed with a host of attractive benefits such as activation benefit worth ₹5000 and two complimentary domestic lounge access per calendar quarter.
- ★ To be eligible for the card, you must be a resident of India with an annual net income of at least ₹600,000.
- ★ The joining fee is ₹1500, but it is free for priority customers.
- ★ Axis Privilege Credit Card offers bonus reward points as a welcome benefit, which is redeemable against multi-brand vouchers.
- ★ Cardholders must make the first transaction within 30 days of card setup to avail of this benefit.

Bank of Baroda Faces ₹5 Crore Penalty from RBI

- ★ Bank of Baroda informed, in an exchange filing, that the Reserve Bank of India had imposed a penalty of ₹5 crore on the bank, in light of a shortage in the soiled note remittances.
- ★ The RBI also imposed an additional penalty of ₹2,750 on the bank after it detected “fake and mutilated” notes in the soiled note remittances.
- ★ A ‘soiled note’ is a “note which has become dirty due to normal wear and tear and also includes a two piece note pasted together wherein both the pieces presented belong to the same note and form the entire note with no essential feature missing.

Aditya Birla Sun Life and IDFC First Bank

- ★ Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance and IDFC First Bank have entered into a bancassurance partnership to offer insurance solutions to the bank’s customers.
- ★ Under this collaboration, the insurer will leverage the extensive distribution network of IDFC First Bank.
- ★ Aditya Birla Sun Life will offer products and services, including those that focus on retirement planning, ensuring a steady source of second income and tax-free returns tailored to their life stages.
- ★ The partnership will provide customers with a one-stop-shop for their financial needs, including a range of insurance and banking products, and enhance the customer experience.
- ★ The two organisations will also collaborate to create financial solutions that cater to the changing needs of customers.

DCB partners with Easy Home Finance

- ★ DCB Bank, a new generation private sector bank and Easy Home Finance Limited (EASY), India’s leading mortgage tech company have entered a colending business alliance to offer affordable home loans in the country.
- ★ The aim is to enable quick disbursement of affordable home loans and fulfil the dream of many an Indian of owning a home.
- ★ DCB Bank has built a granular and secure home loan portfolio across varied geographies and has built expertise in credit assessment for a range of loans such as, prime home loans, affordable home loans, Loan against Property (LAP), Micro-LAP, loan for home improvement, and construction finance for developers as well.
- ★ EASY is a pioneer in the mortgage tech space in the Indian subcontinent.
- ★ The co-origination, underwriting and disbursement activities from both the parties working together will enable a seamless process for new home buyers.
- ★ Easy’s asset-light model of neo banking mortgage and a greater reach for digital home loans combined with rural and urban connect of DCB Bank will help customers in faster processing of their home loan application.

Bandhan Bank Unveils 'INSPIRE' Program

- ★ Bandhan Bank has launched the 'INSPIRE' programme for senior citizens, catering to their diverse banking needs, from preferential interest rates and priority banking to doorstep facilities.
- ★ A specially designed INSPIRE membership card will allow senior citizens to access healthcare benefits, enhanced banking services and special interest rates on fixed deposits (FD).
- ★ This all-in-one product is packed with multiple benefits to help seniors retire with confidence.
- ★ As part of the INSPIRE programme, Bandhan Bank also plans to set up dedicated senior citizen help desks at its branches to ensure personalised service.
- ★ The fee discounts include doctor consultations, medical check-ups and dental care through its partner healthcare providers.
- ★ The bank also plans to have additional features like direct access to phone banking officers to ease senior citizens while availing banking services.
- ★ Regarding preferential fixed deposit rates for senior citizens, Bandhan Bank offers 8.35 per cent interest on 500-day FDs.

ADB to Boost Tourism Infrastructure in the State of Tripura

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) signed an agreement with Asian Development Bank (ADB) to avail a USD 100 million loan to improve urban services and tourism facilities in the North-Eastern state of Tripura.
- ★ The objective is to enhance urban services and tourism facilities in Tripura, focusing on improving municipal infrastructure, public services, and key tourism sites.
- ★ The project includes capacity building for 12 urban local bodies, covering planning, infrastructure operations, financial management, gender equality, social inclusion, and project management.
- ★ The state government will update building regulations to incorporate spatial planning and green building principles, ensuring climate and disaster resilience.
- ★ Through this project, ADB will help upgrade tourist destinations, such as the Chaturdash Devata Temple, Kasba Kalibari, and Neermahal Palace, by improving the amenities, rooms, landscaping, and making them more visitor- and gender-friendly destinations.
- ★ It will establish a digital museum and a new adventure park.

U Gro Capital Raises ₹250 Crore from Dutch Development Bank

- ★ Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) lender U Gro Capital has raised ₹250 crore from Dutch development bank through rupee-denominated non-convertible debentures (NCDs).
- ★ The association will help strengthen the fund's commitment towards greater financial inclusion in India.
- ★ The MSME-lending-focused NBFC has provided credit to more than 80,000 small businesses.
- ★ Prior to this, it had raised ₹240 crore from Denmark's Investment Fund for Developing Countries (IFU) in May 2023.

NABARD and ADB

- ★ The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has teamed up with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help the farming sector tackle the adverse impact of climate change.
- ★ The two organisations, in association with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, will tap climate capital to fund agricultural, natural resources and rural development (ANR) initiatives.
- ★ The collaboration is aimed at enhancing food security and climate financing in India's ANR sector.
- ★ NABARD will also receive support to formulate a climate financing policy and its adoption.
- ★ The firm has experience in managing large-scale programmes in agriculture and other allied sectors, with a focus on climate adaptation and mitigation.
- ★ The partnership will identify and support food security and climate financing programmes in the ANR sector.
- ★ The support can also be extended to NABARD's ongoing and future projects, the ADB and other public and private funds can add value.

IndusInd Bank Introduces 'eSvarna'

- ★ IndusInd Bank has launched 'eSvarna', the country's first corporate credit card on the RuPay network, enabling the private sector lender to become the first to integrate UPI functionality with a corporate credit card.
- ★ The card facilitates smooth transactions at merchant outlets and allows users the flexibility to make UPI payments by linking the card with UPI-enabled apps.
- ★ The IndusInd Bank eSvarna credit card on the RuPay network comes with an array of exclusive perks and rewards.
- ★ IndusInd Bank eSvarna credit cardholders can look forward to a luxurious travel experience, including complimentary lounge access and fuel surcharge waiver.
- ★ Corporate travellers can receive the added benefit of comprehensive travel insurance coverage and an exclusive rewards program meticulously crafted for corporate entities, which makes this credit card a valuable financial solution for various business transactions.

HDFC Life and NKGSB Co-Operative Bank

- ★ HDFC Life, one of India's leading insurers, and NKGSB Co-operative Bank Limited, have entered into a Corporate Agency tie-up enabling NKGSB Co-operative Bank customers to avail life insurance products of HDFC Life.
- ★ The objective of the partnership is to provide life insurance solutions that cater to various needs of individuals – protection, pension, savings, investment and annuity.
- ★ This alliance reflects our Bank's commitment in ensuring the well-being and financial security of its valued customers".

India has Paid UAE in Rupees to Buy Crude Oil

- ★ For the first time, India has paid UAE in rupees to buy crude oil.

- ★ India had signed an agreement with UAE in July 2023 for payment in rupees.
- ★ Indian Oil Corporation has paid to buy 10 lakh barrels of crude oil from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company in Indian Rupees.
- ★ This is a historic step taken by India to promote the local currency globally.
- ★ The move is part of India's broader efforts to diversify oil suppliers, cut transaction costs and establish the rupee as a viable trade settlement currency.
- ★ This initiative comes as part of the Reserve Bank of India's decision on July 2022, to allow importers to make payments in rupees and exporters to receive payments in local currency.

BUSINESS NEWS

SBI to Acquire 20% Stake in SBI Pension Funds

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) announced that it is planning to acquire a 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds, which is held by SBI Capital Markets.
- ★ SBI currently holds a 60% stake in SBI Pension Funds.
- ★ Through this latest transaction, the company is set to increase its stake to 80%, acquiring the additional shares for a sum of ₹229.52 crore.
- ★ The remaining 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds is held by SBI Funds Management.
- ★ As of October 30, 2023, SBI Pension Funds boasts an Asset Under Management (AUM) of ₹3.83 lakh crore and a Profit After Tax (PAT) of ₹35.03 crore.
- ★ SBI aims to finalise the acquisition by 15 December 2023 having already secured approvals from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) for the proposed transaction.

UPI Transaction Value Hits Record ₹17.4 Lakh Crore

- ★ Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transaction value reached a new high level at ₹17.4 lakh crore in November 2023.
- ★ UPI transaction volume declined slightly to 1,124 crore from 1,141 crore in October.
- ★ UPI transactions fell slightly by 1.5% to 1,124 crore from 1,141 crore in October.
- ★ Growth in UPI transactions has remained over 40% for the value of transactions and above 50% for volume in FY24 so far.
- ★ UPI transactions are expected to breach 100 crore transactions per day by FY27, as per a report by PwC India, which projects UPI to dominate the retail digital payments landscape, accounting for 90 per cent of total transaction volumes over the next five years.

SPORTS

Men's National Hockey Championship

- ★ Punjab claimed the Gold medal after their penalty shootout triumph over defending Champions Haryana in the Final.
- ★ 13th Hockey India Senior Men's National Championship 2023 was held at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium, Chennai.
- ★ Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu overcame Karnataka in penalty shootouts to claim the Bronze Medal.
- ★ Punjab defeated Haryana 2-2 (9-8 SO) to clinch the title.
- ★ Punjab started the match strong, scoring the first goal in the 13th minute by Harjeet Singh.

84th Grandmaster of India

- ★ Chennai's Vaishali Rameshbabu has become India's 84th Grandmaster after crossing the coveted 2500 Elo rating during the 2023 IV Ellobregate Open in Barcelona, Spain.
- ★ Vaishali has become the third woman Grandmaster of India after Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli.
- ★ Vaishali achieved this feat by defeating Turkish FM Tamer Tarik Celebes
- ★ She is currently ranked world number 11 in the women's rankings and number two in India with a live rating of 2501.5.

3rd ITF Title by Winning Kalaburagi Open Tennis 2023

- ★ India's Ramkumar Ramanathan won his third ITF title by defeating Austria's David Pichler in straight sets in a one-sided men's singles final at the Kalaburagi Open tennis tournament.
- ★ Ramkumar, who won the ITF Mumbai Open title in early December 2023, defeated Pichler 6-2, 6-1 in just 64 minutes to clinch his third ITF title.
- ★ Ramkumar, who was a member of the Indian Davis Cup team, received a check of US \$ 3200 and 25 ATP points for this victory.

Guwahati Masters Badminton Tournament

- ★ India's Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto won the women's doubles title at the Guwahati Masters 2023 badminton tournament.
- ★ Ashwini Ponnappa and Tanisha Crasto, beat Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun and Yu Chien Hui 21-13, 21-19 to win their second title as a pair.
- ★ Results at the Guwahati Masters 2023 badminton tournament will count towards players' qualifying rankings for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

International Tennis Hall of Fame (ITHF)

- ★ Former tennis players Leander Paes and Vijay Amritraj have been elected to the International Tennis Hall of Fame (ITHF).
- ★ They are the first Asian male tennis players to achieve such a feat and to be included in the International Tennis Hall of Fame.
- ★ They will be formally included in the Tennis Hall of Fame in July 2024.
- ★ Leander Paes has won 18 Grand Slam titles in men's doubles or mixed doubles. Vijay Amritraj is a former player, broadcaster and promoter.
- ★ Vijay Amritraj has been selected in the contributor category along with the player.
- ★ The contributor category also includes broadcasters, commentators and journalists.
- ★ Apart from Amritraj, British journalist Richard Evans has also been included in the contributor category.
- ★ The Contributor category primarily recognises people who have contributed to tennis around the world.

Khelo India Games to be Held in Tamil Nadu

- ★ Khelo India Games will be held in Tamil Nadu in January 2024.
- ★ The State Government said that the games will be held in Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy from 19 January to 31 January, 2024.
- ★ More than 5,500 sports persons and over 1,600 coaches are expected to participate in the event.
- ★ More than 1000 referees and 1200 volunteers will be part of the sporting event in which 27 types of sport will be played.
- ★ For the first time, squash will be included in Khelo India games.

Haryana Won 2023-24 Vijay Hazare Trophy

- ★ Haryana won the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2023 title by defeating Rajasthan by 30 runs.
- ★ Haryana team was successful in winning the Vijay Hazare Trophy for the first time.
- ★ Haryana's Sumit Kumar was chosen player of the match in the final match.
- ★ Vijay Hazare Trophy is known as Ranji One Day Trophy.
- ★ The most runs in the tournament have been scored by Arsalan Khan (508) of the Chandigarh team while the most wickets have been taken by Varun Chakraborty (19) of the Tamil Nadu team.

Asia Cup 2023

- ★ Bangladesh has won the Under-19 Asia Cup 2023 title by defeating United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- ★ The Under-19 Asia Cup 2023 was held in the UAE from 08 December to 17 December.
- ★ In the final match of Under-19 Asia Cup 2023, Bangladesh defeated UAE by 195 runs and captured the title for the first time.

- ★ Bangladesh's Ashikur Rahman Shibli (129 runs off 149 balls) was chosen as the player of the match.
- ★ Ashiqur Rahman Shibli was adjudged Player of the Tournament for scoring 378 runs with the help of two centuries and two half-centuries in 5 innings of the Asia Cup.

Inter State-Inter Zonal Badminton Championship

- ★ In team events of the 75th Inter State-Inter Zonal Badminton Championship 2023, Maharashtra bagged women's and Airport Authority of India (AAI) won the men's title events in Guwahati.
- ★ The national championship organized by Badminton Association of India is being held in Assam after four years.
- ★ The dominant AAI team appeared in both the men's and women's team finals and won the title in the men's category as they outclassed Karnataka 3-0.
- ★ In the women's team event final, Maharashtra dominated AAI 3-0.

Khelo India Partnered with Svayam

- ★ Khelo India, the flagship program of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and Svayam, India's pioneering accessibility organisation, joined hands to ensure transportation and infrastructure are accessible in New Delhi during the Khelo India Para Games.
- ★ Accessible transportation services were provided for more than participating 1400 para-athletes.
- ★ More than 300 volunteers, and officials associated with the Games were sensitised at the beginning of this 8-day-long event.
- ★ Accessible buses and minivans were kept ready for all the Para-Athletes, Para-Officials, and Para-Coaches from their arrival in the city to their departure, including from railway stations, bus stations, and the airport.

Khelo India Para Games conclude in New Delhi

- ★ Khelo India Para Games concluded in New Delhi.
- ★ This was the first edition of Khelo India Para Games.
- ★ Haryana secured the top position in this game.
- ★ Haryana won 105 medals including 40 gold, 49 silver, and 26 bronze medals.
- ★ Uttar Pradesh secured second position by winning 62 medals including 25 gold, 23 silver and 14 bronze medals.
- ★ Tamil Nadu secured third position by winning 20 gold, 8 silver and 14 bronze medals.
- ★ The winners were awarded by Union Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur.

National Sports Awards 2023

- ★ The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2023 on 20 December 2023.

- ★ The winners for the National Sports Awards 2023 were selected by the selection committee headed by retired Supreme Court judge Justice A.M. Khanwilkar.
- ★ Badminton players Chirag C Shetty and Satwik Sai Raj Rankireddy will be honoured with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award.
- ★ Twenty-six sportspersons will receive the Arjuna Awards.
- ★ Golf coach Jaskirat Singh Grewal, Kabaddi coach Bhaskaran E and Table Tennis player Jayanta Kumar Pushilal will be honoured with the Dronacharya Award in the lifetime category.
- ★ Dhyan Chand Award for Lifetime Achievement in Sports and Games, will be given to Manjusha Kanwar for Badminton, Vineet Kumar Sharma for Hockey and Kavitha Selvaraj for Kabaddi.
- ★ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy 2023 will be presented to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.

President of Wrestling Federation of India

- ★ Sanjay Singh has been elected as the new President of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).
- ★ He was elected after the results of election of office bearers, in which he got 40 votes.
- ★ Sanjay Singh is the Vice President of the Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Association and previously served on the WFI's executive council.
- ★ He has also been the national federation's Joint Secretary since 2019.

Chennai Grand Masters 2023

- ★ Indian chess player Dommaraju Gukesh won the Chennai Grand Masters 2023 tournament.
- ★ Gukesh won the title in this tournament by holding compatriot Pantala Harikrishna to a draw.
- ★ Arjun Erigaisi secured the second position in this tournament.
- ★ Both Arjun and Gukesh finished the tournament with 4.5 points out of 7.
- ★ Pantala Harikrishna stood third with 4 points.

Wrestling Player Sakshi Malik Announced Her Retirement

- ★ Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik announced her retirement from wrestling in New Delhi.
- ★ Sakshi Malik last participated in the Commonwealth Games in 2022 in Birmingham.
- ★ The Indian wrestler won the gold medal in the women's 62 kg category but has not participated in international events since then.
- ★ At the age of just 17, she won a silver medal in the 59 kg freestyle at the 2009 Asian Junior World Championships, followed by a bronze medal at the 2010 World Junior Championships.
- ★ She won a bronze medal at the 2013 Commonwealth Championships.
- ★ Sakshi Malik played her first Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2013 and won a silver medal in the 58 kg final.

First Indian to Join the International Table Tennis Federation

- ★ Vita Dani has become the first Indian to join the International Table Tennis Federation in December 2023.
- ★ Vita Dani is an entrepreneur involved in sports philanthropy.
- ★ Vita Dani has become the first Indian to join the International Table Tennis Federation as a steering committee member.
- ★ This foundation was established by ITTF in 2018 to attract more people towards the sport.
- ★ Vita and his organization (Dani Foundation) have played a big role in shaping the upward trajectory of Indian table tennis.
- ★ She is also the co-owner of Chennaiyin Football Club, which is involved in the Indian Super League.
- ★ The International Table Tennis Federation was established in the year 1926.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

World Digital Competitiveness Ranking-2023

- ★ India has been ranked 49th out of 64 economies in the World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WDCR) released by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD).
- ★ According to IMD's study, India has made significant in terms of cybersecurity knowledge but lacks on fronts like technology and future preparedness.
- ★ The United States has topped in the report.
- ★ The Netherlands took second place in the ranking, while Singapore, the leader in the technology factor, took third place.
- ★ The WDCR is a comprehensive assessment that provides insight into how nations are navigating the digital landscape amid the rise of artificial intelligence (AI).
- ★ The ranking, prepared by the IMD World Competitiveness Centre, measures the capacity and readiness of all 64 countries to adopt and explore digital technologies as a key driver for economic transformation in business, government and broader society.

The Richest Person in the World by Bloomberg Billionaires Index

- ★ The Bloomberg Billionaires Index is a daily ranking of the world's richest people.
- ★ South African-born Elon Musk is the new richest person in the world, having recently surpassed United States Jeff Bezos
- ★ They are followed by Frances Bernard Arnault, who is in the 3rd position.
- ★ The rest of the Top 10, in order, are: Bill Gates, Larry Ellison, Steve Ballmer, Warren Buffet, Larry Page, Mark Zuckerberg, and Sergey Brin.
- ★ Gautam Adani becomes 16th richest globally as Adani Group and his wealth tops \$70 billion.

NCRB Report 2022

- ★ According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau, Delhi has recorded the highest number of cases of crimes against women at 14,158 among the 19 metropolitan cities of India in 2022.
- ★ With an average three rapes a day, Delhi is still among the most unsafe metropolitan city for women in the country, according to data shared by the National Crime Records.
- ★ This figure was a slight increase from the 13,982 crimes against women reported in 2021.
- ★ In criminal cases, Uttar Pradesh is first in the entire country, Maharashtra is second, while Madhya Pradesh is third.
- ★ Delhi tops the list of recorded crime cases among cities, followed by Mumbai and Bengaluru.
- ★ However, Jaipur was the most unsafe city in India, with a rate of 239.3 crimes against women. The Rajasthan capital reported 3,479 crimes against women.

S&P Global Study: LIC Ranks as the Fourth-Largest Insurer

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the fourth largest insurer in the world, according to a ranking based on life and accident & health reserves of companies in 2022 by S&P Global Market Intelligence.
- ★ LIC follows Allianz SE, China Life Insurance Company, and Nippon Life Insurance Company in global rankings.
- ★ According to the report, LIC's reserves stood at \$503.7 billion.
- ★ The S&P list of the top 50 global life insurance companies was dominated by European firms, taking 21 spots.
- ★ On an individual country basis, the US has the highest number of life insurers on the list, with 8 companies headquartered in the region, followed by the United Kingdom (UK) with 7 companies.
- ★ The top 50 companies were ranked on their life and accident and health reserves, one of the key financial strengths of a life insurer.

Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2024

- ★ The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2024 was released on the sidelines of the ongoing COP28 in Dubai.
- ★ India ranked 7th in this year's Climate Change Performance Index, up one spot from the previous CCPI Index.
- ★ CCPI is a scoring system that measures the climate protection performance of countries. It was first published in 2005.
- ★ It is designed to improve transparency in international climate politics.
- ★ The CCPI assesses each country's performance in four categories:
 - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions (40%)
 - Renewable Energy (20%)
 - Energy Use (20%)

- Climate Policy (20%)
- ★ Germanwatch, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network publish the index annually.
- ★ India was ranked 9th in GHG Emissions and 10th in Energy Use among assessed countries.
- ★ In Climate Policy, India was ranked 10.
- ★ In Renewable Energy, India is ranked 37.

Quality of Living Index 2023

- ★ Quality of Living Index 2023 was released by Mercer.
- ★ This index evaluates the quality of life for employees working abroad. It has taken data from more than 500 cities all over the world.
- ★ Quality of Living Index is based on different factors like Water Potability, Waste Removal, Sewage, Air Pollution, Water availability, Traffic Congestion.
- ★ For the 6th time, Hyderabad has the best 'quality of living' in India.
- ★ Hyderabad attained the 153rd spot in the Quality of Living Index 2023. Pune has the second-best 'quality of living' in India. It has secured the 154th position in Mercer's Quality of Living City Index.
- ★ Bengaluru (156th) Chennai is the fourth Indian city in the list at 161 spot followed by Mumbai at 164. Kolkata (170) and New Delhi (172).
- ★ Vienna (Austria), Zurich (Switzerland) and Auckland (New Zealand) Copenhagen (Denmark) Geneva (Switzerland) are the top five cities in the Quality of Living Index 2023.

World Bank's Global Remittance Charts

- ★ According to the World Bank's migration and development report, India has topped the migrants in 2023 in terms of receipts.
- ★ In 2023, overseas Indians sent an estimated \$ 125 billion to India.
- ★ The World Bank's latest migration and development report reflects the global landscape of transmission flow.
- ★ It indicates an increase of 3.8% in low and medium-income countries (LMICs) to reach US \$ 669 billion in 2023.
- ★ The report projects a decline in migrants' real income in 2024 due to global inflation and low growth prospects.

Food Adulteration Cases: NCRB Report

- ★ According to the data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Hyderabad is in first position in India regarding food adulteration cases.
- ★ In cases of food adulteration, Andhra Pradesh stood next to Telangana.
- ★ The seized items include adulterated finger garlic paste, ice creams, and tea powder.

- ★ A total of 291 cases of food adulteration were reported across 19 major cities in India in 2021.
- ★ Food adulteration is a critical concern for the health of the Public.
- ★ The contaminated food items can cause severe health problems, including foodborne illnesses, and allergies.
- ★ The NCRB data shows that there is an urgent need to take strict measures to combat food adulteration.

QS World University Rankings

- ★ Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies (MRIIRS) has been awarded an overall QS 4-star rating by the QS World University Rankings for the year 2023.
- ★ The QS Star Rating Award was given at the Education Promotion Society for India (EPSI) conference held in Bangalore.
- ★ Dr. Prashant Bhalla, President, MRIIRS, received the QS Star Rating Award at the EPSI Conference on 'Making Indian Higher Education Globally Competitive' in Bangalore.
- ★ As a long-term member of EPSI, Prashant Bhalla has served as its Treasurer.
- ★ For Prashant Bhalla's unique contribution to the education industry, he was given the honourable title of Senior Vice President of the Society.
- ★ The overall 4-star rating shows that MRIIRS has already achieved international recognition and standards.

The 'QS Sustainability Ranking' 2024

- ★ Delhi University (DU) has been ranked 220th globally in the QS Sustainability Rankings 2024 announced in December 2023.
- ★ In this ranking, DU has achieved this position leaving all the IITs of the country behind.
- ★ Thus, DU is the top Indian university in the QS Sustainability Ranking 2024.
- ★ The QS Sustainability Rankings 2024 include 1,397 institutions from 95 countries.
- ★ Delhi University has scored 73.4 percent out of 100 in the ranking.
- ★ The QS Sustainability Ranking evaluates institutions based on nine parameters.
- ★ According to the ranking, the University of Toronto in Canada ranks first in the list.

India Skills Report 2024

- ★ As per the India Skills Report 2024, Kerala is the most preferred State to work in India.
- ★ Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram have emerged as premier employment destinations for the youth in the country.
- ★ According to this report, in urban areas, both men and women prefer to work regardless of their age.
- ★ This report has been published by talent assessment agency Wheebox in collaboration with AICTE, CII, AIU, Google, and Tagged.

- ★ 88 lakh youth have been surveyed through a National Employability Test conducted nationwide.
- ★ This report shows that employability in India has improved and 51.25% of the youths have been found employable with the required skills.
- ★ In overall employability among the 18-21 age group, Kerala secured second position.
- ★ Thiruvananthapuram leads in providing computer skills.

India to be World's Top Economic Power by Century-End

- ★ The Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) announced in its recent report that India will become the largest economic superpower by the end of the 21st century.
- ★ CEBR in the report published named 'World Economic League Table Report' that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be 90 percent larger than China's and 30 percent larger than America's.
- ★ India will maintain a strong average growth of 6.5 percent from 2024 to 2028.
- ★ By 2032, it will become the world's third-largest economy, leaving behind Japan and Germany.
- ★ According to its demographic estimates and projections, after 2080, India will become the world's largest economic superpower, leaving behind China and America.
- ★ India recorded strong GDP growth of 7.2 percent in 2022-23.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award

- ★ Renowned Hollywood actor and producer Michael Douglas was honoured with the prestigious Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Cinema at the 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa.
- ★ Douglas said that Cinema has the power to unite and transform the people with cross cultural artistic expressions.
- ★ The award was conferred during the festival's closing ceremony by Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana and Pramod Sawant, Chief Minister of Goa.

National Metallurgist Awards

- ★ The National Metallurgist Award was announced by the Union Steel Ministry.
 - Dr Kamachi Mudali Uthandi – Lifetime Achievement Award
 - Dr Debashish Bhattacharjee – National Metallurgist Award
 - Dr Rameshwar Sah – Research and Development in Iron and Steel Sector
 - Dr Niloy Kundu – Young Metallurgist (Environment) Award
 - Agilan Muthumanickam – Award Young Metallurgist (Metal Science) Award
- ★ India's production and consumption of steel during April-October 2023 has grown by 15% to about 82 million tonnes and 75.8 million tonnes respectively.

- ★ India has achieved the status of 2nd largest steel producer globally.

PR Icon Suganthy Sundararaj Receives PRSI National Award

- ★ Suganthy Sundararaj received the PRSI National Award for Outstanding Contributions to Healthcare Communications.
- ★ She received the honour for Outstanding Contributions to the Public Relations Society of India and the public relations industry.
- ★ Suganthy Sundararaj received the Award at the International Public Relations Festival in New Delhi.
- ★ This event has brought together professionals and young minds from the PR space to facilitate knowledge exchange.
- ★ The Festival is being organized around the theme 'G20: Showcasing Indian Values and The Emerging India to the World: Opportunities for Public Relations'.
- ★ For more than 40 years, Suganthy Sundararaj executed PR mandate for Apollo Hospitals.
- ★ She launched many initiatives during her career to build relationships with the media.

SKOCH Award 2023

- ★ Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) under the Ministry of Power, has been honored with the prestigious SKOCH Gold Award 2023.
- ★ The accolade was bestowed upon PGCIL for its groundbreaking Pugalur Thrissur 2000 MW Voltage Source Converter High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) System.
- ★ The SKOCH Gold Award 2023 acknowledges the outstanding contributions and technological advancements made by PGCIL in the realm of power transmission and distribution.
- ★ The award was given for the corporation's commitment to innovation, reliability and sustainable energy solutions.

UNHR Award- Nansen Award

- ★ Abdullahi Mire of somalia has been named the winner of the UNHRC's prestigious Nansen Award.
- ★ Abdullahi Mire has received the award for giving 1,00,000 books to the hands of children in Kenya's crowded Dadaab refugee camps.
- ★ Abdullahi Mire is a journalist and former refugee from Somalia.
- ★ Abdullahi Mire set up the Refugee Youth Education Hub to raise awareness about the refugees' educational needs and promote book donations.
- ★ This organization has distributed more than 1 lakh books in the camps and has opened three libraries.
- ★ This award honours individuals, groups and organizations who protect refugees as well as internally displaced and stateless people.

WISE Prize for Education

- ★ The prestigious WISE Award was honoured to Safina Hussain at the WISE 11 Summit (World Innovation Summit for Education).
- ★ The WISE Prize for Education is the first global award of its kind that honours an individual for outstanding contributions to education.
- ★ Working in partnership with government and communities, Educate Girls reintegrates them into the formal education system.
- ★ Educate Girls has mobilized over 14 lakh girls to enroll and provided remedial education to over 19 lakh students since its inception through this comprehensive approach in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.
- ★ The WISE prize was established in 2009 by the Qatar Foundation.

Asian Awards

- ★ Riyadh, (IANS) Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games gold medallist Asila Mirzayorova from Uzbekistan and the winner of China's historic first cross-country skiing gold medal, Peng Zheng were announced as best female and best male athlete at the fourth edition of Asian Awards at an awards ceremony during the Asian Paralympic Committee's Conference and General Assembly.
- ★ India's Sheetal Devi, the 'armless archer' who went viral after her performances in Hangzhou picked up the best youth athlete.
- ★ Award winners were announced in six categories – Best Male Athlete, Best Female Athlete, Best Youth Athlete, Best Team Performance, Best Photography and Exemplary Asian Official.
- ★ The best team performance went to R. Iran's Men's Wheelchair Basketball Team.
- ★ The best photography award went to Masamine Kawaguchi from Japan for his images from Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympic Games which captured the dynamism, skill, and speed of the downhill skiers.
- ★ The final award for exemplary Asian official went to Young-ju Lee from the Republic of Korea who is the coach of the Korean Para Cycling Team.

TAI Tunnelling Awards 2023

- ★ National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) bagged the award in "Environmental Initiatives of Tunnelling" category at the 4th edition of the prestigious TAI Tunnelling Awards 2023, organised by the Tunnelling Association of India.
- ★ These awards celebrate the most ambitious underground projects in India as well as the latest innovations, techniques, and methods in tunnelling.
- ★ Nimisha Singh, Executive Engineer (Civil), NCRTC, was also awarded with the "Young Tunneller of the Year" award.
- ★ Ms. Singh has been a crucial part of NCRTC's tunnelling team, helped overcome the challenges encountered during the tunnelling process, and has shown commitment to use new methods to achieve project targets.

Jimmy George Award

- ★ Kerala-born long jumper Murali Sreeshankar will receive the Jimmy George Award for the best sports person from the state.
- ★ The Indian athlete is the recipient of the 35th Jimmy George Foundation Award, courtesy of his excellent performance at the Asian Games 2023.
- ★ Sreeshankar will receive a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a plaque.
- ★ The Indian long jumper was picked up as the best sports person from Kerala by the award committee.
- ★ The 24-year-old athlete will receive the Jimmy George Award at the Jimmy George Sports Academy in Kannur.

ISSA Vision Zero 2023 Award

- ★ The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) bagged the "International Social Security Association's ISSA Vision Zero 2023" Award at the 23rd World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Sydney, Australia.
- ★ The International Social Security Association is the principal international institution bringing together social security agencies and organisations of the world.
- ★ It aims to promote dynamic social security as the social dimension in a globalising world by supporting excellence in social security administration.
- ★ It was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization.

Sports Business Leader of the Year Award

- ★ Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Jay Shah has been awarded the 'Sports Business Leader of the Year' 2023 at the CCI Sports Business Awards.
- ★ Jay Shah is the first person in the Indian sports administration to receive this honour. Jay Shah is currently the President of the Asian Cricket Council.
- ★ Jay Shah played an important role in the establishment of Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.
- ★ Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) has been awarded the first CII Sports Business Award, 2023.
- ★ KIIT was awarded in the "Best Sports Facility" category for creating top class sports facilities in India.
- ★ Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) clinches Sports Franchise of the Year award.
- ★ Tamil Nadu was honoured as the top state for sports promotion.

Time's 'Person of the Year'

- ★ Taylor Swift the pop superstar was named Time magazine's 2023 "Person of the Year", beating out Barbie and King Charles III.

- ★ Time announced that Swift was selected because she found a way to give people around the world hope in some seriously dark times.
- ★ Taylor Swift was named TIME's 2023 Person of the Year —making her the first woman to appear twice on a Person of the Year cover since the franchise began in 1927.
- ★ Swift was also named Person of the Year in 2017, when she was recognized as one of the Silence Breakers who inspired women to speak out about sexual misconduct.
- ★ She's the first person to be selected because of her achievement in the arts, and is only the fourth individual selection who was born in the last 50 years.
- ★ Sam Altman was named as the CEO of the Year 2023.
- ★ Alex Newell was named BREAKTHROUGH of the Year 2023.

'Global Anti-Corruption Champion' By US

- ★ Nikhil Dey was honored with the 'International Anti-Corruption Champion' award by the United States of America in the first week of December 2023.
- ★ The United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs has acknowledged Nikhil Dey's work against social movements and corruption in government welfare schemes in India.
- ★ Nikhil Dey is an RTI activist from Rajasthan.
- ★ Nikhil Dey is the co-founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in India.
- ★ Nikhil works for Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, Right to Information and Employment Campaign and National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI).

Most Popular Global Leaders

- ★ Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has once again topped the list of the world's most popular leaders.
- ★ PM Modi is named the most liked leader globally with a 76% approval rating in a survey conducted by the US firm 'Morning Consult'.
- ★ The data collected by this research firm is based on a survey of a total of 22 global leaders.
- ★ PM Modi has consistently been on top in this survey, his approval rating has mostly remained above 70.
- ★ This survey was conducted after the conclusion of the G-20 Summit (New Delhi), in which PM Modi got the highest rating.
- ★ 'Morning Consult' is an American consultancy firm.
- ★ It surveys thousands of people around the world every day, combining that specialised, forward-looking survey data with analytical applications to provide a distinct, competitive advantage to users.

Brandon Hall Group's Excellence in Technology Awards

- ★ NTPC, India's largest integrated power company, has been declared as the winner at the Brandon Hall Group's Excellence in Technology Awards 2023 in an online broadcast held.

- ★ NTPC stands out as the only PSU in India to secure dual accolades in the Technology Awards category.
- ★ The company received the coveted silver awards in two distinct categories: “Best Advance in Corporate Wellbeing Technology” and “Best Advance in Augmented and Virtual Reality”.
- ★ This recognition underscores NTPC’s commitment to innovation and technological excellence, placing it at the forefront of advancements in corporate wellbeing and immersive technologies.
- ★ The Silver Award in the “Best Advance in Corporate Wellbeing Technology” Category was won by NTPC for its efforts in leveraging Technology to design an Individual-Centric Health Care Ecosystem.
- ★ The Silver Award in the “Best Advance in Augmented and Virtual Reality” Category was won by NTPC for being a leader in adapting innovative technologies.

World Athletics Award 2023

- ★ Noah Lyles and Faith Kipyegon were named Track Athletes of the Year by World Athletics.
- ★ Noah Lyles of America was declared the best male track athlete at a ceremony held in Monaco.
- ★ Kenya’s Faith Kipyegon was declared the best female track athlete.
- ★ American athlete Noah Lyles won three gold medals at the World Athletics Championships in 2023.
- ★ Kenyan athlete Faith Kipyegon has won two gold medals.

Vyas Samman Award

- ★ Pushpa Bharati from Moradabad of Uttar Pradesh 2016 memoir ‘Yaadein, Yaadein aur Yaadein’ has been selected for the 33rd Vyas Samman.
- ★ The award is presented to an outstanding Hindi literary work by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years.
- ★ A selection committee headed by eminent litterateur Prof Ramji Tiwari picked Bharati’s Yaadein, Yaadein aur Yaadein for the Vyas Samman award.
- ★ The award carries a cash prize of ₹4 lakh, a citation and a plaque.
- ★ The Vyas Samman Award was instituted in 1991. It is given by the KK Birla Foundation.

Italy’s Highest Civilian Honour

- ★ Kabir Bedi has been honoured with the highest civilian honour of Italy.
- ★ He was awarded the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (Merito della Repubblica Italiana).
- ★ Niccolo Fabi gave a unique live musical performance following the occasion in Mumbai.
- ★ Order of Merit is Italy’s highest honour.
- ★ The scroll of honour was signed by President Mattarella and counter-signed by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, 2023

- ★ Renowned pianist Daniel Barenboim and peace activist Ali Abu Awwad have been announced to be jointly awarded the Indira Gandhi Award 2023.
- ★ Both of them were selected for their efforts towards a non-violent solution to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.
- ★ More than 17,000 people have lost their lives so far in the Israel-Hamas conflict.
- ★ Barenboim and Awwad have been selected by an international jury headed by former Chief Justice of India TS Thakur, according to the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.
- ★ Barenboim and Awwad have played a major role in resolving political and humanitarian conflicts and establishing peaceful public co-operation through music and peace dialogue.

Federal Bank Named “Bank of the Year India”

- ★ Federal Bank, a leading financial institution, has been recognised as “Bank of the Year (India)” by Financial Times owned The Banker, one of the only three global awards that considers the work of banks spanning 120 countries.
- ★ The award is given in recognition of Bank’s unwavering commitment to innovation, customer-centric services, and its outstanding contributions to the banking industry over the past year.
- ★ One of the standout initiatives that garnered attention was the introduction of the Digital Personal Loan by Federal Bank.
- ★ Recognizing the challenges faced by customers in rural areas in accessing banking services, Federal Bank launched the ‘Bank on the Go’ initiative.
- ★ This groundbreaking initiative involves a mobile vehicle equipped with banking kiosks that travel to different locations.
- ★ Federal Bank has also embraced cutting-edge technology to enhance customer support, introducing “Feddy”, an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot.

Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award

- ★ Veteran lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar will be honoured with the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival.
- ★ The award ceremony will take place at Rukmini Auditorium in the MGM University campus.
- ★ The Padmapani Award selection committee comprises Girish Kasarvall, Ashok Vajpeyi, Latika Padgaonkar, Ashok Rane and Chandrakant Kulkarni.
- ★ Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival is to showcase the best of film produced recently and in the past.
- ★ It is organized by Marathwada Art Culture and Film Foundation.
- ★ It will be organized from 03 January to 07 January, 2024.
- ★ It is a platform to encourage aspiring filmmakers, technicians, artists and young film enthusiasts.

Indian Armed Forces Officers Awarded 'Golden Owl'

- ★ Indian Armed Forces officers have been awarded the 'Golden Owl' for their outstanding performance.
- ★ The officers were undergoing the Command and Staff Course at the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in Sri Lanka.
- ★ The DSCSC course is designed to prepare senior officers for leadership roles in joint operations and higher command.
- ★ The award was given to Wing Commander Sumeet Mahajan, Major Rohit and Lieutenant Commander Sunny Sharma by Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe.
- ★ The "Golden Owl" award admires strategic thinking, analytical skills and potential for future leadership.

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards 2023

- ★ The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Prize for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2023 has been announced, with six winners from India.
- ★ Award of Excellence: Rambagh Gate in Amritsar
- ★ Award of Distinction: Karnikara Mandapam at Kunnamangalam Bhagavathi Temple, Kerala.
- ★ Award of Merit: Church of the Epiphany in Gurugram, Haryana, David Sassoon Library and Reading Room in Mumbai, Bikaner House in New Delhi.
- ★ Peepal Haveli in Punjab and Sikami Chhen in Kathmandu were awarded 'Special Recognition for Sustainable Development' for their transformative heritage practices.
- ★ Kempegowda International Airport wins UNESCO special award
- ★ The award for new design in heritage contexts was awarded to the Erlitou Site Museum of the Xia Capital in Luoyang, China.

Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023

- ★ Sahitya Akademi Awards for the year 2023 were announced.
- ★ Sahitya Akademi Award is given for writing in 24 languages.
- ★ Sanjeev of Hindi language has been honored with the Sahitya Akademi Award.
- ★ Sanjeev has been given this award for 'Mujhe Pehchano'.
- ★ Neelam Sharan Gaur's novel 'Requiem in Raaga Janaki' has been adapted for the English language.
- ★ Sadiqa Nawab Sahar's novel 'Rajdev Ki Amrai' was given the Sahitya Akademi Award in Urdu language.
- ★ Sahitya Akademi Award is a literary honor established in the year 1954.
- ★ Apart from the 22 languages included in the Constitution of India, this award is also given in English and Rajasthani.

UAE's Great Arab Minds Award in Arts and Literature

- ★ Professor Waciny Laredj has won the United Arab Emirates (UAE) 'Great Arab Minds Award' (GAM) in the field of literature and arts.
- ★ The Great Arab Minds Award is also known as the 'Arab Nobel'.
- ★ These fields are natural sciences, engineering and technology, literature and arts, architecture and design, economics and medicine.
- ★ The awards are given to individuals who have made significant contributions in these fields for their impact on Arab society and human progress.
- ★ This award is given to those individuals who have inspired meaningful and culturally, socially and intellectually impactful ideas.
- ★ Lebanese scientist Niveen Khashab won the GAM Award in Natural Sciences.
- ★ Fadil Adib of Lebanon won the GAM Award in Engineering Technology.
- ★ Saudi Dr. Hani Najm won the GAM Medical Awards.

Best Male and Best Female Athlete Awards

- ★ Javelin thrower Sumit Antil and archer Sheetal Devi won the prestigious Best Male and Best Female Athlete awards at the first Divyang Sports Awards.
- ★ The 1st Divyang Sports Awards has been instituted for the first time in the country exclusively for Divyang athletes, with an aim to annually celebrate the outstanding achievements of the Divyang sporting community.
- ★ India's first Paralympic gold medalist and freestyle swimmer Muralikant Petkar, who won gold at the 1972 Paralympics, was also honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- ★ Renowned para-badminton coach Gaurav Khanna, won the best coach award.
- ★ Gaurav Khanna Excellia Badminton Academy also won the Best Academy Award.
- ★ The Indian Blind Chess team won the Major Dhyan Chand Team of the Year Award.

Tagore Literary Prize

- ★ Sukrita Paul Kumar has won the sixth edition of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for her book, 'Salt and Pepper: Selected Poems'.
- ★ She received USD 5,000, a Tagore statue and a certificate for contribution to literature at the award ceremony.
- ★ The award was started in 2018 by US-based publisher Peter Bundalo.
- ★ The award is a platform for world peace, literature, art, education and human rights.
- ★ It also recognises works towards human rights and world peace with the Social Achievement Prize.
- ★ Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee was awarded the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for social achievement for his contributions to societal welfare.

Golden Bengal Tiger Award

- ★ Israeli Film 'Children of Nobody' Wins Golden Bengal Tiger Award at the 29th Kolkata International Film Festival.
- ★ Inspired by a true story, this compassionate Israeli drama sheds light on the often unnoticed and neglected individuals on the periphery of society.
- ★ Golden Royal Bengal Tiger Award for Best Film, includes a record cash prize of ₹51 lakh.
- ★ 'Golden Bengal Tiger Award' is the biggest film award of this festival.
- ★ The Best Director award was presented to Venezuelan Director Carlos Daniel Malave.
- ★ He was given this award for directing the film 'One Way'.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

President of Maldives

- ★ Mohamed Muizzu took the oath as the 8th President of the Republic of Maldives in a ceremony held at the Republic Square in the capital, Male.
- ★ Vice President Hussain Mohamed Latheef also took the oath of office during the ceremony, with the oath administered by Chief Justice of the Maldives, Ahmed Muthasim Adnan.
- ★ Muizzu had defeated outgoing President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the elections.
- ★ Union Minister for Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju attended the oath-taking ceremony.

Additional Independent Director of HDFC Bank

- ★ The Board of Directors of HDFC Bank has approved the appointment of Harsh Kumar Bhanwala as an Additional Independent Director of the Bank for 3 years from January 2024.
- ★ The Board has also appointed V Srinivasa Rangan as Executive Director (Whole-time Director) for 3 years, effective from November 2023.
- ★ Harsh Kumar Bhanwala served as the Executive Chairman of Capital India Finance, a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).
- ★ Prior to that role, he held the position of Chairman at the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) from 2013 to 2020.
- ★ V Srinivasa Rangan, the newly appointed Executive Director, previously served as the Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer of the erstwhile Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd.

Chairman of Fino Payments Bank

- ★ Mumbai-based Fino Payments Bank has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the appointment of former Managing Director of Xerox India and Walt Disney India, Rajat Kumar Jain, as its part-time Chairman.

- ★ Rajat Kumar Jain, an alumnus of IIT Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad, is an accomplished corporate executive turned entrepreneur, business mentor/angel investor and serves as a non-Executive Director on various Boards including group companies of Aditya Birla and Mahindra conglomerates.
- ★ Jain brings over three decades of strategic leadership experience across the Consumer, Telecom, Media, and Technology sectors.

Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh

- ★ Senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officer Veera Rana, from the 1988 batch, has been appointed the Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh (MP) as an additional charge.
- ★ Veera Rana's appointment marks the 2nd time a woman officer has taken on the role of Chief Secretary in Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ She has held the portfolios of Chief Electoral Officer, Sports and Youth Welfare, Academy of Administration and Department of Cottage and Village Industries.
- ★ She is currently the chairperson of the Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education (MPBSE) and holds the additional charge of Agriculture Production Commissioner.
- ★ The first woman to hold this position was Nirmala Buch, a 1960 batch officer, during the BJP government in 1991.

First Woman Director General of ICFRE

- ★ Kanchan Devi, a 1991 batch Indian Forest Service Officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been appointed Director General (DG) of the Indian Council of Forestry Research Education (ICFRE).
- ★ Kanchan is the first woman officer to hold this post of ICFRE under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- ★ Kanchan Devi has over 30 years of experience working in various areas of forestry including forest management, forest administration, education, human resource development and research and extension in the State Government of Madhya Pradesh and Government of India.
- ★ She has also served as a faculty member at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun.

IDFC Board of Directors

- ★ US President Joe Biden has nominated Indian-origin Deven Parekh to the board of directors of the International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC).
- ★ IDFC partners with the private sector to provide financing to address challenges facing developing countries.
- ★ The International Development Finance Corporation Board of Directors consists of four members on the recommendation of the US President.
- ★ Deven Parekh has been appointed to this post on the recommendation of the US Senate.
- ★ Deven Parekh is currently Managing Director at Insight Partners, a New York-based growth equity investment fund.

New Executive Director of IBBI

- ★ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has appointed Jitesh John as the new Executive Director.
- ★ John has a postgraduate degree in Economics and has completed 21 years in Central Government in various capacities.
- ★ He has experience working in financial, Energy, Infrastructure and Small and Medium Enterprises sectors.
- ★ John, a 2001 batch Indian Economic Service Officer, previously served as an Economic Advisor in the Ministry of Power.
- ★ The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has given its approval to appoint Sandip Garg as a Whole Time Member of IBBI.
- ★ Garg had also served as a member of the Indian Revenue Service from 1992 for over 31 years in various capacities in the income tax department and Central Board of Direct Taxes.

Chairman of the India Debt Resolution Co Ltd (IDRCL)

- ★ Former KPMG managing partner Narayan Seshadri will take over as Chairman of the India Debt Resolution Co Ltd (IDRCL), the agent to the government-backed bad bank.
- ★ Seshadri, a chartered accountant, is a financial sector veteran with experience in buying and turning around distressed companies.
- ★ He is currently an independent Director in the company and will take over immediately.
- ★ The IDRCL Chairman position became vacant after Diwakar Gupta resigned earlier this week to take up a post at parent National Asset Reconstruction Co Ltd (NARCL).

Independent Director of HUL

- ★ Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) has appointed Tarun Bajaj as an independent Director on its board, for a period of 5 years.
- ★ Bajaj belongs to the Indian Administrative Service, 1988 batch, Haryana Cadre.
- ★ He was the Revenue Secretary, Government of India before superannuating in November 2022.
- ★ He also contributed towards a significant increase in revenue collections under GST and Income Tax.
- ★ Before joining the Union Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs, Bajaj worked as Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister from April 2015 to 2020.

Chief Minister of Telangana

- ★ In Telangana, Congress leader Revanth Reddy took oath as Chief Minister along with 11 ministers on 07 December 2023.
- ★ Telangana Governor Tamilisai Sundarajan administered the oath of office and secrecy to Revanth Reddy. Bhatti Vikramark was made the Deputy Chief Minister.

- ★ Revanth Reddy replaced Chandrashekhara Rao (KCR) of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) as the third Chief Minister of Telangana.
- ★ Voting was held for a total of 119 assembly seats in Telangana on November 30. In this, Congress had got 64 seats.

Chief Minister of Mizoram

- ★ Lalduhoma will take oath as the 6th Chief Minister (CM) of Mizoram.
- ★ Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati will administer the oath to Mr Lalduhoma.
- ★ During the ceremony, several other ZPM leaders also took oath as ministers.
- ★ Lalrinpuii is the lone woman minister in the 12-member council of ministry.
- ★ 7 of the 12 ministers are first time winners.
- ★ Lalduhoma is the leader of the Zoram Nationalist Party, a regional political party in Mizoram.
- ★ His party secured a significant victory, winning 27 out of 40 seats in the Assembly.

Chairman of the BBC

- ★ Dr Samir Shah, an India-born media executive with over 40 years of experience in TV production and journalism, has been named as the United Kingdom (UK) government's preferred candidate to take over as the new BBC Chairman.
- ★ Dr Shah will replace Richard Sharp, who was forced to resign after his communication with former Prime Minister Boris Johnson came under scrutiny.
- ★ With a career spanning more than 40 years in TV production and journalism, Dr Shah has a wealth of experience to bring to the position of BBC Chair.
- ★ He was previously the head of current affairs and political programmes at the BBC.
- ★ Dr Samir Shah has served as a non-Executive Director of the BBC between 2007 and 2010.

Chairman of the World Radiocommunication Conference

- ★ The United Arab Emirates's (UAE) Mohammed Al Ramsi appointed as the Chairman of the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) 2023.
- ★ This conference started from 20th November and will continue till 15th December in Dubai, UAE.
- ★ This year, more than 4,000 government officials and 900 international organisations from 193 countries are attending the conference.
- ★ This decision underscores the prominent global position of the UAE, particularly in the ICT sector, a pivotal force driving development across diverse domains.
- ★ The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) organises the World Radiocommunication Conference every three to four years.
- ★ The objective of organizing the conference is to review the global use of radio frequency spectrum, geostationary satellites, and non-geostationary satellites in orbit.

Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

- ★ Bharatiya Janata Party leader Vishnu Deo Sai will take oath as the new Chhattisgarh Chief Minister on December 13, 2023 in Raipur.
- ★ He will be the 4th Chief Minister of the state and the 1st tribal Chief Minister.
- ★ Sai hails from the influential Sahu (Teli) community which has a sizable presence in Durg, Raipur and Bilaspur divisions.
- ★ The BJP won 54 seats in the 90-member Assembly in the recently held polls.
- ★ Vishnu Deo Sai served as State President of Bharatiya Janata Party for Chhattisgarh from 2020 until 2022.
- ★ He was Union Minister of State for Steel in the First Modi ministry.

Prime Minister of Poland

- ★ Poland's parliament 'Sejm' has elected Donald Tusk as its new Prime Minister.
- ★ The current Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, lost the vote of confidence in the parliament.
- ★ Tusk will present his Cabinet to parliament and outline his governance programme.
- ★ After this, members of the Polish Parliament will place their vote of confidence on it.
- ★ The new government led by Donald Tusk will be sworn in by Polish President Andrzej Duda.

Part-Time Member of PFRDA

- ★ The Centre has appointed Parama Sen, Additional Secretary, Department of Expenditure in the Finance Ministry, as a part-time member of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).
- ★ Sen, a 1994 batch Indian Audit and Accounts Services (IAAS) Officer, replaces Anne George Mathew, Additional Secretary in the Finance Ministry, who demitted office.
- ★ PFRDA comprises a Chairman, three whole-time members, and three part-time members.
- ★ Rahul Singh (Department of Personnel and Training) and Pankaj Sharma (Department of Financial Services) were appointed as part-time members last year.

Guinea-Bissau President reappoints Geraldo Martins as Prime Minister

- ★ Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embalo has reappointed Geraldo Martins as Prime Minister (PM) after dissolving his government.
- ★ Geraldo Martins was first appointed Prime Minister in August, 2023.
- ★ As a former Senior Executive at the World Bank, he served as Minister of Finance under the presidency of former President Jose Mario Vaz.
- ★ He is a member of the former ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) party which now leads an opposition coalition.

President of Egypt

- ★ Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has been elected as the President of Egypt for the third consecutive time.
- ★ The National Election Authority announced that President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had received 89.6 percent of the votes in the election.
- ★ Hazem Omar, who leads the Republican People's Party, received 4.5 percent of the vote.
- ★ Al-Sisi will remain in power for another six years for a third consecutive term.

Director General of Prisons

- ★ Senior IPS Officer Maheshwar Dayal was appointed as Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services.
- ★ As Inspector General of Police (IG) Economic Offences in the Tamil Nadu Police, Dayal played a pivotal role in addressing complex economic crimes.
- ★ His tenure saw effective strategies implemented to curb financial wrongdoing.
- ★ The officer's commitment to maintaining law and order led to subsequent appointments as IG Anti-Naxal Commando force, Government of India and IG Anti-Naxal Operations with the CRPF in Ranchi.
- ★ These roles underscore his dedication to tackling insurgency and maintaining internal security.

Reuven Azar as New Ambassador to India

- ★ The Israeli government approved the appointment of Reuven Azar as the new Ambassador to India.
- ★ Azar will also concurrently serve as the non-resident Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Bhutan.
- ★ Azar was born in Argentina and has a diverse and extensive background in various diplomatic roles.
- ★ In an earlier stint in Washington from 2003 to 2006, he served as Counsellor for Political Affairs.
- ★ From 2014 to 2018, Mr. Azar was Deputy Ambassador at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, DC.
- ★ Azar is currently serving as the Ambassador of Israel to Romania.

India's Uma Sekhar gets Elected to Governing Council of UNIDROIT

- ★ India's first woman candidate, Ms. Uma Sekhar secured a remarkable victory by garnering 45 out of 59 votes in the initial round of elections for the Governing Council of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) held in Rome, Italy.
- ★ With this, India will be a member of the Governing Council for the period from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2028.
- ★ In the election, there were 32 contestants in the fray including those from the USA, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, France, and others.

Executive Director of ICICI Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of Sandeep Batra as Executive Director of ICICI Bank, effective from December 2023 to December 2025.
- ★ This renewed term of two years is within the five-year term previously approved by the shareholders.
- ★ Batra is an ED on the Board of ICICI Bank and has been responsible for the Corporate Centre since July 2018.
- ★ He is responsible for the credit, corporate communications, data science, finance, human resource, legal, operations and customer service, technology and secretarial groups.

Chairman of Bombay Stock Exchange

- ★ Pramod Agarwal has been appointed as the Chairman of Bombay Stock Exchange.
- ★ The appointment of Pramod Aggarwal has been approved by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- ★ Pramod Aggarwal has been the former Chairman of Coal India Limited.
- ★ Agarwal will replace S.S. Mundra as Chairman of BSE.
- ★ Pramod Aggarwal's tenure will start from January 17, 2024.

MD and CEO of North East Small Finance Bank

- ★ North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB) has appointed Satish Kumar Kalra as its interim Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- ★ The appointment has been approved by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ Kalra served as the Managing Director and Executive Director of Andhra Bank from 2012 to 2017.
- ★ He has also served as an independent Director at Lakshmi Vilas Bank from Dec 2019 to May 2021.
- ★ Kalra's prior roles include independent Director positions at PNB GILTS, Indbank Merchant Banking Services, JK Cement and CAN FIN Homes.
- ★ Currently, he is an independent Director at Can Fin Homes Limited.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

The book 'Four Stars of Destiny'

- ★ The book 'Four Stars of Destiny' written by Naravane has been unveiled.
- ★ Naravane has mentioned the Galvan Valley military clash that occurred in the year 2020.
- ★ The Galwan Valley military clash took place between the troops of India and China on August 31, 2020.

- ★ To deal with the situation in Galwan Valley, the government had given a free hand to the Indian Army and ordered it to do whatever was appropriate.
- ★ M.M. Naravane was the Army Chief from December 2019 to April 2022.

DEFENCE

First Survey Vessel (Large) “Sandhayak”

- ★ Sandhayak (Yard 3025), the first of four Survey Vessel (Large) ships, being built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, was delivered to the Indian Navy.
- ★ INS Sandhayak is the largest survey vessel ever built in India.
- ★ The primary role of the ship would be full scale coastal and deep-water Hydrographic Survey of Port/Harbour approaches and determination of navigational channels/routes.
- ★ The ships will also collect oceanographic and geophysical data for defence and civil applications.
- ★ INS Sandhayak has a displacement of about 3400 tons and an overall length of 110 metres.
- ★ Sandhayak is fitted with state of the art hydrographic equipment such as Data Acquisition and Processing System, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, DGPS Long range positioning systems, Digital side scan sonar etc.

Russia Unveils Two New Nuclear-Powered Submarines

- ★ Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled two new nuclear-powered submarines on 11 December 2023.
- ★ These new submarines will soon start patrolling in the Pacific Ocean.
- ★ Krasnoyarsk and Emperor Alexander III were inaugurated at the Sevmash shipyard in Severodvinsk.
- ★ Emperor Alexander III is the seventh submarine of the Borei-class, a nuclear-powered fleet.
- ★ Each submarine is equipped with 16 Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads.
- ★ Krasnoyarsk belongs to the Yasen (Ash Tree) class of submarines. These are multipurpose submarines armed with long-range, high-precision missiles. For Krasnoyarsk, Putin said that it is capable of attacking both sea and land targets.
- ★ Krasnoyarsk is armed with cruise missiles and torpedoes. Krasnoyarsk is designed to hunt enemy submarines.

Indian Navy to induct Fast Attack Craft, ‘INS Tarmugli’

- ★ The Indian Navy will be re-inducting a refurbished 22-year-old fast attack craft, INS Tarmugli, in a commissioning ceremony at the naval dockyard, Visakhapatnam.
- ★ The ship has a unique distinction of having served under the flag of two nations with three names during her distinguished service till date.

- ★ Commissioned in the Indian Navy as INS Tillanchang, a Trinkat Class ship, she was in active service till 2006, and thereafter gifted to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) by the Govt of India, as part of diplomatic outreach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ★ The vessel was originally designed and constructed by Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on March 17, 2001.
- ★ The ship has undergone extensive repair and upgradation by the Indian Navy at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, over the last 6 months, and is scheduled to be commissioned as 'INS Tarmugli' on 14 December 2023 at Visakhapatnam.

IndiGo to set up an Aircraft Leasing Shop

- ★ Interglobe Aviation, the parent company of India's largest airline, IndiGo, has received approval from IFSC Gift City to establish an aircraft leasing venture.
- ★ Over the next 5 years, the company aims to invest approximately ₹11,500 crore in the IFSC aircraft leasing segment.
- ★ The funds will come from promoter investments, according to the company's application to the IFSC.
- ★ IndiGo plans to operate under the name 'Interglobe Aviation Financial Services IFSC Private Limited', focusing on operating leasing, financial leasing, and other related services for aircraft.
- ★ The estimated Free on Board (FOB) value for the export of services over a five-year period is projected at ₹11,563 crore, resulting in a Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) of ₹6,090 crore after a foreign exchange outgo of ₹11,502 crore.

Iran Reveals Upgraded Karrar Drones

- ★ Iran unveiled advanced Karrar combat drones armed with air-to-air missiles, enhancing its air defence capabilities.
- ★ It is an Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV) developed by Iran.
- ★ It is the first long-endurance, combat-capable Iranian drone.
- ★ It will be strategically deployed along border areas, providing air defence units with the capability to intercept and neutralise hostile aerial threats at significantly reduced costs compared to traditional manned fighter sorties.
- ★ The Karrar drone, which was first introduced in 2010, has an operational range of up to 1,000 kilometres (620 miles).
- ★ It has a maximum speed granted by its turbojet installation of 560 miles per hour.
- ★ It reportedly boasts a service ceiling altitude of 47,000 feet.

IIT Kanpur Signed MoU with Indian Navy

- ★ Indian Navy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Kanpur to promote innovation.
- ★ The agreement was signed at Naval Headquarters in New Delhi.

- ★ This agreement was signed by Indian Navy Admiral K. Srinivas and Professor Subramaniam Ganesh, Acting Director of IIT Kanpur.
- ★ This MoU will serve as a comprehensive framework.
- ★ This will be helpful in enhancing the capacity of both sides and providing solutions to regional issues.
- ★ This agreement reflects the commitment of both organizations to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint research and development.

DRDO has Shot Down 4 Targets Simultaneously Using Akash Missile

- ★ Defense Research and Development Organization has shot down 4 targets simultaneously using Akash missile system.
- ★ DRDO demonstrated the capability of the Akash missile system to simultaneously engage four aerial targets at a range of 25 kilometers.
- ★ India became the first country to demonstrate the capability to engage 4 air targets simultaneously at a distance of 25 km by command guidance using a single firing unit.
- ★ This ability is Displayed in ‘Astra Shakti’ military exercises.
- ★ Akash is a short-range surface-to-air missile with a strike range of up to 25 km.
- ★ It is mainly used to protect vulnerable areas and points from air attacks.

Indian Air Force Conducts Successful Test of ‘SAMAR’

- ★ Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted the test of the ‘SAMAR’ standing for Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation, air defence missile system during ‘Exercise Astrashakti-2023’.
- ★ Exercise Astrashakti-2023 took place at Suryalanka Air Force Station in Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted the test of the ‘SAMAR’ standing for Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation, air defence missile system during ‘Exercise Astrashakti-2023’.
- ★ Exercise Astrashakti-2023 took place at Suryalanka Air Force Station in Andhra Pradesh.

Stealth Guided Missile Destroyer, Imphal

- ★ Indian Navy, in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, will commission its latest stealth guided missile destroyer, Imphal, from the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai on December 26.
- ★ The latest destroyer’s commission will signal the formal entrance of the third of four ‘Visakhapatnam’ class destroyers into the Navy.
- ★ This destroyer was designed in-house by the Indian Navy’s Warship Design Bureau and built by Mumbai-based Mazagon Dock Limited.
- ★ It is the third indigenous stealth destroyer in India’s Project 15B class.
- ★ The top speed is 30 knots, the length is 163 metres, and the breadth is 17 metres.
- ★ The Indian Navy currently operates 132 vessels, including 11 guided missile destroyers of three classes: Kolkata Class, Delhi Class, and Rajput Class.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

North Korea Achieves Successful Launch of Military Spy Satellite

- ★ North Korea has achieved a successful launch of a military spy satellite on its third attempt within a span of six months.
- ★ The rocket was launched from the Sohae Satellite Launching Station.
- ★ In a parallel development, South Korea is also gearing up to launch its first spy satellite into orbit.
- ★ This initiative is scheduled to take place later in December and involves utilizing a SpaceX rocket.

IndiGo Introduces AI Chatbot 6Eskai

- ★ IndiGo, the country's largest airline, has unveiled a cutting-edge AI chat assistant, 6Eskai, powered by GPT-4 technology.
- ★ This innovative chatbot, developed in collaboration with Microsoft, is poised to reshape the passenger experience by efficiently handling customer queries in 10 different languages.
- ★ To begin with, it will address customer queries in 10 different languages.
- ★ Early results show a 75% reduction in customer service agent workload.
- ★ 6Eskai is capable of performing a wide range of tasks, including booking tickets, applying promotional discounts, booking add-ons, performing web check-ins, helping in seat selection, planning trips, answering FAQs, and connecting customers with an agent.

NASA Unveils Initiative to Send ISRO-Selected Indian Astronaut

- ★ US space agency National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) plans to train an Indian astronaut for a mission to the International Space Station (ISS) by the end of 2024.
- ★ Bill Nelson, the administrator of NASA, made this announcement during his visit to Delhi, India.
- ★ A major collaboration between India and the United States is the NISAR satellite, set to be launched in the first quarter of 2024.
- ★ India is planning its space station, named Bharatiya Antariksha Station, to be built and operated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- ★ Prime Minister Modi urged ISRO scientists to set up an Indian Space Station by 2035 and send an Indian to the moon by 2040.

India set to Launch its First X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite

- ★ India is preparing to launch its inaugural X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ XPoSat is designed to investigate the polarization of intense X-Ray sources through space-based X-Ray astronomy.

- ★ The spacecraft is designated for observation from a Low Earth Orbit (650 km altitude, low inclination of approximately 6 degrees).
- ★ Two scientific payloads onboard will observe X-Ray sources during the spacecraft's transit through Earth's shadow (eclipse period).
- ★ The mission life is expected to be approximately 5 years.
- ★ The POLIX payload was developed by the Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru, with support from various ISRO centers.

Indian Immunologicals Launches Measles and Rubella Vaccine

- ★ The measles and rubella vaccine "Mabella" was launched by Vaccine maker Indian Immunologicals (IIL) for children.
- ★ The vaccine, Mabella, was developed through an exclusive partnership with the Polyvac Institute of Vietnam.
- ★ Mabella was launched as part of the 25th celebrations of the IIL division Human Biologicals Institute (HBI) in Udthagamandalam (Ooty), Tamil Nadu (TN).
- ★ The vaccine has been proven to be safe and effective through extensive human clinical trials.
- ★ It will address the urgent need to control the deadly measles and rubella that kill nearly a million children globally.

Iran Sends Animals into Space

- ★ Iran has sent a capsule carrying animals into space as it boosts its Western-contested space programme in preparation for human missions.
- ★ Capsule was launched 130 kilometres (80 miles) into orbit.
- ★ The Salman rocket carried an "all indigenous" capsule weighing 500 kg (1,100 pounds), which is reportedly the heaviest biological capsule ever successfully carried in the history of the Iranian space programme.
- ★ The capsule was ordered by the Iranian Space Agency and developed by the aerospace division of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.
- ★ The rocket was built by the aerospace wing of the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics.
- ★ Iran started work on sending animals into space in the mid-2000s and had its first successful launch in 2010.

Geojit to set up Centre of Excellence in Sustainability

- ★ Geojit Financial Services Limited is establishing a Centre of Excellence in Sustainability at the Cochin University of Science and Technology.
- ★ The proposal to set up the centre named Geojit Cusat Centre of Sustainability Studies (GCCOSS) has been approved by the University Syndicate.
- ★ Geojit stands committed to providing an endowment of ₹5 crore over a period of four years.
- ★ This is one of the biggest industry-academia partnerships in Kerala.

- ★ The Centre will have 6 focus areas, namely Research, Academics, Consulting, Capacity Building, Innovation, and Certifications.
- ★ It will strive to be an autonomous hub for creating high-quality scientists and entrepreneurs while engaging in global collaborations to create the best research output, academic rigour, and technical innovations.
- ★ Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals have emerged as an important agenda for governments as well as corporations.

ISRO Announced to Launch a Female Robotic Astronaut

- ★ Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has announced that it will launch a female robotic astronaut 'Vyommitra' before the Gaganyaan mission.
- ★ 'Vyommitra' will be launched in the year 2024.
- ★ 'Vyommitra' has been developed at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.
- ★ It is a female humanoid space robot developed by the Indian Space Research Organization for the manned orbital spacecraft Gaganyaan.
- ★ This robot has been designed as half humanoid.
- ★ Through this project, ISRO will conduct the first test using this robotic system to ensure the safe travel and return of Indian astronauts, after which it will send the astronauts into space.

IIT Madras Developed 'AMRIT'

- ★ IIT Madras developed 'AMRIT' for removing Arsenic and Metal ions from water.
- ★ 'AMRIT' (Arsenic and Metal Removal by Indian Technology) uses nano-scale iron oxy-hydroxide. It removes arsenic when water is passed through it.
- ★ This water purifier technology has been developed for both domestic as well as community levels.
- ★ This technology has been recommended by the 'Standing Committee' of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation for the examination of the best technologies related to water and sanitation.
- ★ Government is committed to provide a safe and potable tap water supply to all rural households.
- ★ Government launched the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) for the planning, approval, implementation, operation, and maintenance of drinking water supply schemes.
- ★ The government is working with academic institutions such as IITs to resolve issues related to water supply and water quality.

ISRO to Launch Chandrayaan-4

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has planned to launch Chandrayaan-4 to bring back samples from the Moon in 4 years stated its chairperson S Somanath while elaborating on the space agency's Vision 2047.
- ★ The first module of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station – India's planned space station, that will be capable of conducting experiments with the help of robots will be launched by 2028.

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi had previously called on the space agency to set up a space station by 2035 and send a man to the Moon by 2040.
- ★ Bharatiya Antariksh Station is India's planned space station.
- ★ It will have capability to conduct experiments with the help of robots.

IIT Guwahati Researchers Introduce BRAHMA-2D Model

- ★ Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IIT Guwahati) developed an indigenous river model, BRAHMA-2D.
- ★ BRAHMA-2D (Braided River Aid: Hydro-Morphological Analyzer) is a mathematical model to gauge the flow of large braided rivers like the Brahmaputra.
- ★ It is a quasi-3D river flow model which helps to understand how fast the water moves at different depths inside a river and its circulation around a structure like a spur installed to prevent river bank erosion.
- ★ It can help engineers in the design of sustainable hydraulic structures like spurs, reverent, and other river bank protection measures in order to check river bank erosion.
- ★ It was developed by the researchers at IIT Guwahati in collaboration with the Brahmaputra Board under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- ★ It was successfully validated on the Brahmaputra River near Majuli Island, the second largest freshwater River Island in the world, in Assam, which is prone to river bank erosion.

ISRO to Launch India's First Polarimetry Mission

- ★ ISRO will launch the country's first polarimetry mission, XPoSat, from Satish Dhawan Space Center Sriharikota on 01 January 2024.
- ★ It will be launched from Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C58.
- ★ XPoSat is also India's first and the world's second polarimetry mission.
- ★ XPoSat stands for X-ray Polarimeter Satellite.
- ★ EXPOSAT is developed in collaboration with ISRO and Raman Research Institute (RRI), Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- ★ According to ISRO, "XPoSat will study the various dynamics of bright astronomical X-ray sources under extreme conditions".
- ★ XPoSat aims to study the 50 brightest sources in the universe.
- ★ This satellite will be installed in a low earth orbit of 500-700 km.
- ★ The satellite is expected to have a life of approximately five years.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World AIDS Day

- ★ World AIDS Day is observed every year on 1st December.
- ★ WHO, together with communities and partners will commemorate World AIDS Day 2023, under the theme “Let communities lead”.
- ★ World AIDS Day was first initiated in 1998 and observed on December 1.
- ★ World AIDS Day was the first day celebrated for health awareness.
- ★ The day is an opportunity for everyone around the world to come together in the fight against the disease and stand in solidarity to support those suffering from HIV, as well as remember those who lost their lives to this illness.

National Pollution Control Day

- ★ National Pollution Control Day 2023 is observed every year on 02 December.
- ★ The day is observed to create awareness about pollution which is causing harm to our environment and living beings.
- ★ It is nationally observed for the remembrance of an Industrial accident that took place in Bhopal which took thousands of lives in 1984.
- ★ The Bhopal gas tragedy happened on the night of 2nd and 3rd December in the year 1984 because of the unintentional discharge of the poisonous chemical known as Methyl Isocyanate (also called MIC) as well as some other chemicals released from the Union Carbide Chemical Plant positioned in the city.
- ★ Nearly 25000 people died due to the release of Poisonous gas and it is reported as one of the biggest Industrial Pollution disasters that took place in history.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

- ★ International Day for the Abolition of Slavery 2023 is observed every year on 02 2023.
- ★ The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery focuses on eradicating modern forms of slavery like trafficking, sexual exploitation, child labour, forced marriage, and forced recruitment of children into armed conflict.
- ★ The International Labor Organization puts the number of victims of modern slavery at 40 million worldwide.
- ★ From past times to the present, slavery has spanned various nations, civilizations, and religions.
- ★ Similarly, victims of slavery hailed from a wide range of races and religious backgrounds.
- ★ ILO has adopted a legally binding Protocol designed to strengthen global efforts to eliminate forced labor, which entered into force in November 2016.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

- ★ International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2023 is observed every year on 03 December.
- ★ The theme for 2023 is 'United in action to rescue and achieve the sustainable development goals for, with and by persons with disabilities'.
- ★ In 1976, the UN General Assembly decided that from 1981 International Day of Persons with Disabilities will be celebrated globally.
- ★ The UN announced 3rd December as the official date for celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
- ★ In 1992 The International Day of People with Disability was proclaimed by the United Nations.

International Volunteer Day

- ★ International Volunteer Day is observed every year on 05 December.
- ★ The theme for the year 2023 is "If everyone did..."
- ★ Volunteerism started in Europe to support elderly people within the community by carrying out Church-related work and helping the poor.
- ★ Organized Volunteering was started in the 18th Century and mainly to carry out military services rather than give back to society.
- ★ Organizations like the Red Cross, Lions Club, Rotary Club, and the Y.M.C.A. started collecting donations, mobilizing volunteers, and doing charity work and community service.
- ★ In 1985, the United Nations Volunteers Programme coordinated International Volunteer Day on December 5.

World Soil Day

- ★ World Soil Day is observed on 05 December.
- ★ It's the source of food, medicine, and naturally filters water through its layers and making it pure water to drink.
- ★ In 2002, the International Union of Soil Sciences recommended creating an international day to celebrate and generate awareness about soil.
- ★ The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United States supported the formal establishment of World Soil Day
- ★ In 2014, the U.N. General Assembly designated December 5 as the first official World Soil Day at the 68th UN General Assembly.

Armed Forces Flag Day

- ★ Armed Forces Flag Day is celebrated every year on 07 December.
- ★ The day is celebrated to commemorate the contributions and sacrifices of the Indian Armed Forces.
- ★ This day is observed to honour the valour, courage and unwavering dedication of the men and women serving in the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy.

- ★ It has been celebrated every year since 7 December 1949 as an annual festival.
- ★ Armed Forces Flag Day holds significance as a day dedicated to raising funds for the welfare of the soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces.
- ★ It serves as a platform for citizens to contribute to the well-being of soldiers who selflessly dedicate their lives to protect the nation.

International Civil Aviation Day

- ★ International Civil Aviation Day is celebrated every year on 07 December.
- ★ The purpose of celebrating this day is to recognise international air travel and to convey the importance of aviation to the social and economic development of the world.
- ★ International Civil Aviation Day fosters global awareness of aviation's pivotal role in the world's social and economic development.
- ★ The theme for the year 2023 is "Advanced Innovation for Global Aviation Development".
- ★ The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) was established on 7 December 1944 to promote global co-operation and uniformity in civil aviation matters.
- ★ ICAO had declared International Civil Aviation Day in 1994 on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

International Anti Corruption Day

- ★ International Anti Corruption Day 2023 is observed every year on 09 December.
- ★ As an annual celebration, the day serves as a platform to raise awareness, promote transparency and encourage action against corruption.
- ★ The theme of IACD 2023 is "UNCAC at 20: Uniting the World Against Corruption".
- ★ The theme celebrates the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.
- ★ It also underlines the importance of global co-operation in combating corruption.
- ★ . It started on 31 October 2003, when the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) was adopted.
- ★ The United Nations passed the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
- ★ It was a treaty signed by the member states of the United Nations, who came together to fight against corruption and enforce law and order.

International Mountain Day

- ★ International Mountain Day 2023 is observed every year on 11 December.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly declared the International Year of Mountains in 2002.
- ★ The U.N. establishes December 11 as International Mountain Day each year for the protection and sustainability of mountains.
- ★ Mountain Day is established and celebrated in Japan as a national holiday for people.

Universal Health Coverage Day

- ★ International Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day is observed every year on 12 December.
- ★ It emphasises the need for a health care system that provides good health facilities to all.
- ★ The year 2023 marks the sixth anniversary of the International Universal Health Coverage Day.
- ★ The theme of 'Universal Health Coverage Day for the year 2023' is "Health for All: Time for Action".
- ★ This theme calls for specific actions that focus on the resilience of health systems.
- ★ On 12 December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly, by resolution, declared 12 December as International UHC Day.

National Energy Conservation Day

- ★ National Energy Conservation Day 2023 is observed every year on 14 December.
- ★ National Energy Conservation Day 2023 was first observed on December 14, 1991 by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency BEE, under the Union Ministry of Power, the government of India.
- ★ The Bureau of Energy Efficiency assists in developing and implementing strategies and policies to reduce excessive energy consumption.
- ★ The committee also executed 'The Energy Conservation Act' in 2001.
- ★ The main objective of the day is to reduce energy use and encourage people to use it efficiently.

Vijay Diwas

- ★ Vijay Diwas 2023 is observed every year on the 16 December.
- ★ Vijay Diwas is celebrated for the remembrance of the victory of the Indian Armed Forces in 'Operation: Vijay' against the infiltrating Pakistani troops.
- ★ Rich tributes are given to the Armed Soldiers who lost their lives in the war.
- ★ Pakistani troops attacked 11 Indian airfields that proved the war on December 3, 1971.
- ★ At that time Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India.
- ★ The war ended in just 13 days which is considered as one of the shortest wars in history.
- ★ As a result of the war, Bangladesh was liberated from Pakistan as a separate country.

International Migrants Day

- ★ International Migrants Day is celebrated every year on 18 December.
- ★ The purpose of celebrating this day is to respect the migrants and treat them properly.
- ★ This day is celebrated to raise awareness of the challenges and difficulties faced by international migrants.
- ★ The theme of International Migrants Day this year 2023 is "Act Today".
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families on 18 December 1990.

Good Governance Week

- ★ Good Governance Week is being organized every year in the country from 19 to 25 December.
- ★ This week of the year 2023 was inaugurated by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology.
- ★ The third edition of Good Governance Week is being organized in the year 2023.
- ★ This week was organized for the first time in the year 2021.
- ★ Good Governance Week is organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.
- ★ The events of Good Governance Week yield very positive results and generate a greater sense of commitment and solidarity in the Government's firm objective of promoting administrative reforms.
- ★ Good Governance Week is organized in the memory of former Prime Minister of the country Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

National Mathematics Day

- ★ National Mathematics Day (NMD) is celebrated every year on 22 December.
- ★ National Mathematics Day is celebrated in memory of the great Indian mathematician Srinivasa Iyengar Ramanujan.
- ★ Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh started the celebration of NMD on 22 December 2012 on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Srinivas Ramanujan.
- ★ Ramanujan's main works included the infinite series of Pi. Ramanujan provided several formulas for calculating the digits of pi that differed from traditional methods.
- ★ He introduced innovative ideas to solve many challenging mathematical problems, which played a key role in the development of game theory.

Good Governance Day

- ★ 'Good Governance Day' is celebrated every year on 25 December, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- ★ The purpose of this day is to create awareness among the citizens of India about the accountability of the government.
- ★ Good Governance Day was inaugurated on December 25, 2014.
- ★ The organisation of Good Governance Week was started in 2021.
- ★ Many programs are being organised in the country on this occasion.
- ★ On 23 December 2014, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the late Madan Mohan Malviya were honoured with Bharat Ratna.

International Day of Epidemic Preparedness

- ★ International Epidemic Preparedness Day is observed every year 27 December.

- ★ The day aims to increase awareness about the pandemic.
- ★ This is done by exchanging information, sharing scientific knowledge and exchanging best practices internationally.
- ★ Governments have the primary role and responsibility when responding to pandemics.
- ★ International Pandemic Preparedness Day helps people get ready for pandemics by educating them and raising awareness.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on 7 December 2020.
- ★ The resolution declares 27 December as International Epidemic Preparedness Day.

OBITUTARY NEWS

Renowned Art Historian BN Goswamy

- ★ Renowned art historian and critic Brijinder Nath Goswamy passed away in Chandigarh at the age of 90.
- ★ N. Goswamy was renowned for scholarship on Pahari painting and Indian miniature paintings.
- ★ He initially joined the Indian Administrative Service (1956), and resigned in 1958 to pursue art studies.
- ★ He has been a member of the Governing Committee of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) and has chaired the Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi.
- ★ The Government of India awarded him the 4th highest civilian award of the Padma Shri in 1998 and followed it up with the third highest honour of the Padma Bhushan in 2008.

Popular Malayalam Actress and Musician R Subbalakshmi

- ★ Veteran actor R. Subbalakshmi, renowned for her remarkable contributions to Malayalam cinema passed away at the age of 87.
- ★ Subbalakshmi's collection Malayalam cinema included stellar performance in movies such as "Nandanam (2002)", "Pandippada (2005)", "CID Moosa" and "Thilakkam".
- ★ Her ability to effortlessly portray diverse roles showcased her versatility as an actor and endeared her to audiences across linguistic boundaries.
- ★ Her skills as a dubbing artist were recognized and she left her mark on various films.
- ★ Additionally, she showcased her musical prowess by singing for films like "Marykkundoru" and "Ammini", further highlighting her diverse talents.

American Diplomat and Nobel Winner Henry Kissinger

- ★ American diplomat and Nobel winner Henry Kissinger passed away at the age of 100 years.
- ★ He was a German-born American diplomat, political scientist, geopolitical consultant, and politician.

- ★ He served in the U.S. Army during World War-II, and, after the war, was educated at Harvard University, where he became a Professor of government and earned an international reputation as an expert on nuclear weapons and foreign policy.
- ★ He served as United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor in the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford between 1969 and 1977.
- ★ On January 13, 1977, Kissinger received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Gerald Ford.

Emmy-Winning Actor Andre Braugher

- ★ Emmy-winning actor Andre Braugher, renowned for his notable roles in series such as “Homicide: Life on The Street” and “Brooklyn Nine-Nine”, passed away at the age of 61.
- ★ Braugher was recognized with his breakthrough role in the 1989 film “Glory”, alongside Morgan Freeman and Denzel Washington.
- ★ He won his first Emmy Award in 1998, securing the trophy for lead actor in a drama series.
- ★ In 2006, Braugher clinched his second Emmy for lead actor in a miniseries or movie, showcasing his versatility.
- ★ His contributions to both drama and comedy have left an indelible mark on the entertainment industry.

Kuwait’s Ruling Emir, Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah

- ★ Kuwait’s ruling emir, Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah passed away at the age of 86.
- ★ He was appointed Governor of Hawalli on 21 February 1962 and held the post until 19 March 1978
- ★ He was Minister of Interior (1978–1988, 2003–2006), Minister of Defense (1988–1991) and Deputy Prime Minister (2020–2023).
- ★ Following the liberation of Kuwait in the Gulf War, Nawaf was appointed the acting Minister of Labour and Social Affairs on 20 April 1991 and held the post until 17 October 1992.
- ★ On 16 October 1994, Nawaf was appointed Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard and held that post until 2003.
- ★ He was Emir of Kuwait from 29 September 2020 until his death in 2023.

Tamil Nadu Leader and Actor Vijayakanth

- ★ ‘Captain Vijayakanth’, Chief of Tamil Nadu’s Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) political party, passed away in Chennai. He was infected with Corona.
- ★ Vijayakanth started his film career in 1979.
- ★ He worked in more than 150 films in his film career.
- ★ He was honoured with many awards, such as the Filmfare Award for Best Actor – Tamil (1989) and Kalaimamani Award (2001).
- ★ Vijayakanth formed his party, Deshi Murpokku Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, in 2005.

Parasite Actor Lee Sun-Kyun

- ★ South Korean actor Lee Sun-kyun, widely recognized for his role in the Oscar-winning film Parasite, passed away.
- ★ Born in Seoul, South Korea, Lee Sun-kyun left an indelible mark as an actor and manager, earning acclaim for his roles in films like Parasite (2019) and A Hard Day (2014).
- ★ Affectionately dubbed “The Voice” by fans, he earned this nickname due to his distinctive deep voice.
- ★ In Korea, he was widely acclaimed for his roles in the thriller Helpless (2012), the romantic comedy All About My Wife (2012), and the crime/black comedy A Hard Day (2014).

MISCELLANEOUS

Rizz Crowned Oxford Word of the Year 2023

- ★ Oxford Word of the Year 2023 is rizz.
- ★ This year, a shortlist of eight words was created, all chosen to reflect the mood, ethos, or preoccupations of the past year, and put them to the public to vote for their favourites.
- ★ Through head-to-head competitions over a four-day voting period, the public narrowed down our shortlist of worthy contenders to four finalists: rizz, Swiftie, prompt, and situationship.
- ★ These words were then put to our language experts, who considered our corpus data, the vote counts, and the public commentary around the words to choose the definitive word of the year for 2023.
- ★ ‘rizz’ is a colloquial noun, defined as ‘style, charm, or attractiveness.

Kerala’s Shaikh Hassan Khan Climbs Mount Vinson

- ★ Shaikh Hassan Khan, a 36-year-old Kerala government employee, has climbed Mount Vinson, the highest peak in Antarctica.
- ★ This is the fifth peak that Shaikh Hasan Khan has conquered.
- ★ Apart from Mount Vinson, Shaikh Hassan Khan has climbed four other highest peaks – Mount Everest (Asia), Mount Denali (North America), Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa), and Mount Elbrus (Europe).
- ★ The aim of his campaign is to spread awareness about climate change happening in Antarctica.
- ★ It is the highest mountain in Antarctica.
- ★ Mount Vinson is situated at an altitude of 4,892 meters (16,050 ft) above sea level.

