



# Shankar School of Banking

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## JANUARY - 2024



## Contents

<b>NATIONAL NEWS</b> .....	1
PM Inaugurates Maharishi Valmiki International Airport.....	1
DIVYA KALA MELA-2023 to be Inaugurated in Surat, Gujarat.....	1
Government Launches NTPS .....	1
Government Raises Interest Rates on Select Small Savings Schemes.....	2
Foundation Stone of Multiple Development Projects in Tamil Nadu.....	2
'India's longest sea bridge' in Mumbai .....	2
Telangana Chief Minister Launches 'Abhaya Hastam'.....	3
Haryana Government Launched OTS Scheme.....	3
VP Jagdeep Dhankhar to inaugurate Startup Expo in Kathua.....	3
IIT Madras Targets Incubating 100 Startups Across Various Sectors.....	4
Government Extends Tenure of PLI Scheme for Auto Industry.....	4
Kerala Introduces K-Smart Tech Solution.....	4
Jharkhand Government Reduces Qualifying Age for Old-Age Pension .....	5
First Indian EV Maker to File For An IPO.....	5
India Launches Single-Window Portal for Medical Devices Management.....	5
Maharashtra Approves Establishment of Maharashtra Drone Mission .....	6
First Union Territory to Implement PM Vishwakarma Yojana .....	6
First Inland Waterways Development Council Meeting in Kolkata .....	7
Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Connection .....	7
Electric Vehicle (EV) Manufacturing Facility in Thoothukudi.....	7
ArcelorMittal Partners with IIT Madras .....	8
MoU for Several Investments to be signed on Global Investors Meet.....	8
Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit.....	8
West Bengal Secures Geographical Indication (GI) .....	9
Arunachal Pradesh to Get Geographical Indication (GI) Tag.....	9
MoU Signed Between Indian Railways and CII.....	10
NHPC and Gujarat Government Signed MoU.....	10
DPIIT Organises Startup India Innovation Week 2024.....	10
Land Ports Authority Releases Report on Gender-Inclusive Framework.....	10
Shri Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates, Lays Foundation Stones of 29 Highway Projects.....	11
PM to Inaugurate 27 <sup>th</sup> National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra.....	11
ITC Joins Hands with Microsoft and Skymet.....	11
Assam Government Initiates 'Gunotsav 2024'.....	12
Odisha Secures Geographical Indication (GI) Tag .....	12
Foundation Stone of Multiple Development Projects in Maharashtra.....	13
Direct Flight Between Ayodhya And Ahmedabad.....	13
India-United States Trade Policy Forum Held in New Delhi .....	13

Karnataka Government has initiated the Yuva Nidhi Scheme .....	14
Farsi would be the 9 <sup>th</sup> Indian Classical Language .....	14
Indian International Science Festival in Haryana.....	14
PM Modi Releases First Instalment of PM-JANMAN to 1 Lakh Beneficiaries .....	15
Modi Inaugurates NACIN Complex in Andhra Pradesh.....	15
India's First Dark Sky Park .....	16
Haryana CM Inaugurates 2 <sup>nd</sup> Panchkula Book Fair.....	16
Karnataka HC Imposes ₹5 Lakh Penalty on Government.....	16
PM Issued Six Postage Stamps for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple.....	17
Wings India 2024 .....	17
IREDA and IOB Signed MoU .....	17
AP CM Jagan to Unveil 125-ft Statue of Ambedkar in Vijayawada.....	18
Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center Campus .....	18
Prime Minister Lays Foundation Stone for Eight Projects Maharashtra .....	19
National Skill Training Institute in Hyderabad.....	19
First Pilot Project to Make Jet Fuel from Alcohol in Pune .....	19
Akasa Air Announces Flight Operation.....	20
'Gole Mela' Festival at Jagannath Temple, Udhampur .....	20
Kachchhi Kharek Gem from Kutch Receives GI Tag .....	20
Ayodhya Ram Mandir Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.....	21
Vice President to Inaugurate 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman' Campaign .....	21
Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 Announced .....	21
Jaisalmer to Host Desert Festival 2024.....	22
SJVN Inks Pact with NHAI.....	22
The 7 <sup>th</sup> Edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha to be Held .....	22
Desert National Park May Get UNESCO World Heritage Status .....	23
IREDA Releases Vigilance Journal 'Pahal' .....	23
2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition of India Energy Week.....	23
Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Signed MoU With The Government Of India.....	24
Ministry of Rural Development and Lady Irwin College Renews MoU .....	24
World's First Melanistic Tiger Safari.....	24
<b>INTERNATIONAL NEWS</b> .....	<b>25</b>
Argentine President Javier Milei Declines BRICS Membership .....	25
India-Oman FTA to be signed in January 2024 .....	25
MoU between India and Guyana.....	25
South Korea Launches 'Workation' Visa for Foreigners .....	26
India Starts Four-Year Term as UN Statistical Commission Member .....	26
Kyrgyzstan Declared 'Snow Leopard' As National Symbol.....	26
India to Host UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.....	27

India and UAE Signed Four MOUs at Gujarat Summit.....	27
International Camel Festival .....	27
MoI between India and Netherlands.....	28
Vice-Chair of UN FAO Committee on Fisheries.....	28
India Launches Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality Alliance .....	28
North Korea Conducts ‘Underwater Nuclear Weapons System’ Test .....	29
G77-Third South Summit Held at Kampala in Uganda .....	29
Switzerland and India Signed FTA.....	29
Cabo Verde Declared a Malaria-Free Country .....	30
AP Moller-Maersk Reveals World’s Largest Methanol-Powered Container Ship.....	30
<b>BANKING, FINANCE &amp; ECONOMICS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
NPCI Set to Introduce UPI for Secondary Market.....	30
RBI Sets the Redemption Price for SGB at ₹6,331 per Unit.....	31
Central Bank of India Partnered With Kisetsu Saison Finance.....	31
SEBI Extends Nomination Filing Deadline for Mutual Funds and Demat Accounts .....	31
Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) .....	32
Small Finance Banks Launch ‘Small Banks: Empowering Big Dreams’ .....	32
IOB Introduces Savings Account Portability Online Scheme .....	33
Karnataka Bank Facilitates Direct Tax Payments for Customers.....	33
ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund to Acquire 9.95% Stake in Karur Vysya Bank .....	33
Paytm Enters Partnership with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam .....	34
Finance Ministry Greenlights an Additional ₹1,500 Crore for FAME-II Scheme.....	34
‘Politically Exposed Persons’ Term to Meet FATF Norms .....	34
Narayana Health Gets IRDAI Nod to Launch Health Insurance Business.....	35
SEBI Modifies Framework for Online Bond Platform Providers.....	35
Tata Pay Secures Payment Aggregator License from RBI.....	35
Regulations for Short-Term Commercial Papers and Non-Convertible Debentures .....	36
LEO1 and NSDL Payments Bank.....	36
India Post Payments Bank Signed MoU with Hindustan Zinc.....	37
SBI Launches Green Rupee Term-Deposit Scheme .....	37
New Development Bank to Provide \$500 Million Loan to Gujarat .....	37
Karnataka Bank Collaborates with Clix Capital .....	38
Karnataka Bank and Digivridhi Collaborate to Provide Financial Services .....	38
State Bank of India to Collaborate with Rural Development Ministry.....	38
ICICI Bank Canada Launches ‘Money2India (Canada)’ Mobile Banking App.....	39
DBS Bank India Partners with StartupTN .....	39
Indian Bank Plans to Establish Operations Support Subsidiary .....	39
Unity Bank Collaborates with Uncia .....	40
HDFC Bank Becomes the First Lender to Issue 20 Million Credit Cards .....	40

‘SBI Life – Saral Swadhan Supreme’ and ‘SBI Life – Smart Swadhan Supreme’ .....	41
Max Life Insurance Introduces SWAG Pension Plan.....	41
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Invests \$58.4 Million in InvIT.....	41
Zomato Payments Gets RBI’s Nod to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator.....	42
Bank of Baroda’s Subsidiary was renamed as ‘BOBCARD Limited’ .....	42
General Insurance Council Collaborates with Insurance Companies .....	42
<b>BUSINESS NEWS</b> .....	43
India to Become World’s Largest Metallurgical Coal Importer .....	43
Flipkart Co-founder Binny Bansal Launches e-commerce Start-up OppDoor.....	44
Direct Tax Collections Surpass 17 Lakh Crore in Current Fiscal .....	44
LIC Overtakes SBI as the Most Valuable PSU Firm .....	44
Ola Founder’s Krutrim Becomes India’s First AI Unicorn .....	44
<b>SPORTS</b> .....	45
Pole Vaulter Katie Moon becomes Ambassador for Mumbai Marathon.....	45
Australian Batter David Warner Announces Retirement.....	45
Country’s First Multi-Sports Games 2024 .....	45
Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Jakarta .....	46
Zagreb Open 2024 Wrestling Tournament in Croatia.....	46
Australian Open.....	46
India’s Number-One Chess Player .....	47
Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun Tournament .....	47
2024 Asian Marathon Championships.....	47
ICC Announces T20I Team of the Year for 2023 .....	48
Khelo India Youth Games.....	48
Virat Kohli wins ICC ODI Player of the Year Award.....	48
Australia Open 2024 .....	49
ICC Lifts Suspension of Sri Lanka Cricket after Two-Months.....	49
ISSF World Cup .....	49
<b>RANKS, INDICES &amp; REPORTS</b> .....	50
RBI Released a Report ‘Trend And Progress Of Banking In India’ .....	50
India will remain the Fastest Growing Economy in 2024.....	50
List of Source Markets for Tourism into Sri Lanka in 2023 .....	50
Global Unemployment set to Reach 5.2% in 2024, ILO Reports.....	51
Henley Passport Index 2024.....	51
Global Firepower Military Strength Ranking 2024 .....	52
India’s Masala Chai the World’s Second-Best Non-Alcoholic Beverage.....	52
<b>AWARDS &amp; PRIZES</b> .....	52
M.S. Swaminathan Award.....	52

'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' 2023 .....	53
National Awards for e-Governance 2023 .....	53
Former President Kovind to Award Diplomas at IIMC's 55 <sup>th</sup> Convocation .....	53
ISRO Awarded "Indian of the Year 2023" .....	54
Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 .....	54
FIFA Male and Female Players.....	54
Assam's Highest Civilian Award 'Assam Baibhav' .....	55
ICAI Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting .....	55
SCOPE Excellence Award for Digitalization .....	56
Airport of the Year Award 2024 .....	56
Delhi and Bengaluru Jointly Clinch 'Best Airport' Award.....	56
Actress Alia Bhatt Honored at Saudi Arabia's Joy Awards .....	57
Former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur Awarded Bharat Ratna .....	57
Freedom of the City of London Award .....	58
Electoral Practices Awards for the year 2023 in New Delhi .....	58
C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Awards .....	58
Blavatnik Award .....	59
<b>APPOINTMENTS &amp; RESIGNATIONS .....</b>	<b>59</b>
First Woman Chief of CISF .....	59
Chairman of HDFC Bank .....	60
New CMD of Power Grid Corporation.....	60
Head of the 16 <sup>th</sup> Finance Commission.....	60
Vice Chief of the Naval Staff .....	61
President of the European Investment Bank .....	61
CEO of Indian Olympic Association .....	61
Executive Director of Asian Development Bank .....	62
President of All India Rubber Industries Association .....	62
Prime Minister of Kuwait.....	62
India's Representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO) .....	63
Secretary General of BIMSTEC .....	63
Chairperson of Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.....	63
Gabriel Attal Has Been Named the Youngest PM in France.....	64
MD and CEO of NARCL .....	64
Prime Minister of Bangladesh.....	64
India's Ambassador to WTO .....	64
Prime Minister of Bhutan.....	65
Deputy Governor of RBI .....	65
First Female Neutral Umpire Appointed by the International Cricket Council .....	65
Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal .....	66

Managing Director and CEO of DCB Bank .....	66
WHO Regional Director for Southeast Asia.....	66
New Chairman of AEPC .....	67
Indian Army's First Woman Subedar .....	67
<b>DEFENCE</b> .....	67
Military Exercise Desert Cyclone-2024.....	67
Defence Ministry signs ₹802 Crore Contract for Military Equipment .....	68
Indian Navy's Elite Marine Commandos Effectively Rescue 21 Crew Members.....	68
DRDO Launches an Indigenous Assault Rifle Named 'Ugram' .....	68
Indian Navy Unveils 'Drishti 10 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)'.....	69
Indian Navy Will Host The MILAN 24 Exercise .....	69
20 <sup>th</sup> India-Japan Coast Guard Exercise.....	70
NATO's Biggest War Exercise – Steadfast Defender 2024 .....	70
India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR.....	70
Exercise Desert Knight.....	71
Indian Air Force Locates Debris of Missing An-32 Aircraft from 2016.....	71
Joint Special Forces Exercise Cyclone II Commenced in Egypt .....	71
Tata Group and Airbus Sign to Manufacture H125 Civil Helicopter .....	72
'Sada Tanseeq' Joint Military Exercise .....	72
Ministry of Defence Signs Contract with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders.....	73
<b>BOOKS &amp; AUTHORS</b> .....	73
Raghuram Rajan has released a new book .....	73
Governor of Kerala has Released the Book.....	73
Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has released the Book 'Maga Kavithai' .....	74
Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Releases Book .....	74
Autobiography Titled "Time Spent Distance Travelled" .....	74
Amit Shah Launched the Book "Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan" .....	74
Shri Amit Shah Launched a New Book .....	75
<b>SCIENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY</b> .....	75
Pakistan Conducts Successful Flight Test Fatah-II.....	75
Reliance Jio and IIT-Bombay Collaborate to Develop 'BharatGPT' .....	76
Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre Unveils 'FEAST' Analysis Software.....	76
India's ISRO is to Launch GSAT-20 Satellite.....	76
Researchers Develop 'Electronic Soil' that Enhances Crop Growth by 50% .....	77
Aditya L1 Successfully Injected Into Orbit.....	77
NSPAAD Launches Mobile App 'Report Fish Disease' .....	77
Indian Immunologicals Launches Indigenous Hepatitis-A Vaccine.....	78
Japan Becomes 5 <sup>th</sup> Country to Land Spacecraft on the Moon .....	78

Iran Successfully Launches Sorayya Satellite Into Orbit .....	79
ICAI Collaborates with IIM Ahmedabad to Develop 'Vision 2049' .....	79
North Korea Conducts Test of Underwater Nuclear Weapon System.....	79
ISRO to Launch INSAT-3DS Satellite .....	80
<b>IMPORTANT DAYS</b> .....	80
Global Family Day .....	80
World Braille Day .....	80
Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.....	80
World Hindi Day .....	81
National Human Trafficking Awareness Day .....	81
International Day of Education.....	81
National Girl Child Day.....	82
International Customs Day .....	82
National Voters Day.....	82
International Holocaust Remembrance Day.....	83
Martyr's Day.....	83
<b>OBITUTARY NEWS</b> .....	83
Padma Bhushan Awardee Ved Prakash Nanda .....	83
FIFA World Cup Champion Mario Zagallo.....	84
Music Maestro Rashid Khan .....	84
Famous Malayalam Filmmaker Vinu .....	85
Urdu Poet Munawwar Rana Passes Away .....	85
Former Olympic Pole Vaulter Shawn Barber.....	85
Rana Talwar, First Asian to Head a Global Bank.....	85
Dr Nitya Anand, Man Who Discovered India's First Oral Contraceptive Pill 'Saheli' .....	86
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b> .....	86
First World Leader to reach 2 Crore Subscribers on Youtube.....	86



## **JANUARY – 2024**

### **NATIONAL NEWS**

#### **PM Inaugurates Maharishi Valmiki International Airport**

- ★ The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly built Ayodhya Airport.
- ★ The airport has been named Maharishi Valmiki International Airport.
- ★ Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in modern India will connect us to Ayodhya Dham and the divine-grand-new Ram temple.
- ★ In the first phase, the airport can handle 10 lakh passengers annually and after the second phase, Maharishi Valmiki International Airport will cater to 60 lakh commuters annually.
- ★ Phase 1 of the state-of-the-art airport is developed at a cost of more than ₹1450 crore.
- ★ The airport's terminal building will have an area of 6500 sqm, equipped to serve about 10 lakh passengers annually.

#### **DIVYA KALA MELA-2023 to be Inaugurated in Surat, Gujarat**

- ★ Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is organizing a unique event 'Divya Kala Mela' from 29 December 2023 – 07 January 2024 in Surat, Gujarat.
- ★ This is a unique initiative towards the economic empowerment of PwD/Divyangjan.
- ★ Around 100 Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs from about 20 states and UTs will display their products and skills.
- ★ It is a platform for marketing and showcasing the products and skills of Divyangjan (PwD).
- ★ The Divya Kala Mela, Surat is the 12<sup>th</sup> series that started from Delhi in December 2022.

#### **Government Launches NTPS**

- ★ Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the National Transit Pass System (NTPS) pan-India.
- ★ It is to facilitate the seamless transit of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across the country.
- ★ Currently, the transit permits are issued for the transport of timber and forest produce based on state-specific transit rules.
- ★ The NTPS is envisioned as a "One Nation-One Pass" regime, which will enable seamless transit across the country.

- ★ This initiative will streamline the issuance of timber transit permits by providing a unified, online mode for tree growers and farmers involved in agroforestry across the country, contributing to the ease of doing business.
- ★ It offers seamless transit permits, managing records for both inter-state and intra-state transportation of timber, bamboo and other forest produce obtained from various sources like private lands, government owned forest and private depots.
- ★ The QR-coded transit permits generated under NTPS will allow check gates across various states to verify the validity of the permits and allow seamless transit.

### **Government Raises Interest Rates on Select Small Savings Schemes**

- ★ The Central government has increased the rate of interest on two small savings schemes for January-March 2024 quarter by up to 20 basis points.
- ★ As per a notification by the Finance Ministry, the rate of interest on the Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme has been raised by 20 basis points to 8.2 percent from 8 percent.
- ★ Further, interest on the three-year time deposit has been increased by 10 basis points to 7.1 percent from 7.0 percent.
- ★ All other small savings schemes will continue to offer the same rate of interest as they did in October-December quarter.

### **Foundation Stone of Multiple Development Projects in Tamil Nadu**

- ★ The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated, dedicated to the nation and laid the foundation stone of development projects worth more than ₹20,000 crores in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The development projects include rail, road, oil and gas, and shipping sectors in Tamil Nadu.
- ★ At the public programme in Tiruchirappalli, the Prime Minister inaugurated the New Terminal Building at Tiruchirappalli International Airport.
- ★ Developed at a cost of more than 1100 crore, the two-level new international terminal building can serve more than 44 lakh passengers annually and about 3500 passengers during peak hours.
- ★ The new terminal hosts state-of-the-art amenities and features for passenger convenience.
- ★ The Prime Minister also dedicated to the nation the Demonstration Fast Reactor Fuel Reprocessing Plant (DFRP) at Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam.

### **'India's longest sea bridge' in Mumbai**

- ★ The ambitious infrastructure project, the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The MTHL project is 22 km long, touted to be India's longest and the world's 12 longest sea bridge.

- ★ The project consists of an approximately 22 km long 6-tier (3+3-lane, 2 emergency lane) bridge connecting Shivdi in Mumbai city and Nhava on the mainland.
- ★ It has been in the making since 2018.
- ★ Originally expected to be completed in 4.5 years, the infrastructure project was delayed by eight months due to Covid-19 pandemic.
- ★ Build at the cost of ₹17,843 crore, the six-lane bridge is among the most expensive projects.
- ★ The MTHL will have interchanges at Sewri in Mumbai and Shivaji Nagar, Jassi, and Chirle on National Highway 4B on the Navi Mumbai end.

### **Telangana Chief Minister Launches ‘Abhaya Hastam’**

- ★ Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy kickstarted “Abhaya Hastam”, a programme to implement the six guarantees as promised by the Congress before the elections, and the government was committed to implementing all the promises within 100 days.
- ★ Under this, a special campaign ‘Praja Palana’ (People’s governance) was launched across the state on 28 December, 2023.
- ★ The program, aimed at receiving applications from eligible beneficiaries of various schemes promised under Abhay Hastam, will end on January 6, 2024.
- ★ The state government has also launched the format of the “Praja Palana” applications, the program logo, and other materials.
- ★ The entire exercise of Praja Palana is to take the government to the doorstep of the people.

### **Haryana Government Launched OTS Scheme**

- ★ The Chief Minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal, has launched the One Time Settlement-2023 (OTS) Scheme through the Excise and Taxation Department.
- ★ The scheme aims to resolve any outstanding tax payments that were due before the implementation of GST.
- ★ This scheme will be in effect from January 1, 2024, until March 30, 2024. It offers businesses the chance to clear their pre-GST tax liabilities.
- ★ Businesses can settle pre-GST tax obligations from January 1 to March 30, 2024 using the OTS-2023 scheme.

### **VP Jagdeep Dhankhar to inaugurate Startup Expo in Kathua**

- ★ Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will inaugurate the Startup Expo in Kathua.
- ★ Twenty-five startups from Northern States will showcase their products at the expo.
- ★ Six women Entrepreneurs will also participate in the startup expo.
- ★ The theme of the expo is Emerging Startup Trends in North India.
- ★ Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, a lot of development took place in the field of startups in the last nine years.

- ★ The number of Startups in the country has grown to over one lakh from about 350 in 2014.

### **IIT Madras Targets Incubating 100 Startups Across Various Sectors**

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) is targeting incubating at least 100 start-ups across various sectors next year, in 2024.
- ★ Kamakoti said the institute is working hard towards maintaining the number 1 ranking in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- ★ IITM has been ranked No.1 in the 'Overall' Category for the fifth consecutive year in India Ranking 2023 released by NIRF, Ministry of Education.
- ★ The Institute has also been ranked No.1 in the 'Engineering Institutions' category in the same Rankings for eight consecutive years – from 2016 to 2023.
- ★ Some of the top developments of the institute in 2023 include the launching of IIT Madras Zanzibar Campus; the launch of the School of Sustainability and the School of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence.
- ★ In 2023, the Supreme Court signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IIT Madras for collaborating on using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies for transcription tools, summarization of page transcript, translation Tool.

### **Government Extends Tenure of PLI Scheme for Auto Industry**

- ★ The tenure of the PLI scheme for the automobile industry has been extended by the government by a year.
- ★ The tenure of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components has been extended by the government by one year with partial amendments.
- ★ Under the amended scheme, the incentive would apply for five consecutive financial years, beginning from the financial year 2023-24 (FY24).
- ★ The distribution of incentives will take place in the next financial year 2024-25.
- ★ The scheme also clarifies that an approved applicant would be eligible for benefits for 5 consecutive financial years, but not more than the financial year ending March 31, 2028.
- ★ Further, the amendments state that if an approved company fails to meet the prescribed selling price increase limit in the first year, it will not get any incentive for that year.
- ★ However, it will still be eligible for benefits in the following year if it meets the threshold calculated based on a 10% year-on-year increase over the earlier year's threshold.
- ★ The amendment also includes changes in the table showing the incentive outlay, taking the total indicative incentive amount to ₹25,938 crore.

### **Kerala Introduces K-Smart Tech Solution**

- ★ Aimed at making available all services of local self-government institutions over a uniform digital platform, Kerala has introduced K-Smart (Kerala Solutions for Managing Administrative Reformation and Transformation), the first of its kind project in the country.

- ★ It is for the first time that a system that makes available the entire gamut of services of a department in a single click is being introduced in the country.
- ★ Initially, K-Smart will be operational in corporations and municipalities and later will be rolled out in grama panchayats as well.
- ★ It is embedded with an Integrated Messaging System that facilitates delivery of the acknowledgment receipt of complaints and applications in the portal that can be accessed through login of the applicant or complainant as also via Whatsapp and email.

### **Jharkhand Government Reduces Qualifying Age for Old-Age Pension**

- ★ Jharkhand Chief Minister Shri Hemant Soren announced that the qualifying age for old-age pension for tribals and Dalits has been reduced from 60 years to 50 years.
- ★ The government has taken this decision because the death rate among tribals is high and they do not get jobs after 60 years.
- ★ When Jharkhand was formed in 2000, only 16 lakh people were getting pension benefits.
- ★ Now, around 36 lakh people above the age of 60 receive the benefit of the pension.
- ★ This shift reflects a commitment to address the financial needs of the elderly population and recognize their contributions to society.
- ★ In September, 2023 the Jharkhand government decided to add the transgender community under its universal pension scheme in a move to provide social security and bring them into the mainstream of society.

### **First Indian EV Maker to File For An IPO**

- ★ Ola Electric Mobility, the Bhavish Aggarwal-led electric vehicle company, filed papers with Sebi to go public through an IPO that is estimated to be worth about ₹10,000 crore.
- ★ Ola Electric is the first EV company in India planning to go public.
- ★ It would also be the first automobile company to go for IPO in over 20 years.

### **India Launches Single-Window Portal for Medical Devices Management**

- ★ India has launched National Single Window System (NSWS) to streamline the imports of Medical Devices.
- ★ It has been designed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).
- ★ It will be a 'one-stop-shop' portal for importing medical devices in India.
- ★ It will facilitates applications for the certificate of registration and licences to manufacture or import medical devices for various purposes like clinical investigations, tests, evaluations, demonstrations, or training.
- ★ This portal will act as a one-stop shop for all the approvals required by the investor and facilitates ease of doing business.

- ★ The NSWIS portal, distinct from the existing SUGAM and cdscomonline portals, has been developed by Tata Consultancy Services (TCS).
- ★ The existing portals will be disabled by January 15.
- ★ It will help investors to identify, apply, track and obtain approvals needed before starting any business operations in India.
- ★ India's demand for medical devices is projected to reach \$50 billion by 2030.

### **Maharashtra Approves Establishment of Maharashtra Drone Mission**

- ★ The Maharashtra government has decided to set up the Maharashtra Drone Mission (MDM) for the use of drone technology.
- ★ The aim of the mission is to utilize drone technology for various functions, including security surveillance, disaster rescue and relief, delivery of emergency medicines and vaccines to remote areas, monitoring infrastructure projects, and traffic management.
- ★ A five-year implementation plan has been developed by a team of experts from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bombay.
- ★ The headquarters of the Maharashtra Drone Mission will be located at IIT-Bombay.
- ★ This move is expected to transform Maharashtra into a global drone hub.
- ★ The IIT-B report envisaged the use of drones for the delivery of medicines in an emergency as well as vaccines to remote areas.
- ★ The state government notified that the use of drones would be done under the Centre's Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) operation guidelines.

### **First Union Territory to Implement PM Vishwakarma Yojana**

- ★ Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has become the first Union Territory (UT) to implement the Prime Minister (PM) Vishwakarma Yojana.
- ★ PM Vishwakarma Yojana is an initiative to empower and enhance the skills of the craftsman community.
- ★ The training programme for the first batch of 30 trainees (Vishwakarmas) in 'darzi craft' has been inaugurated at the Industrial Training Institute in Shopian.
- ★ PM Vishwakarma Yojana was launched by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to provide holistic support to artisans and craftspeople, including access to collateral-free credit, skill training, modern tools, incentives for digital transactions, and market linkage support.
- ★ The primary aim of the scheme is to recognize artisans and craftspeople through PM Vishwakarma certificates and ID cards.
- ★ The minimum age of the beneficiary should be 18 years on the date of registration.

### **First Inland Waterways Development Council Meeting in Kolkata**

- ★ Union Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal will chair the first Inland Waterways Development Council Meeting in Kolkata.
- ★ During the meeting, Mr Sonowal will unveil groundbreaking initiatives, including Harit Nauka – Guidelines for Green Transition of Inland Vessels and the River Cruise Tourism Roadmap 2047.
- ★ The Ministry has set a target to elevate the modal share of Inland Water Transportation from the current two per cent to five per cent, aligning with the goals outlined in the Maritime India Vision 2030.
- ★ The establishment of the Inland Waterways Development Council in October 2023 underscores the government’s commitment to the comprehensive development of inland waterways and the associated Inland Water Transport ecosystem for improved cargo efficiency, passenger movement and river cruise tourism.

### **Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Connection**

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

### **Electric Vehicle (EV) Manufacturing Facility in Thoothukudi**

- ★ VinFast, Vietnam’s leading automaker and electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer, is set to establish an EV and battery manufacturing facility in Thoothukudi, near Chennai.
- ★ The facility in Thoothukudi is planned to have the capacity to produce 150,000 electric vehicles (EVs) in the first phase.
- ★ The total investment in the 400-acre facility is expected to reach as much as \$1 billion or potentially even more.
- ★ Global Expansion Strategy: VinFast, the EV arm of Vingroup (Vietnam’s largest conglomerate), had previously announced plans to build assembly factories in India and Indonesia.

- ★ These factories were projected to have annual capacities of 50,000 cars each, with an initial capital expenditure of up to \$200 million.
- ★ In August 2023 following its listing on Nasdaq, VinFast temporarily became the world's third-most valuable carmaker.

### **ArcelorMittal Partners with IIT Madras**

- ★ Steel giant ArcelorMittal has partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras to build "Asia's first" Hyperloop test track facility.
- ★ The companies, ArcelorMittal and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS), are providing foundational steel materials as well as engineering, design, and project management expertise to support the construction of Asia's first Hyperloop test track at the 163-acre Discovery campus of IIT Madras, located at Thaiyur on the outskirts of Chennai.
- ★ ArcelorMittal is collaborating with the IIT Madras's Hyperloop Technology teams – Avishkar Hyperloop, a student team, and TuTr Hyperloop, a startup incubated in IIT Madras, for the project.
- ★ The Ministry of Railways is also a key partner.
- ★ ArcelorMittal and AM/NS will supply 400 tonnes of steel for the fabrication of a 400-metre vacuum tube at the site, while engineers from AMDEC, the design and engineering arm of ArcelorMittal, will help oversee the project.

### **MoU for Several Investments to be signed on Global Investors Meet**

- ★ During the Global Investors Meet in Tamil Nadu, discussions were held on climate change missions, circular economy, AI, and providing a robust environment for start-ups and SMEs.
- ★ Several investment MoUs were expected to be signed.
- ★ The Additional Chief Secretary to the Department of Environment announced that three missions – Green Tamil Nadu, Climate Change, and Wetlands - have been implemented.
- ★ The Tamil Nadu Coastal Mission will soon be implemented.
- ★ Climate protection teams will be created in every district.
- ★ Industries were encouraged to develop initiatives to achieve zero carbon emissions.
- ★ Modern technologies could be used to increase production, reduce waste, and manage it sustainably.
- ★ The aim of achieving carbon neutrality can be reached in a shorter time frame with these objectives.

### **Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit**

- ★ Gujarat is set to host the tenth edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit commencing at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar.
- ★ The Tenth edition will celebrate "20 Years of Vibrant Gujarat as the Summit of Success".



- ★ The theme of the summit this time is ‘Gateway to the Future’.
- ★ The tenth edition Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit is being held after a gap of four years as the summit was cancelled in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ★ Over 1 lakh people from across the world have registered to participate in the summit.
- ★ There are 34 Partner countries and 16 Partner organisations for this year’s Summit.
- ★ This year, the summit will focus on sunrise sectors like semiconductors, green hydrogen, e-mobility, and space manufacturing.

### **West Bengal Secures Geographical Indication (GI)**

- ★ West Bengal has achieved Geographical Indication (GI) tags for 5 more products as part of the National GI Drive Mission.
- ★ The newly awarded GI tags include Sundarban honey, Black Nunia rice, Tangail sarees, Gorod sarees, and Kadiyal sarees.
- ★ The Central Government has uploaded the names of the products with GI tags on the designated portal.
- ★ Sundarban honey, collected from the Sundarban forest, has received a GI tag. It was collected by the ‘Mauli’ community.
- ★ The West Bengal Forest Development Corporation Limited (WBFDC) has applied for a special GI tag for Sundarban honey.
- ★ WBFDC collects and processes Sundarban honey, selling it under the brand name “Mouban”.
- ★ Black Nuniya rice is called the “Prince of Rice” and is cultivated in the Jalpaiguri district of the state.
- ★ Kadiyal saree is produced only in Mirzapur in Murshidabad district of West Bengal. Tangail and Gorod sarees are also famous in this region.
- ★ With the addition of the 5 new items, West Bengal now has a total of 27 items registered on the GI portal.
- ★ Since 2004, a total of 504 items from different parts of the country have received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

### **Arunachal Pradesh to Get Geographical Indication (GI) Tag**

- ★ Arunachal Pradesh’s ginger, locally known as Adi Kekir, handmade carpets and Wancho wooden craft have secured the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- ★ A geographical indication or GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- ★ Adi Kekir is a specific variety of ginger grown in East Siang, Siang, and Upper Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- ★ The handmade carpets made by Tibetan refugees, who live in various parts of the state, are known for their typical designs, motifs and textures.

- ★ Wancho wooden craft items are unique as they feature tobacco pipes with head-shaped bowls and drinking mugs showing warriors carrying heads.

### **MoU Signed Between Indian Railways and CII**

- ★ Indian Railways has signed an MoU with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to reduce energy and water consumption lowering GHG emissions.
- ★ IR and CII have renewed their MoU for third consecutive term.
- ★ Indian Railways, as a major stakeholder of the transportation sector in India shared the responsibility of environment protection.
- ★ IR, itself has set “Net Zero Carbon Emission” target by the year 2030.
- ★ CII has been actively partnering with IR since July 2016 to promote and facilitate green initiatives over Indian Railways.
- ★ This initiative has been implemented in 75 Railways units and has improved their environmental performance substantially.

### **NHPC and Gujarat Government Signed MoU**

- ★ NHPC has signed an MoU with Gujarat Power Corporation Limited, Government of Gujarat for investment in the proposed 750 MW Kuppa Pumped Hydro Storage Project.
- ★ As per the MoU, NHPC will invest an estimated ₹4000 crores in the proposed project, situated at Chhota Udaipur, Gujarat.
- ★ NHPC and the Government of Gujarat plan to develop and utilize pumped hydro storage projects as an effective solution for energy storage.
- ★ The MoU aims to contribute towards the national objective of clean and green energy, i.e. attainment of 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and a “Net Zero” target by 2070.

### **DPIIT Organises Startup India Innovation Week 2024**

- ★ The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is organising the Startup India Innovation Week 2024 from 10 January to bring together the country’s startups, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders.
- ★ The Startup India initiative was launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, boosting startups, and encouraging investments in the startup ecosystem of the country.
- ★ Commerce and Industry Ministry said, the Indian startup ecosystem has grown from strength to strength over the years.
- ★ It said the number of recognised startups has increased to over one lakh 17 lakh thousand from about four hundred startups in 2016.

### **Land Ports Authority Releases Report on Gender-Inclusive Framework**

- ★ Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) has released a report on ‘Engendering Land Ports in India’ in New Delhi.

- ★ The main objective of the report is to develop a framework for gender inclusive cross border trade and tourism through land Ports in the country.
- ★ Chairman of LPAI Aditya Mishra, a step towards making a gender-positive environment.
- ★ The Land Ports Authority of India will implement the recommendation of the reports to make land Ports more gender neutral.

### **Shri Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates, Lays Foundation Stones of 29 Highway Projects**

- ★ Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated 29 National Highway projects with an investment of more than ₹4,000 crore in Hoshiarpur, Punjab.
- ★ The Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Shri Som Prakash, Punjab BJP State President Shri Sunil Kumar along with MPs, MLAs and officials were also present on the occasion.
- ★ The implementation of the projects inaugurated and foundation stone laid will improve the infrastructure, which will lead to overall economic development of the implementation area and improve the quality of life of the population.
- ★ There will be seamless and free movement of traffic which will also improve the efficiency of freight transportation.

### **PM to Inaugurate 27<sup>th</sup> National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra**

- ★ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 27<sup>th</sup> National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra on 12<sup>th</sup> January and will address the youth of the nation.
- ★ This year, National Youth Day will be celebrated by all field organisations of the Department of Youth Affairs in districts pan-India in collaboration with multiple Government departments.
- ★ 'MY Bharat' volunteers throughout the country, with support from NSS units, NYKS and many educational institutions will coordinate their energies to carry out activities to volunteer for India.
- ★ Youth Clubs will also bring their vibrant energy to the celebration, ensuring a truly inclusive atmosphere.
- ★ More than 88,000 volunteers will participate in the campaign.
- ★ Road safety awareness events will be conducted at major cities and 750 districts headquarters of the country on 12<sup>th</sup> January.

### **ITC Joins Hands with Microsoft and Skymet**

- ★ ITC, a prominent Indian conglomerate, has joined forces with Microsoft and Skymet to address the escalating challenges faced by tobacco farmers in India due to climate change.
- ★ To combat the challenges posed by climate change, ITC has formulated a comprehensive program in collaboration with Microsoft and Skymet.

- ★ This initiative incorporates cutting-edge technologies such as drones, AI, and data analytics to provide accurate weather forecasts, crop advisories, hotspot mapping, and nutritional supplementation.
- ★ The negative effects of climate change on agriculture are well documented, and the tobacco industry is no exception, with an estimated loss of 800-900 crore in export profits.

### **Assam Government Initiates 'Gunotsav 2024'**

- ★ 'Gunotsav 2024' has been launched by the Assam Government for holistic assessment of students' performance.
- ★ It has been launched for holistic assessment of the performance of about 40 lakh students of 43,498 government schools in 35 districts of the state.
- ★ Gunotsav, an initiative of the Government of Assam, is covering all government primary and secondary schools in the state.
- ★ The services of 18,098 external evaluators will be used for this evaluation process, starting in all the primary and secondary schools of the state.
- ★ The first phase will cover 12 districts from January 3 to 6, 2024 the second phase will cover 13 districts from January 10 to 12, and the final phase will cover the remaining 10 districts from February 6 to 8, 2024.
- ★ 'Gunotsav 2024' will identify learning gaps in each child and ensure quality education with grade-specific outcomes.
- ★ 'Gunotsav' encourages the active participation of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, administrators, and local communities.
- ★ The engagement of these key players is expected to foster accountability and contribute to the overall enhancement of the quality of education.

### **Odisha Secures Geographical Indication (GI) Tag**

- ★ The Similipal kai chutney made with red weaver ants by the tribal people of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district (Odisha) received the geographical identity tag.
- ★ The application was made by The Mayurbhanj Kai Society Ltd in 2020 for registration in Class 30 under sub-section (1) of section 13 of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- ★ The savoury chutney is popular in Mayurbhanj region for its healing properties and also deemed important for nutritional security of the tribal people.
- ★ Many indigenous people from Mayurbhanj district venture into nearby forest to collect kai pimpudi (red weaver ant).
- ★ Around 500 tribal families have been eking out a living by collecting and selling these insects and a chutney made with them.
- ★ The red weaver ants are indigenous to Mayurbhanj and are found in abundance in the jungles of every block area of the district, including in the Similipal Tiger Reserve, throughout the year.

## **Foundation Stone of Multiple Development Projects in Maharashtra**

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over 30,500 crore rupees in Maharashtra.
- ★ Mr Modi will inaugurate Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewari – Nhava Sheva Atal Setu to improve ease of mobility by strengthening urban transport infrastructure.
- ★ Atal Setu has been constructed at a total cost of more than 17,840 crore rupees.
- ★ It is about a 21.8 km long 6-lane bridge having about 16.5 km length over sea and about 5.5 km on the land.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone of the bridge in December 2016.
- ★ Mr Modi will also lay the foundation stone of the underground road tunnel connecting Eastern Freeway's Orange Gate to Marine Drive.
- ★ The 9.2 Km tunnel will be built at a cost of more than 8,700 crore rupees.
- ★ It will be a significant infrastructure development in Mumbai which will reduce travel time between Orange Gate and Marine Drive.
- ★ The project, developed at a cost of more than 1975 crore rupees will provide drinking water supply to the Palghar and Thane districts of Maharashtra, benefiting about 14 lakh population.

## **Direct Flight Between Ayodhya And Ahmedabad**

- ★ Direct flight services from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad started on January 11, 2024.
- ★ Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the direct flight of IndiGo Airlines from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad through Video conferencing.
- ★ On this occasion, the Chief Minister stated that this Maharshi Valmiki International Airport in Ayodhya will help in shaping the future of the youth of the region and will also benefit the economy in a major way.
- ★ He also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, and Indigo Airlines for this initiative and stated that with this facility of international airport, Ayodhya is going to shine on the tourist map of the world.
- ★ Flights from Ayodhya to cities like Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru are going to start soon.

## **India–United States Trade Policy Forum Held in New Delhi**

- ★ The 14<sup>th</sup> Ministerial-level meeting of the India–United States Trade Policy Forum (TPF) was held in New Delhi.
- ★ Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Katherine Tai co-chaired the forum meeting.
- ★ Ministers committed to pursuing a foundation to launch future Joint Initiatives in certain areas, including critical minerals, customs and trade facilitation, supply chains, and trade in high-tech products.

- ★ For this, both nations will develop an ambitious and forward-looking roadmap for enhanced co-operation to achieve economically meaningful outcomes.
- ★ In the forum, both nations agreed to establish a Joint Facilitative Mechanism (JFM) to mitigate non-tariff barriers which would pursue mutual recognition of results from International Laboratories and establish mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs), on a bilateral basis whenever possible.

### **Karnataka Government has initiated the Yuva Nidhi Scheme**

- ★ The Karnataka Government has initiated the Yuva Nidhi Scheme to provide financial support to educated unemployed youth in the state.
- ★ This scheme aims to offer economic security to the youth and reduce their dependence on others for their financial needs.
- ★ The Yuva Nidhi Scheme in Karnataka, launched by the state government, is a commendable initiative to bolster the economic prospects of educated, unemployed youth.
- ★ Under the Yuva Nidhi Scheme, eligible beneficiaries will receive monthly financial assistance directly in their bank accounts through Direct Bank Transfer (DBT). This financial aid will continue until they secure employment or for a maximum period of two years, whichever occurs earlier.
- ★ The government will disburse the following amounts to unemployed youth in Karnataka who have completed their degree or diploma courses in the academic year 2022-2023:
  - ₹3,000 per month for unemployed graduates.
  - ₹1,500 per month for diploma pass-outs.

### **Farsi would be the 9<sup>th</sup> Indian Classical Language**

- ★ In a move to strengthen cultural ties, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar announced that the Indian government has included Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages in India under the New Education Policy.
- ★ It is announced that Farsi will be a new classical language Under the New Education Policy 2020.
- ★ Recognising Farsi as a classical language will foster a greater understanding and appreciation of Farsi's rich heritage within the Indian educational framework.

### **Indian International Science Festival in Haryana**

- ★ Minister of State for Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh will inaugurate the 9<sup>th</sup> Indian International Science Festival in Faridabad, Haryana.
- ★ The primary objective of this festival is to commemorate the world of science, making it accessible to all.
- ★ It will continue till 20<sup>th</sup> January, which aims to engage the public with science and celebrate the joy of science.

- ★ The Department of Science and Technology informed that during the festival, 17 different events are being organized keeping in mind different sections of the society like young students, women scientists, toy manufacturers, social organizations, science teachers and start-ups. School, College students and general public can visit the festival through registration.
- ★ India emerges as a global frontrunner, showcasing its unparalleled prowess on the international stage.

### **PM Modi Releases First Instalment of PM-JANMAN to 1 Lakh Beneficiaries**

- ★ PM Modi released the first instalment to 1 lakh beneficiaries of PMAY-G under the PM-JANMAN scheme.
- ★ PM Modi released the first instalment of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN).
- ★ PM Modi released ₹540 crores as the first instalment of funding.
- ★ Since the launch of the PM-JANMAN scheme, had sanctioned projects worth over ₹4,700 crore through 9 ministries under the PM-JANMAN package.
- ★ PM-JANMAN was launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in November 2023.
- ★ It has a budget of around 2,40,004 crore rupees.
- ★ It focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine ministries.
- ★ It aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of the PVTGs by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities.
- ★ Safe housing, clean water to drink, better access to healthcare, nutrition, education, energy, road and telecom connectivity, and chances for sustainable livelihood are some of these facilities.
- ★ Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development.

### **Modi Inaugurates NACIN Complex in Andhra Pradesh**

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be inaugurating the new campus of National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) at Palasamudram in Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ He will be interacting with the Officer Trainees of the 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> batch of Indian Revenue Service (Custom and Indirect Taxes) as well as the Officer Trainees of the Royal Civil Service of Bhutan.
- ★ He will be visiting the Antiques Smuggling Study Centre, Narcotics Study Centre and Wildlife Crime Detection Centre at NACIN and will also plant a sapling and interact with construction workers.
- ★ The PM will also be releasing a book titled Flora of Palasamudram.

- ★ Andhra Pradesh Governor S.A. Nazeer, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Seetharaman are also likely to participate in the programme.

### **India's First Dark Sky Park**

- ★ The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) in Maharashtra has been marked as India's first Dark Sky Park and the fifth such park in Asia for protecting the night sky and preventing light pollution, making the facility ideal for astronomy enthusiasts.
- ★ The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) emphasises on the recognition of the intrinsic value of the night sky as a natural, cultural, and historical resource.
- ★ The IUCN also highlights the need to preserve natural darkness for the sake of nature conservation, ecological integrity in protected areas, and the well-being of communities in healthy cities, stated Prabhu Nath Shukla, Deputy Director of PTR Maharashtra.
- ★ The escalating global threat of light pollution poses a substantial risk to this invaluable resource, he stated in a release.
- ★ The Dark and Quiet Skies for Science and Society Working Group, led by the International Astronomical Union, has recommended the establishment of 'Dark Sky Oases' by national and local governments, Shukla.
- ★ He stated the Dark Sky Place certification focuses on lighting policy, dark sky-friendly retrofits, outreach and education, and monitoring the night sky.

### **Haryana CM Inaugurates 2<sup>nd</sup> Panchkula Book Fair**

- ★ Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal inaugurated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panchkula Book Fair, organized by six departments under the aegis of power companies in Panchkula.
- ★ The National Book Trust also has a special contribution in this fair.
- ★ The theme of the book fair is "Haryana illuminates with the light of knowledge, knowledge flows through electricity".
- ★ Nearly 100 publishers have put stalls in the fair, in which books of Hindi, English, Urdu, Sanskrit, Punjabi, among others are available. The book fair will continue till 22 January.
- ★ Addressing the event, Haryana Chief Minister stated that the coordination of language in books is akin to the mutual relationship between body and soul.
- ★ He stated that books not only enhance knowledge but also free us from mental stress.

### **Karnataka HC Imposes ₹5 Lakh Penalty on Government**

- ★ The Karnataka High Court has imposed a fine of ₹5 lakh on the State Government after it did not comply with a court order passed in 2020.
- ★ The order was passed by a bench consisting of Chief Justice Prasanna Varale and Justice Krishna S. Dixit.



- ★ The contempt complaint was filed by a retired employee of the Department of Public Libraries regarding the non-fulfilment of the 2020 order, which had ruled in his favour regarding entitlement to pay increments.
- ★ The 2020 order was based on a petition that the employee had filed in 2014, and ended with the court directing the Government to comply with its order from 2006 and pay the amount.

### **PM Issued Six Postage Stamps for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple**

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi released six special commemorative postage stamps dedicated to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in New Delhi.
- ★ Along with this, an album of postage stamps related to Shri Ram which were issued earlier in many countries of the world was also released.
- ★ The 48-page album contains stamps related to Ram from 20 countries including America and New Zealand.
- ★ Postal stamps have been made by incorporating five components in its pictures.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi released a total of 6 commemorative postage stamps which include Lord Ganesha, Lord Hanuman, Ram Temple, Jatayu, Kevatraj and Maa Shabari.
- ★ These commemorative stamps will also help the young generation of the country to know about Lord Ram and his life.

### **Wings India 2024**

- ★ Wings India 2024, Asia's largest civil aviation event, is being held at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad.
- ★ The eighth edition of the once-in-two-year event was inaugurated on 18 January 2024 by the Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.
- ★ The Airports Authority of India, in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and FICCI, is organizing the biennial event.
- ★ Wings India 2024 showcases a collection of new-generation aircraft displays, allied aviation services, auxiliary unit industries, and advancements in the tourism sector.
- ★ The four-day Wings India 2024 brought together various worldwide stakeholders and aviation industry participants to promote collaboration, showcase innovations, and explore business opportunities.

### **IREDA and IOB Signed MoU**

- ★ IREDA has entered into an agreement with IOB for co-finance and loan syndication for renewable energy projects in the country.
- ★ The MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed by Dr. RC Sharma, General Manager, IREDA and Ajay Kumar Srivastava, General Manager and CEO, IOB, at IREDA's Business Center on January 16, 2024 in New Delhi.

- ★ The agreement between Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) and Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has created a platform for joint lending (co-lending) for renewable energy projects. The agreement between the two will also strengthen collaborative efforts in loan syndication.
- ★ The strategic partnership between the two will help in accelerating the development of renewable energy in the country.
- ★ This MoU includes provisions for providing joint lending and co-origination support for all renewable energy projects.
- ★ The collaboration aims to make it easier to get loans and manage finances for IREDA projects, with a focus on stable interest rates over a 3 to 4 year period.
- ★ This is in line with the Prime Minister's COP26 announcement to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil-based power generation capacity by 2030.

### **AP CM Jagan to Unveil 125-ft Statue of Ambedkar in Vijayawada**

- ★ Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy unveiled the 206 feet tall statue of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar at Swaraj Maidan in Vijayawada on 19 January 2024.
- ★ The world's tallest statue of BR Ambedkar is in Vijayawada.
- ★ Ambedkar's 206 feet Mahashilapam, built by the Andhra Pradesh government in Vijayawada, is a symbol not only for the state but also for the country.
- ★ The world's tallest statue of Dr. Ambedkar unveiled in Vijayawada has been named 'Statue of Social Justice'.
- ★ It will be included in the list of top 50 tallest statues in the world.
- ★ The construction of this statue has been completely done under the Made in India project. It is constructed using approximately 400 tons of steel.
- ★ The tallest statue of Dr. Ambedkar outside India is in Washington, America. It was unveiled last year in 2023, which was named 'Statue of Equality'.

### **Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center Campus**

- ★ Indian Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the new state-of-the-art Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center (BIETC) campus in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- ★ Built with an investment of ₹1,600 crores, the 43-acre campus is Boeing's largest such investment outside the USA.
- ★ The Prime Minister also launched the Boeing Sukanya Program which aims to support the entry of more girl children from across India into the country's growing aviation sector.
- ★ The Prime Minister took a walkthrough of the Experience Center and interacted with Sukanya beneficiaries.
- ★ The Prime Minister inaugurated the new state-of-the-art Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center (BIETC) campus in Bengaluru. Built with an investment of ₹1,600 crores, the 43-acre campus is Boeing's largest such investment outside the USA.

- ★ Boeing's new campus in India will become a cornerstone for partnership with the vibrant startup, private and government ecosystem in India, and will help develop next-generation products and services for the global aerospace and defence industry.

### **Prime Minister Lays Foundation Stone for Eight Projects Maharashtra**

- ★ The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of 8 AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) projects worth around ₹2,000 crores in Solapur, Maharashtra.
- ★ Shri Modi dedicated to the nation more than 90,000 houses completed under PMAY-Urban in Maharashtra and 15,000 houses of Raynagar Housing Society in Solapur, whose beneficiaries comprise thousands of handloom workers, vendors, power loom workers, rag pickers, Bidi workers, drivers, among others.
- ★ He also initiated the distribution of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> instalments to 10,000 beneficiaries of PM-SVANIDHI in Maharashtra during the programme.

### **National Skill Training Institute in Hyderabad**

- ★ Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy inaugurated the National Skill Training Institute in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- ★ Constructed for ₹19.90 crore in an area of 4 acres, the institute offers short-term and long-term skilling courses to women in various sectors.
- ★ Reddy emphasized that empowering women has been a major priority for the Central Government.
- ★ He stated that the government has launched numerous schemes dedicated to empowering women across India, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and PM Ujjwala.
- ★ He also added that several other initiatives have been taken to help women increase their opportunities to build decision-making power.
- ★ The event was attended by several women achievers like Saina Nehwal and Sunita Krishnan.

### **First Pilot Project to Make Jet Fuel from Alcohol in Pune**

- ★ The first pilot technology project to make jet fuel from alcohol was inaugurated by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Pune.
- ★ This project will produce sustainable biological aviation fuel or SAF.
- ★ This pilot project has been set up in the research and development department of Praj Udyog Group in Pirangut Industrial Estate near Pune.
- ★ Pramod Chaudhary, President of Praj, along with officials of Indian Oil and other oil companies were present for the inauguration program.
- ★ There is a huge demand for this bioaviation fuel in the global market, and it is a big challenge to provide the necessary raw materials for it.

- ★ He added, that most of the countries around the world have great expectations from India for biofuel.
- ★ He congratulated the engineers of Praj Udyog Group for setting up this project in India before Brazil and expressed confidence that this project will truly be a pioneer for the world.
- ★ After the inauguration, the Minister along with other officials inspected the project and expressed satisfaction over the use of state-of-the-art technology.

### **Akasa Air Announces Flight Operation**

- ★ Akasa Air has become the second airline to announce tie up with Noida International Airport, located near the national capital.
- ★ Visitors gathered near an Akasa Air aircraft during the ‘Wings India 2024’, an exhibition and conference on civil aviation, at the Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad.
- ★ Previous to Akasa Air, IndiGo was the first airlines to announce its partnership with the Noida airport for commercial services to enhance connectivity, the airline had said in a statement earlier.
- ★ A partnership agreement was signed between Akasa Air and Noida International Airport in Hyderabad on the sidelines of industry event ‘Wings 2024’.
- ★ The Noida International Airport, which is also called the Jewar International Airport, is aimed at servicing the National Capital Region (NCR).
- ★ Noida International Airport, which is expected to start operating from September 2024, is aimed at offering passengers unmatched connectivity and an exceptional travel experience.
- ★ Akasa Air’s partnership with Noida airport will help aid connectivity between NCR and Tier 2 and 3 cities across the country.

### **‘Gole Mela’ Festival at Jagannath Temple, Udhampur**

- ★ In Jammu and Kashmir, a Popular Festival known as ‘Gole Mela’ was organized at Jagannath temple in Udhampur.
- ★ A large number of devotees assembled and paid obeisance at Jagannath temple.
- ★ Gole Mela is organized twice every year.
- ★ Moreover, two ancient temples are dedicated to Lord Jagannatha across India.
- ★ One is situated in Puri, Orissa and other in Udhampur District of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **Kachchhi Kharek Gem from Kutch Receives GI Tag**

- ★ Kachchhi Kharek, the indigenous date variety from the arid region of Kutch in Gujarat, has recently been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- ★ This accolade recognizes Kachchhi Kharek as the second fruit from Gujarat, after the Gir Kesar mango, to be distinguished with such an honour.

- ★ The GI tag is a form of intellectual property that identifies a product as originating from a specific geographic location.
- ★ It is characterized by qualities, reputation, or attributes unique to that area.
- ★ This tag not only protects and promotes products associated with a particular region but also prevents unauthorized use of the name.

### **Ayodhya Ram Mandir Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi**

- ★ The Ram Janmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya will be opened to the general public from January 23.
- ★ Thousands of devotees and pilgrims are expected to visit the grand temple daily for 'darshan' of Lord Ram Lalla.
- ★ The 'pran pratishtha' ceremony of the temple took place on January 22 in an event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other VVIP guests.
- ★ The Ram temple holds immense importance for millions of devotees and followers of Hinduism who believe that it's situated at the birthplace of Lord Ram.
- ★ The idol also contains carvings of all ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, Hindu Gods like Lord Hanuman and other major Hindu religious symbols.
- ★ According to the website of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, the 'darshan' of Lord Ram Lalla can be done.
- ★ The free passes for the "aarti" can be obtained offline and online.

### **Vice President to Inaugurate 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman' Campaign**

- ★ Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will inaugurate a year-long pan India campaign Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Year of India as a Republic, in New Delhi.
- ★ The campaign aims to reaffirm the collective commitment to the principles enshrined in the Constitution of India and celebrate the shared values that bind the nation.
- ★ This nationwide initiative envisages instilling a sense of pride and responsibility to uphold the ideals outlined in the constitutional framework.
- ★ It will also give opportunity to every citizen to participate in various ways and empower them to contribute in a meaningful way in the democratic journey.
- ★ During the Event, Nyaya Setu will be launched which is a significant and transformative step that aims to extend and expand the reach of legal services till the last mile.
- ★ It will provide a unified legal interface for legal information, legal advice and legal assistance and thus enable a more inclusive and just society.

### **Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2024 Announced**

- ★ 19 children have been selected for Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar.

- ★ Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) are given to children in the age group of 5-18 years in seven categories.
- ★ PMRBP is given in Bravery, Art and Culture, Environment, Innovation, Science & Technology, Social Service and Sports categories.
- ★ Each awardee will be presented a medal, certificate and a citation booklet.
- ★ The awards will be presented by the President of India at Vigyan Bhawan on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024.
- ★ The children will also participate in the Republic Day parade on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- ★ One child in the categories of Bravery, Science & Technology, and Innovation has been selected for the PMRBP.
- ★ Four children have been selected for the Social Service category while five children in the category of Sports and seven children have been selected in the category of Art and Culture.
- ★ Out of the total 19 children, 9 are boys and 10 are girls and they belong to 18 States and UTs.

### **Jaisalmer to Host Desert Festival 2024**

- ★ The Desert Festival 2024 is scheduled to take place in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, from February 22 to 24, with the theme “Back to the Desert”.
- ★ The festival will kick off with a procession starting from Lakshminath temple.
- ★ A notable focus for this year’s festival is to provide ample space for local artists to showcase their talents.
- ★ Preparations for the event have commenced, marked by a meeting chaired by district collector Pratap Singh.
- ★ The meeting involved stakeholders such as citizens, hoteliers, tourism operators, and artists, seeking their suggestions and involvement in the festival.

### **SJVN Inks Pact with NHAI**

- ★ State-owned power producer SJVN has signed an agreement with NHAI to provide technical consultancy services for highway projects.
- ★ The primary focus of this MoU is to utilise the expertise of SJVN in Technical Consultancy Services.
- ★ This consultancy service will be initially provided for a period of 24 months by SJVN to NHAI.
- ★ SJVN, formerly known as Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, is an Indian public sector undertaking involved in hydroelectric power generation and transmission.

### **The 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha to be Held**

- ★ The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha 2024’ will be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month.

- ★ Ministry of Education announced that, through the unique interactive program, over 4,000 participants will be interacting with the Prime Minister.
- ★ The programme will be held in a town hall format at Delhi's Bharat Mandapam.
- ★ Pariksha Pe Charcha is a programme where students, parents, and teachers from across the nation and also from overseas interact with the Prime Minister to discuss anxieties related to examinations and life after school.
- ★ Pariksha Pe Charcha is part of the larger movement 'Exam Warriors' led by Mr Mhodi to create a stress-free atmosphere for youngsters.

### **Desert National Park May Get UNESCO World Heritage Status**

- ★ The Desert National Park (DNP) is located in the Rajasthan State of India and covers an area of 3162 sq.km.
- ★ Out of this, 1900 sq.km; is in Jaisalmer district and the remaining 1262 sq.km; is in Barmer district.
- ★ The park was established in 1980 and is situated in an extremely hot and arid region, with very low rainfall.
- ★ DNP is the natural habitat of the Great Indian Bustard (state bird), Chinkara (state animal), Khejri (state tree) and Rohida (state flower).
- ★ It is the only place where these species are found together.
- ★ A World Heritage Site is a location that has been recognised by UNESCO for its cultural or physical significance.
- ★ Such sites are a part of the International 'World Heritage Programme', which is managed by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

### **IREDA Releases Vigilance Journal 'Pahal'**

- ★ Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), a Government of India enterprise under the administrative control of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has unveiled 'Pahal'- the insightful house journal of its Vigilance Department.
- ★ The journal was unveiled by the Chairman and Managing Director of IREDA, Shri Pradip Kumar Das on January 25, 2024.
- ★ Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited is an Indian public sector enterprise that provides financial assistance and other services to projects related to renewable sources of energy and energy conservation.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of India Energy Week**

- ★ The second edition of India Energy Week is scheduled to take place in Goa from 6 to 9 February 2024.
- ★ Indian Energy Week is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, the Government of India and the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI).

- ★ India Energy Week is a great opportunity to showcase the latest developments in the energy sector and provide a platform for further growth.
- ★ The event hosts two influential conferences – the Strategic Conference and the Technical Conference.
- ★ The Strategic Conference will host Global Energy Ministers, CEOs, policymakers and business leaders to discuss the trends shaping the future of energy.
- ★ The Technical Conference, on the other hand, will provide technical expertise for engineers, project managers and innovators driving India’s energy transition. This conference will focus on cutting-edge research and industry best practices.

### **Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan Signed MoU With The Government Of India**

- ★ Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, as both states signed an MoU with the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS), Government of India (GoI) in New Delhi.
- ★ The MoU is for the implementation of the “Modified PKC-ERCP” which integrates the original PKC with the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project of Rajasthan.
- ★ This is the second project under the national perspective plan of the interlinking of rivers (ILR) program.
- ★ With a view to utilize the water resources optimally, the integration of the Parbati-Kalisindh – Chambal (PKC) link of NPP with Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) was discussed in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> meetings of the Task Force for Interlinking of Rivers (TFILR) in year 2019.

### **Ministry of Rural Development and Lady Irwin College Renews MoU**

- ★ Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), and Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, have renewed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- ★ During the five-year term of MoU, MoRD will work with ROSHNI – Centre of Women Collectives led Social Action (CWCSA), to strengthen interventions for better results of Food, Nutrition, Health and WASH (FNHW) for rural communities.
- ★ This initiative will enhance capacity building of community resource persons (CRP) for FNHW and gender interventions.
- ★ ROSHNI-CWCSA is supported by UNICEF India technically and financially
- ★ ROSHNI assists DAY-NRLM to improve food, nutrition, health, and WASH (FNHW) outcomes for 9.96 crore Self Help Group (SHG) members and their households across the country.

### **World’s First Melanistic Tiger Safari**

- ★ The Government of Odisha has recently announced the establishment of the world’s first melanistic tiger safari and it is likely to be ready for visitors by October 2024.
- ★ There are preparations to develop Safari near Baripada, the district headquarters of Mayurbhanj.



- ★ A 200-hectare site adjacent to National Highway 18 has been identified for this initiative.
- ★ It is located near Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj.
- ★ This safari will be the first of its kind anywhere in the world and will give tourists a chance to see “the rare and majestic “melanistic tiger species found only in Odisha”.
- ★ The safari will house surplus tigers from Nandankanan Zoo and rescued or orphaned tigers that are unfit for the wild but are suitable for display. Open enclosures will provide habitat for these tigers.
- ★ The safari is intended to offer a close encounter with the rare beauty of melanistic tigers, thereby promoting awareness of their conservation needs.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **Argentine President Javier Milei Declines BRICS Membership**

- ★ Argentine President Javier Milei sent a letter to BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) leaders to convey the decision not to join the BRICS.
- ★ In August 2023, six new members were admitted to BRICS: Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- ★ The membership of these new countries was scheduled to take effect from January 1, 2024.
- ★ During his election campaign, Milei had vowed not to join BRICS.

### **India-Oman FTA to be signed in January 2024**

- ★ India and Oman will likely sign a free trade agreement in early 2024.
- ★ This free trade agreement will benefit export sectors such as motor gasoline, iron and steel products, electronics, machinery, etc.
- ★ Currently, these goods face a 5% import duty in Oman.
- ★ Oman’s import duty ranges from 0 to 100%.
- ★ A duty of 100% is on specific items such as meats, wines, and tobacco products.
- ★ Both sides have concluded the negotiations on most of the issues.
- ★ India has the potential to export products like light oils and preparations of petroleum and bituminous minerals, medicaments, parts and accessories for motor vehicles, etc. to Oman.
- ★ Oman is India’s third-largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

### **MoU between India and Guyana**

- ★ The Union Cabinet has approved the MoU between ISRO and MRIC regarding co-operation in developing a joint small satellite.

- ★ The agreement was signed between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) in Port Louis, Mauritius.
- ★ This MoU will establish a framework for co-operation between the two for developing a joint satellite and using MRIC ground stations.
- ★ Some of the sub-systems of this joint satellite will be adopted through the participation of Indian industries, which will benefit the industry.
- ★ This joint satellite construction will also prove helpful in ensuring support from MRIC from its ground station for ISRO's future small satellite missions.

### **South Korea Launches 'Workation' Visa for Foreigners**

- ★ South Korea introduced a new visa for foreigners allowing them to visit the country on a working holiday or workation.
- ★ The "workation" or "digital nomad" visa allows foreign nationals to visit South Korea on a working holiday.
- ★ Foreign nationals with an annual income twice as much as South Korea's per capita gross national income will be eligible to apply for the visa.
- ★ It will be given to those having a work experience of over a year in one industry and are eligible for remote work.
- ★ Moreover, the applicants must also have medical insurance of over 100 million won (₹63,62,655.45) and must cover medical treatment and repatriation fees.
- ★ The visa will also be allowed to the families of these employees.
- ★ The visa, which is valid for a year and renewable for up to two years.

### **India Starts Four-Year Term as UN Statistical Commission Member**

- ★ India started its four-year term as a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
- ★ The country had won the election to the global statistics body in April after a gap of nearly two decades.
- ★ The period of India's term corresponds with the time that the 24-member body will decide on new norms for national accounts, which will also play an important role in changing India's GDP calculations.
- ★ The UN Statistical Commission was established in 1947 and is the highest body of the global statistical system.
- ★ The Commission consists of 24 member countries. The term of office of members is four years.

### **Kyrgyzstan Declared 'Snow Leopard' As National Symbol**

- ★ Kyrgyzstan has officially declared the snow leopard as its national symbol.
- ★ The Kyrgyz Republic states that "snow leopard is not only a symbol of natural wealth and cultural prosperity but also an indicator of the stability and health of the mountain ecosystem".

- ★ The Cabinet of the Kyrgyzstan government will develop a logo, explore symbol usage at different levels, and define its ideological content.
- ★ The snow leopard is also known as Panthera.
- ★ It represents greatness, nobility, courage, bravery, and resilience.

### **India to Host UNESCO's World Heritage Committee**

- ★ India has been selected for the first time to chair and host the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- ★ Vishal V Verma, India's permanent representative to UNESCO, has announced.
- ★ The 46<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee will be held in New Delhi between 21 and 31 July 2024.
- ★ The World Heritage Committee selects sites that can be listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- ★ The World Heritage Committee currently consists of 21 countries.
- ★ UNESCO cooperates with member countries and supports various programmes, initiatives, campaigns and organisations to advance the welfare of the world's people.

### **India and UAE Signed Four MOUs at Gujarat Summit**

- ★ At the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, India exchanged four MOUs with the UAE.
- ★ Addressing the media at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar, Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs Vinay Mohan Kwatra, the MoUs are related to Investment co-operation in innovative healthcare, renewable energy, food parks and logistics co-operation.
- ★ Totally 35 countries have participated in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit as partner countries.
- ★ Mr Kwatra also told the media that India and the Czech Republic agreed to build a strategic partnership in fields such as research and technology at the Summit.

### **International Camel Festival**

- ★ The Department of Tourism organised the three-day International Camel Festival, which started with a Heritage Walk in the Bikaner district of Rajasthan.
- ★ On the first day of the festival, both domestic and foreign tourists were seen enjoying the celebration of traditional folk culture.
- ★ The festivities commence at Rampuriya Haveli with beautifully decorated camels, women dressed in colourful traditional costumes and folk artists participating in the Heritage Walk.
- ★ Local artists entertained the crowd with folk songs, Rammats and dances, showcasing the local culture.
- ★ During the heritage walk, city residents extended a warm welcome to the guests by showering flowers and creating rangolis at various places along the way.

## **MoI between India and Netherlands**

- ★ Cabinet approves Memorandum of Intent (MoI) between India and Netherlands on co-operation in the field of Medical products Regulation.
- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) signed between the Central Drugs standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- ★ The MoI between the regulatory authorities of the two countries will facilitate better understanding of medical products regulation with regard to pharmaceuticals including raw materials for pharmaceutical use, biological products, medical devices and cosmetic products.
- ★ The MoI will facilitate export of medical products leading to foreign exchange earnings.
- ★ This would be a step towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

## **Vice-Chair of UN FAO Committee on Fisheries**

- ★ India has been elected as the Vice-Chair of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Fisheries (COFI) Management.
- ★ India's role in this committee as a representative of least developed and developing countries in the field of fisheries and management will determine the direction of the sector.
- ★ India will serve as a member of the global Bureau of Fisheries and Management for the first time in 57 years.
- ★ This will prove especially important in the case of artisanal and small scale fisheries.
- ★ The embassy also said that India will work as a member of the FAO Fisheries Bureau on 'Capture Fisheries' for the first time in 57 years.

## **India Launches Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality Alliance**

- ★ India launched Global Good Alliance for Gender Equity and Equality, at the World Economic Forum Summit at Davos, Switzerland, held from 15 to 19 January 2024.
- ★ At the World Economic Forum's annual meeting, India participated in the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", ready to shape a common future marked by global co-operation,
- ★ The theme of the WEF summit is 'Rebuilding Trust'.
- ★ The idea of this new alliance emerged from the presidency of G20 India and its abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ This new Alliance aims to bring together knowledge sharing, global best practices and investments in the identified areas of women's education, health, and enterprise.
- ★ The World Economic Forum came on board as a 'Network Partner' and Invest India as an 'Institutional Partner'.

- ★ This 'Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality' is poised to be a force to reckon with on all gender-related issues given India's abiding commitment to Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' along with its continued efforts towards "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Prayas".

### **North Korea Conducts 'Underwater Nuclear Weapons System' Test**

- ★ North Korea informed it has carried out a test of its "underwater nuclear weapons system" in response to drills by the US, South Korea and Japan this week.
- ★ The underwater drone, which supposedly can carry a nuclear weapon, was tested off the east coast, state media stated.
- ★ South Korea called the reported tests a "provocation".
- ★ The North has claimed tests of its "Haeil-5-23" system before, but the latest incident comes as the North has ramped up military action in recent weeks.
- ★ It claimed to have deployed a new solid-fuelled intermediate-range ballistic missile.
- ★ That followed live-fire drills at the maritime border with South Korea in the first week of January.

### **G77-Third South Summit Held at Kampala in Uganda**

- ★ The Third South Summit was held at Kampala in Uganda from 20 to 23 January 2024 with the theme "Leaving No One Behind".
- ★ The Third South Summit is a platform to bring energy to the co-operation among its 134 member States of the Group of 77 (G-77) in a more competitive world.
- ★ From the Indian side Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan attended the inaugural session of the Third South Summit.
- ★ The summit aims to boost South-South co-operation, in the areas of trade and sustainable development, investment, climate change, poverty eradication, and digital economy.
- ★ On June 1964, the Group of 77 (G-77) was established by 77 developing countries.

### **Switzerland and India Signed FTA**

- ★ After 16 years of negotiations, Switzerland and India have finally reached a consensus on a free-trade agreement, as confirmed by Swiss Economy Minister Guy Parmelin, reported.
- ★ According to the agency, Parmelin travelled to India directly from the World Economic Forum in Davos to meet with Minister Piyush Goyal.
- ★ Parmelin is heading the delegation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).
- ★ The meeting was described as a positive step towards advancing negotiations on a free trade agreement.
- ★ The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) announced that EFTA had updated its free trade agreement with Chile.

### **Cabo Verde Declared a Malaria-Free Country**

- ★ The World Health Organization (WHO) has certified Cabo Verde as a malaria-free country, marking a significant achievement in the global fight against the disease.
- ★ Cabo Verde joins the 43 other countries and 1 territory that have received this certification, becoming the third country in the WHO African region to achieve this status, following Mauritius and Algeria.
- ★ Malaria remains an urgent health concern, especially in Africa, where approximately 95% of global malaria cases and 96% of related deaths occurred in 2021.
- ★ Cabo Verde's success in eliminating malaria is a triumph for the nation and brings hope for the African region.

### **AP Moller-Maersk Reveals World's Largest Methanol-Powered Container Ship**

- ★ AP Moller-Maersk has revealed the Ane Maersk, the world's largest Ship that can run on the green hydrogen.
- ★ It was named after Ane Maersk Mc-Kinney Uggla, Chairman of the Parent Company AP Moller Holding.
- ★ It can carry 8 times more containers than Danish Logistics Company's Laura Maersk, which became the world's first methanol dual-fuel container ship when it was launched in September 2023.
- ★ AP Moller-Maersk has revealed the Ane Maersk, the world's largest Ship that can run on the green hydrogen.
- ★ It was named after Ane Maersk Mc-Kinney Uggla, Chairman of the Parent Company AP Moller Holding.
- ★ It can carry 8 times more containers than Danish Logistics Company's Laura Maersk, which became the world's first methanol dual-fuel container ship when it was launched in September 2023.

## **BANKING, FINANCE & ECONOMICS**

### **NPCI Set to Introduce UPI for Secondary Market**

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is set to kick off an Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA)-like facility in the secondary market from 01 January 2024.
- ★ The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for the secondary market will start its beta phase next week for the equity cash segment.
- ★ It will be supported by key stakeholders, including clearing corporations, stock exchanges, depositories, stockbrokers, banks, and UPI app providers.
- ★ This Beta launch is facilitated by Groww as the brokerage app, alongside BHIM, Groww, and YES PAY NEXT as UPI apps.

- ★ Initially, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank customers will be able to avail this facility.
- ★ Further, HDFC Bank, HSBC, ICICI Bank, and Yes Bank are sponsor banks for the Clearing Corporation and exchanges.
- ★ NPCI added that the 'beta phase' of the service will initially be available for a limited set of users.

### **RBI Sets the Redemption Price for SGB at ₹6,331 per Unit**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fixed a price of ₹6,331 per unit for premature redemption of two tranches of sovereign gold bonds issued in January 2018 and January 2019.
- ★ Although sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) are issued for a duration of 8 years, investors are allowed to redeem them prematurely after 5 years from the date of issue.
- ★ The next due date for premature redemption of the specified tranches is January 1, as mentioned by the central bank.
- ★ The redemption price of the sovereign gold bonds is determined based on the simple average of the closing gold price of 999 purity over the previous 3 business days from the date of redemption.
- ★ SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.
- ★ They are substitutes for holding physical gold.

### **Central Bank of India Partnered With Kisetsu Saison Finance**

- ★ Central Bank of India (CBI) has entered into a strategic co-lending partnership with Kisetsu Saison Finance, India to facilitate MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) loans.
- ★ Both entities participating in the co-lending arrangement anticipate a significant expansion of their loan portfolios.
- ★ This collaboration suggests a mutual interest in leveraging each other's strengths for increased market presence.
- ★ The partnership was officially announced through a regulatory filing by the Central Bank of India.
- ★ Co-lending (or co-origination) is a financial arrangement where both banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) join forces to provide credit, especially for priority sector lending.
- ★ In this specific arrangement, the risk-sharing ratio is mentioned as 80:20.

### **SEBI Extends Nomination Filing Deadline for Mutual Funds and Demat Accounts**

- ★ Capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has once again extended the deadline for mutual fund and demat account holders to add the name of the beneficiary/beneficiaries or opt out of it till June 30, 2024.
- ★ Earlier, the deadline for the same was December 31, 2023.

- ★ The move is aimed at helping investors to secure their assets and pass them on to their legal heirs.
- ★ If investors fail to meet the nomination deadline, SEBI may freeze debits from their holdings.
- ★ This implies that investors won't be able to withdraw from mutual funds or engage in trading using their demat accounts.

### **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)**

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI) and HDFC Bank, both domestic systemically important banks (D-SIBs), will be required to set aside higher capital for the loans they make with effect from April 1, 2025, in the backdrop of their balance sheets growing bigger.
- ★ The Central Bank has prescribed higher additional Common Equity Tier (CET) 1 requirement for SBI (bucket 3 to bucket 4 ) and HDFC Bank (bucket 1 to bucket 2) at 0.80 per cent (against 0.60 per cent up to March-end 2025) and 0.40 per cent (0.20 per cent), respectively, as a percentage of their Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs).
- ★ For ICICI Bank, the additional CET 1 requirement continues at 0.20%.
- ★ SBI, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank continue to be identified as D-SIBs.
- ★ RBI stated that SIBs are perceived as banks that are 'Too Big To Fail (TBTF)'.
- ★ This perception of TBTF creates an expectation of government support for these banks at the time of distress.

### **Small Finance Banks Launch 'Small Banks: Empowering Big Dreams'**

- ★ While each small finance bank (SFB) has a different tagline to capture customers' attention, they will also have a common one-"Small Banks: Empowering Big Dreams" to highlight the success of their business model to all stakeholders.
- ★ SFBs are mandated to lend at least 75% of their total advances to priority sectors such as agriculture, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), education, housing, and others.
- ★ Further, at least 50 per cent of their loan portfolio should comprise loans and advances of up to ₹25 lakh.
- ★ 10 SFBs commenced operations in the 2016-2017.
- ★ In 2021, Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank transitioned to become an SFB.
- ★ In 2021, Unity SFB was given a license on the condition that it take over the fraud-hit Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative Bank.
- ★ The tagline "Small Banks: Empowering Big Dreams" reflects the philosophy of all 12 SFBs.
- ★ In its latest "Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India", RBI noted that SFBs serve a critical role in delivering credit to under-banked segments.



### **IOB Introduces Savings Account Portability Online Scheme**

- ★ Public sector bank Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has introduced ‘Savings Account Portability Online’, a scheme that is aimed at offering an easier savings account portability process for customers who move to different locations.
- ★ For individuals, who have to shift from one location to another due to career shifts, educational pursuits, or various life transitions, the new scheme will help avoid the cumbersome process of relocating bank accounts.
- ★ With the new online scheme, customers don’t have to fill out those endless forms and wait for days and weeks for the account transfer to materialise.
- ★ To initiate an account transfer, customers need to log in to the IOB website (iob.in) and access the ‘Transfer of Savings Accounts’ section.

### **Karnataka Bank Facilitates Direct Tax Payments for Customers**

- ★ Customers of Karnataka Bank can make direct tax payments through two channels by visiting any branch of the bank or utilizing the internet banking services.
- ★ Karnataka Bank has enhanced its service portfolio by enabling users to pay various direct taxes, including income taxes and advance taxes.
- ★ In addition to direct taxes, Karnataka Bank had already been facilitating online payments for goods and services taxes, as well as customs duties.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) authorized Karnataka Bank to offer this service, following a recommendation from the Ministry of Finance’s Controller General of Accounts.
- ★ Both the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) have given their approval for Karnataka Bank to collect both direct and indirect taxes.

### **ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund to Acquire 9.95% Stake in Karur Vysya Bank**

- ★ Karur Vysya Bank (KVB) announces that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given approval to ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company Ltd (ICICI AMC) for acquiring an aggregate holding of up to 9.95% of the paid-up share capital or voting rights of The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd.
- ★ The approval is in reference to the application submitted by ICICI AMC to the RBI.
- ★ The approval granted by the RBI is subject to compliance with relevant provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ★ It also adheres to RBI’s Master Direction and Guidelines on Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights in Banking Companies dated January 16, 2023.

### **Paytm Enters Partnership with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam**

- ★ One97 Communications which owns the brand Paytm signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam, to enable Nagar Nigam facilities with mobile payments using Paytm pioneered QR code, Soundbox and card machines.
- ★ This is aimed at providing seamless mobile payment services during the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in the city.
- ★ With this, the company will enable mobile payments at various departments in collaboration with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam.
- ★ Through this MoU, the company will also deploy Paytm card machines at cash collection centres under State Nagar Nigam departments.
- ★ This MoU was signed in presence of Girish Pati Tripathi, Mayor, Ayodhya Nagar Nigam.

### **Finance Ministry Greenlights an Additional ₹1,500 Crore for FAME-II Scheme**

- ★ The Union Finance Ministry has approved an additional ₹1,500 crore for the second phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-II) program.
- ★ The decision to allocate additional funds was made to address concerns that the existing budget might be exhausted before the scheme concludes in March 2024, given the robust sales of electric vehicles (EVs).
- ★ A proposal to increase the FAME-II outlay from ₹10,000 crore to ₹11,500 crore was approved by the department of expenditure (DoE) on January 2, 2024.
- ★ Until December 26, the government had utilized ₹8,948 crore of the ₹10,000 crore allocated funds under the FAME-II scheme.
- ★ Supplementary funds injection has led to an increase in the government's vehicle support objectives for all categories except buses.

### **'Politically Exposed Persons' Term to Meet FATF Norms**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) updated Know Your Customer (KYC) norms for politically exposed persons (PEPs) who transact with regulated entities (REs), seeking to comply with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- ★ In the amended KYC master direction, the central bank defines PEPs as individuals who have held or are currently entrusted with prominent public functions by a foreign country.
- ★ This includes heads of states/governments, senior politicians, senior government or judicial or military officers, senior executives of state-owned corporations, and important political party officials.
- ★ Regulated entities (REs) have the option to establish relationships with PEPs, either as customers or beneficial owners.

## **Narayana Health Gets IRDAI Nod to Launch Health Insurance Business**

- ★ Narayana Health has received approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to venture into the health insurance business in India.
- ★ The company operates one of the largest hospital chains, known by the brand name Narayana Hospital.
- ★ With this approval, the count of Standalone Health Insurance Companies (SAHI) will increase from 5 to 6.
- ★ This marks the fifth registration granted by IRDAI in approximately one year, encompassing Life, Non-life, and Health segments.
- ★ IRDAI has set a goal of achieving 'Insurance for All' by 2047, with a particular focus on improving the penetration of non-life insurance companies, which currently stands at 1 percent.
- ★ India's overall insurance penetration is expected to decrease to 4 percent in the financial year 2022-23 from the previous level of 4.2 percent in 2021-22.

## **SEBI Modifies Framework for Online Bond Platform Providers**

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has made adjustments to the regulatory framework for Online Bond Platform Providers (OBPPs) to improve the ease of doing business.
- ★ SEBI made these changes in response to representations from stock exchanges and market participants, including online bond platforms.
- ★ Under this, the regulator has modified the framework pertaining to the issue of order receipt, deal sheet and quote receipt in case of products, securities or services.
- ★ On placement of an order by an investor, SEBI Stated that OBPPs will have to issue without delay an electronic order receipt which includes the date and time of the order, details of counter-parties involved, quantity and amount proposed to be transacted.
- ★ An entity serving as an Online Bond Platform Provider can offer specific products, securities, or services on its platform.
- ★ OBPPs must register themselves as stockbrokers in the debt segment of the stock exchange under the new rules.

## **Tata Pay Secures Payment Aggregator License from RBI**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted a payment aggregator (PA) licence to Tata Payments, Tata group's digital payments app.
- ★ Tata Payments, held through Tata Digital, aims to facilitate e-commerce transactions through its platform.
- ★ Tata Payments operates under Tata Digital, the subsidiary entity of the Tata Group dedicated to its digital businesses.
- ★ Tata Pay joins other prominent players like Razorpay, Cashfree, and Google Pay in obtaining the coveted payment aggregator license.

- ★ With the PA license, Tata can manage and power all e-commerce transactions within its subsidiary entities, leading to more efficient fund management.
- ★ This is the second payments business to be housed within the Tata group.
- ★ It also owns the licence to run 'white label ATMs' in rural India under the subsidiary Tata Communications through the brand name Indicash.

### **Regulations for Short-Term Commercial Papers and Non-Convertible Debentures**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has tightened rules for the issuance of short term Commercial Papers (CPs) and Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs), with an initial maturity of up to one year.
- ★ The new norms are effective from April 1, 2024, and include six key changes.
- ★ An unsecured money market instrument issued in the form of a promissory note.
- ★ A secured money market instrument with an original or initial maturity up to one year.
- ★ All residents are eligible to invest in commercial papers and non-convertible debentures.
- ★ Non-residents are eligible to invest in CPs and NCDs to the extent permitted under FEMA or the rules framed under.
- ★ Short-term CPs cannot have a tenor less than 7 days or exceed one year.
- ★ NCDs' tenor cannot be less than 90 days or more than one year.
- ★ As per the revised norms, CPs and NCDs issued from April 1 onwards will have a minimum denomination of ₹5 lakh and in multiples of ₹5 lakh thereafter.
- ★ Both these debt instruments cannot be issued with options, while the settlement must be done within a period not exceeding T+4 working days.

### **LEO1 and NSDL Payments Bank**

- ★ Edu-fintech startup LEO1, in collaboration with NSDL Payments Bank and with MasterCard as network partner, launched India's first numberless Prepaid ID card for students and educational institutions.
- ★ As per the fintech startup the prepaid student card is designed with an aim to provide educational institutes and students with a streamlined and cost-effective payment solution.
- ★ The prepaid card will help digitise the financial ecosystem in educational institutes across India and create cash-free campuses.
- ★ With the LEO1 card, parents will be able to send money digitally and monitor category-wise usage of the card and overall spending.
- ★ Students will be able to use it effortlessly to tap and pay institute fees, make payments effortlessly at any retail outlets that use point of sale (POS) terminals.
- ★ Students will also be able to pay online payments just like any other debit card, withdraw cash, if necessary, from an ATM.
- ★ Complete with their student and curriculum details, students will also be able to use it as a student ID card.

### **India Post Payments Bank Signed MoU with Hindustan Zinc**

- ★ India Post Payments Bank signed a MoU with Hindustan Zinc to provide financial inclusion services to its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) beneficiaries.
- ★ This collaboration will ensure a lasting impact on the lives of community beneficiaries around Hindustan Zinc's operational areas.
- ★ This collaboration will ensure financial support for 3.5 lakh+ beneficiaries covering SHG women, farmers and youth.
- ★ This will ensure easy access to opening bank accounts, pension products, long-term savings, and investment plans etc.
- ★ India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been set up under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications, with 100 per cent equity owned by the Government of India.

### **SBI Launches Green Rupee Term-Deposit Scheme**

- ★ State Bank of India (SBI), has launched a special fixed deposit (FD) scheme named SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD) to mobilise funds to support environment-friendly initiatives and projects, thereby fostering the growth of a green finance ecosystem in India.
- ★ A green deposit is a fixed-term deposit for people looking to invest their surplus cash reserves in environmentally friendly projects.
- ★ By offering this product, lenders stride towards fulfilling the goal of the Government of India of making the nation net carbon zero by 2070.
- ★ SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit scheme is open to resident individuals, non-individuals, and NRI customers.
- ★ SGRTD offers investors the flexibility to choose from three distinct tenors: 1111 days, 1777 days, and 2222 days.
- ★ Currently, the scheme is available through the branch network, and it will soon be made available through other digital channels such as YONO and Internet Banking Services (INB).

### **New Development Bank to Provide \$500 Million Loan to Gujarat**

- ★ New Development Bank (NDB) signed an agreement for providing a \$500-million loan to the Gujarat government.
- ★ As part of Vibrant Gujarat Summit, a project loan will be provided for the State's Mukhayamantri Gram Sadak Yojana.
- ★ An agreement in this regard was finalised between NDB and Gujarat government at the summit in Gandhinagar.
- ★ NDB will support the roads and buildings department of the State government for construction of an estimated 1,200 km of roads.
- ★ NDB will also provide knowledge support to strengthen the rural road network in the State by adopting new technology, safeguarding the environment and implementing safer road designs.

### **Karnataka Bank Collaborates with Clix Capital**

- ★ Karnataka Bank, a leading private sector bank, and Clix Capital, one of India's fastest-growing new-age NBFCs, have entered into a digital co-lending partnership through the Yubi Co.lend Platform.
- ★ A Co-Lending Partnership, also known as co-lending or co-origination, refers to a collaborative arrangement between two financial institutions, typically a bank and a non-banking financial company (NBFC) or another lending institution.
- ★ In this partnership, both entities join forces to extend loans to borrowers, sharing the risks and rewards associated with the lending process.
- ★ The collaboration is specifically targeted at providing loans to the Indian Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, a significant contributor to India's GDP and employment growth.
- ★ The agreement aligns with the guidelines set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on co-lending by banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to priority sectors, emphasizing the commitment to regulatory compliance.

### **Karnataka Bank and Digivridhi Collaborate to Provide Financial Services**

- ★ Karnataka Bank has partnered with fintech company Digivridhi (DGV) to offer financial services catering to the needs of dairy farmers and milk societies.
- ★ The services will be made available at village dairy co-operative societies associated with milk unions of Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF).
- ★ To begin with, the services are now made available to milk societies associated with Chamarajnagar Milk Union.
- ★ This partnership with DGV will provide seamless and innovative end-to-end digital product offerings to the dairy farmers and provide access to institutional credit, while easing and digitizing payments across the dairy value chain".
- ★ 'DGV Pay' product simplifies the payments value chain for dairy farmers and micro-enterprises helping with their basic banking needs, including opening of bank accounts.
- ★ 'DGV Money' product is built with a unique underwriting mechanism that facilitates digital working capital and bovine loans to farmers.

### **State Bank of India to Collaborate with Rural Development Ministry**

- ★ The Rural Development Ministry and State Bank of India (SBI) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to facilitate enterprise financing for rural self-help groups (SHG).
- ★ State Bank of India introduced a specialised financial product Svyam Siddha, exclusively tailored for SHG women entrepreneurs seeking loans up to ₹5 lakhs.
- ★ This initiative is designed to alleviate the challenges associated with extensive documentation requirements for bank loan applications and reduce the turnaround time (TAT).

- ★ The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) will facilitate the loan application process and supervise loan repayment through its dedicated field cadre.
- ★ A training toolkit package was launched to promote formal finance access for SHG women entrepreneurs.

### **ICICI Bank Canada Launches 'Money2India (Canada)' Mobile Banking App**

- ★ ICICI Bank Canada, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ICICI Bank Limited, has introduced its latest mobile banking app, 'Money2India (Canada)', providing Canadian customers with a seamless platform for 24/7 fund transfers to any Indian bank without the necessity of opening an account with ICICI Bank Canada.
- ★ The app offers a user-friendly interface for customers across Canadian banks, enabling instant and round-the-clock money transfers to any bank in India.
- ★ Users can send amounts of up to CAD 30,000 in a single transaction, enhancing flexibility and catering to various transaction needs.
- ★ The innovation streamlines cross-border transactions, offering convenience without the need for account opening, specifically with ICICI Bank Canada.
- ★ Customers of any bank in Canada can utilize the app, using their Visa or Mastercard debit cards for instant money transfers to India.

### **DBS Bank India Partners with StartupTN**

- ★ DBS Bank India has announced a partnership with StartupTN, the nodal agency of the Tamil Nadu government in fostering innovation and promoting entrepreneurship throughout the State.
- ★ It is to strengthen the ecosystem and drive innovation within the State by providing crucial support to startups, including knowledge sharing through various forums and facilitating connections with potential investors.
- ★ The partnership will impact and engage more than 1,000 Startups in Tamil Nadu through StartupTN's eight regional hubs in metros, as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- ★ As part of this collaboration, new-age companies associated with StartupTN will have an opportunity to connect with DBS Bank India's network of over 30 accelerators, incubators and ecosystem enablers so that they can gain from being part of a larger entrepreneurial community.

### **Indian Bank Plans to Establish Operations Support Subsidiary**

- ★ Chennai-based Indian Bank is in the process of establishing an operations support subsidiary to offer value-added services while optimizing costs, particularly for operations in non-metropolitan areas.
- ★ Two large public sector banks – State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) have already formed such units for servicing customers in rural and semi-urban areas.

- ★ Indian Bank, after issuing a request for proposal (RFP) to empanel manpower consultants for the subsidiary, has received in-principle approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ In July 2022, country's largest lender SBI set up a subsidiary State Bank Operations Support Services Pvt Ltd (SBOSS) for providing operations support services at branches in rural and semi-urban areas of the country.
- ★ SBOSS, which is head-quartered in Delhi, will also work as a corporate business correspondent of the SBI.
- ★ Mumbai-based Bank of Baroda (BoB) has established Baroda Global Shared Services, a wholly-owned subsidiary, to integrate service functions into a single entity.

### **Unity Bank Collaborates with Uncia**

- ★ Uncia Technologies has successfully launched its advanced Supply Chain Finance platform, Uncia Chain, at Unity Small Finance Bank Limited (Unity Bank), known for its digital-first banking approach.
- ★ Uncia Chain is a flagship Supply Chain Finance (SCF) platform, offering a feature-rich product suite designed to meet the financing needs of the physical Supply Chain industry.
- ★ The platform efficiently manages all aspects of a three-party financing model, bringing together the buyer, seller, and lender on a single platform.
- ★ It provides templated variations for onboarding and transaction journeys between these parties.
- ★ Uncia Chain is highlighted for its cloud-agnostic and database-agnostic capabilities, making it adaptable to various cloud environments and database systems.
- ★ The platform demonstrates efficiency in integrating with Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, contributing to its rapid deployment and configurability.
- ★ The implementation of Uncia Chain for Unity Bank was successfully accomplished in less than 100 days, showcasing its highly configurable and swift deployment framework.

### **HDFC Bank Becomes the First Lender to Issue 20 Million Credit Cards**

- ★ HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector bank, has become the first lender in the country to achieve the milestone of 20 million credit cards in force (CIF).
- ★ HDFC Bank is a prominent credit card issuer in India, having started its credit card business in 2001.
- ★ It launched its first credit card and reached the milestone of 1 crore cards-in-force in 2017.
- ★ The bank doubled this number to 2 crore cards in just 6 years.
- ★ HDFC Bank is amongst the leading card issuers in the country and has the largest market share of credit card business, totalling 28.6% as of March 2023.
- ★ According to the latest RBI data, the bank added 3.2 lakh cards in November, taking the total number of cards outstanding to 1.95 crore, making it the largest card issuer in the country.



### **‘SBI Life – Saral Swadhan Supreme’ and ‘SBI Life – Smart Swadhan Supreme**

- ★ SBI Life Insurance, one of the most trusted private life insurers in the country, launched two products: ‘SBI Life – Saral Swadhan Supreme’ and ‘SBI Life – Smart Swadhan Supreme’.
- ★ These products aim not only to provide life cover but also to offer the return of premiums at maturity.
- ★ The new products are strategically designed to empower customers, recognizing the growing awareness of the crucial link between insurance and financial well-being.
- ★ By offering a lumpsum benefit on the policyholder’s demise and returning total premiums if the life assured survives, these plans are crafted to provide a comprehensive solution.
- ★ Policyholders can opt for regular premium payments or choose a limited premium payment term of 7, 10, or 15 years.
- ★ Both these policies offer a minimum sum assured of 25 lakhs, however, while SBI Life – Saral Swadhan Supreme is capped at ₹50 lakhs, SBI Life – Smart Swadhan Supreme has no upper limit for the maximum sum assured.

### **Max Life Insurance Introduces SWAG Pension Plan**

- ★ Max Life Insurance Company Limited., has launched Smart Wealth Annuity Guaranteed Pension Plan – SWAG Pension Plan.
- ★ This is a non-linked, non-participating individual/group general annuity savings plan which allows customers to tailor their own policies, choosing from an array of annuity options.
- ★ Customers can plan early and get a higher annuity on retirement by deferring the first annuity from the first month itself up to 12 years.
- ★ This unique offering empowers customers to tailor their policies, choosing from a diverse array of annuity options, all while keeping up with growing inflation and enjoying the flexibility of personalised income timing.
- ★ Further, the customers have the freedom to select from a range of Return of Premium options, enabling them to choose their plans to meet specific financial objectives.

### **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Invests \$58.4 Million in InvIT**

- ★ The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has invested ₹4.86 billion (around USD58.4 million equivalent) in India’s largest renewable energy Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).
- ★ The InvIT (Sustainable Energy Infra Trust or SEIT), has eight operating solar power generation assets of 54 gigawatt-peak total capacity located nationwide in India.
- ★ SEIT is co-sponsored by Mahindra Susten Private Limited, the dedicated renewable energy platform of one of the largest Indian multinational conglomerates (the Mahindra Group) and Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan, a leading global institutional investor.
- ★ AIIB aims to support the development of InvITs as an infrastructure asset class in India.
- ★ The project is AIIB’s second investment in InvITs in India.

## **Zomato Payments Gets RBI's Nod to operate as an Online Payment Aggregator**

- ★ Zomato Payments, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zomato Limited, has received the certificate of authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as an online payment aggregator.
- ★ In an exchange filing, the food delivery platform stated the central bank has allowed it to carry out the business as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments with effect from January 24, 2024.
- ★ Last year, Zomato had joined hands with ICICI Bank to launch its own unified payments interface (UPI) offering – Zomato UPI.
- ★ The feature was offered to select users and did not involve a KYC process.
- ★ It eliminated the need for users to navigate to other payment apps, such as Google Pay, Paytm, and PhonePe, while placing orders on Zomato.
- ★ With this, Zomato, just like Tata Pay, Razorpay, Cashfree, among others, managed to secure the much-awaited payments licence.
- ★ Earlier this month, Tata Payments and Bengaluru-based identity verification startup DigiO secured the payment aggregator (PA) licence from the RBI.

## **Bank of Baroda's Subsidiary was renamed as 'BOBCARD Limited'**

- ★ Bank of Baroda's wholly-owned subsidiary for cards, 'BOB Financial Solutions Limited', has been rebranded as 'BOBCARD Limited' with the tagline "Credit Reimagined".
- ★ Accordingly, the NBFC has also unveiled a new logo called 'Baroda Sun', which comprises dual 'B' letterforms that hold the rays of the rising sun.
- ★ The rebranding embodies "revitalised commitment to reimagine the country's credit landscape with excellent credit solutions and customer-centric offerings.
- ★ It aims to offer customer-centric, solution-driven assistance that assures service through innovation.
- ★ BOBCARD offers an array of consumer and commercial credit cards and caters to all segments of customers with varied needs, including shopping, travel and business cards for large corporations and MSMEs.
- ★ The company also has exclusive credit cards for Defence Personnel.
- ★ It is also the merchant payment processing partner of Bank of Baroda's merchant acquiring business.
- ★ As per the latest RBI data, the NBFC had 22.4 lakh outstanding credit cards in force as of December 2023.

## **General Insurance Council Collaborates with Insurance Companies**

- ★ The General Insurance Council (GIC) in consultation with all the general and health Insurance companies have announced the "Cashless Everywhere" initiative.
- ★ Currently the cashless facility is available only at hospitals where the respective insurance company has an agreement or tie-ups.

- ★ However, under the 'Cashless Everywhere' initiative, policyholders will be eligible to get treated in any hospital they choose, and a cashless facility will be made available even if the hospital is not in the network of the Insurance company.
- ★ For elective procedures, the customer should intimate the Insurance Company at least 48 hours prior to admission.
- ★ For emergency treatment, the customer should intimate the Insurance Company within 48 hours of admission.
- ★ The claim should be admissible as per the terms of the policy and the cashless facility should be admissible as per the operating guidelines of the Insurance Company.
- ★ The 100% cashless system will be backed up by a technological platform with the aid of the National Health Authority.
- ★ The new system of cashless payment, apart from needing a technological platform, also needs a lot of standardisation of rates and services.
- ★ In the cashless system, insurance companies will pay only up to the amount taken as a sum assured in the policy.
- ★ For instance, if the sum assured is ₹5 lakh, insurers will pay the hospital up to ₹5 lakh during the year.

## **BUSINESS NEWS**

### **India to Become World's Largest Metallurgical Coal Importer**

- ★ India will become the largest metallurgical coal importer in the world by 2026.
- ★ According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), global metallurgical coal trade will increase by about 2% to 353 million tonnes (MT) in 2026.
- ★ Rise in India's metallurgical coal imports will be aided by growing industrialization, higher steel consumption and limited availability of coking coal.
- ★ The IEA predicted that rising imports from other countries will balance off a decline in metallurgical coal imports into China of roughly 28 MT, or 28% compared to 2023.
- ★ IEA said imports into India will increase by 2026, by 16 MT (or 21%).
- ★ According to IEA, the global metallurgical coal imports are expected to have increased by about 11% y-o-y to 352 MT in 2023.
- ★ As per the IEA, China and India have been the main drivers of this surge, with China overtaking India to regain its position as the largest importer of metallurgical coal.
- ★ IEA added it is expected China's imports have increased by 56% y-o-y to 100 MT.
- ★ India's imports are expected to have increased by 17% to 78 MT.
- ★ IEA pointed out India is increasingly replacing Australian metallurgical coal with Russian.

### **Flipkart Co-founder Binny Bansal Launches e-commerce Start-up OppDoor**

- ★ Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal has launched new e-commerce start-up OppDoor, business-to-business (B2B) platform.
- ★ The software services platform says it will help emerging ecommerce brands expand globally.
- ★ OppDoor, is a ‘managed services platform for global expansion’.
- ★ OppDoor delivers fully managed Amazon services aimed at expanding private label brands across multiple regions globally.
- ★ The start-up is housed under a Singapore-registered entity which was earlier called Three State Ventures but has now been named OppDoor.
- ★ Bansal’s venture fund is also called Three State Ventures.
- ★ Curefoods, PhonePe and Acko are among his prominent start-up bets.

### **Direct Tax Collections Surpass 17 Lakh Crore in Current Fiscal**

- ★ The Direct Tax collections have recorded over 17 lakh crore rupee in the current fiscal so far, which is about 17 per cent higher than the gross collections for the same period last year.
- ★ Finance Ministry said, this collection is over 80 percent of the total Budget estimates of Direct Taxes for 2023-24.
- ★ The growth rate for Corporate Income Tax is 8.32 percent and Personal Income Tax is over 26 percent.
- ★ The refunds amounting to two lakh 48 thousand crore rupees have been issued during the current fiscal so far.

### **LIC Overtakes SBI as the Most Valuable PSU Firm**

- ★ LIC has become the most valuable company among the public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- ★ The market capitalization of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) became more than that of the State Bank of India (SBI).
- ★ Shares of Life Insurance Corporation of India have been trading rapidly since the morning of 17 January. After the rise in LIC’s stock, its market cap has crossed ₹5.8 lakh crore.
- ★ Whereas the market cap of SBI stood at ₹5.62 lakh crore. SBI shares are trading with a decline.
- ★ LIC shares are trading with a rise of more than 2 percent.

### **Ola Founder’s Krutrim Becomes India’s First AI Unicorn**

- ★ Krutrim, an AI startup founded by Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal, stated it has raised a funding round that values it at \$1 billion.
- ★ The startup, founded last year, is the fastest to become a unicorn in India, it claimed in a press statement.

- ★ It's also the first Indian AI startup to become a unicorn, it stated.
- ★ Matrix Partners India — which has also backed Aggarwal's other two startups, ride-hailing platform Ola and EV startup Ola Electric — led the \$50 million "first round" in Krutrim.
- ★ TechCrunch reported last year that Aggarwal was in talks to raise \$50 million for his new AI venture.
- ★ Krutrim, which means "artificial" in Sanskrit, is building a large language model that has been trained on local Indian languages in addition to English.
- ★ The startup plans to launch a voice-enabled conversational AI assistant that understands and speaks multiple Indian languages, the startup stated.

## SPORTS

### **Pole Vaultier Katie Moon becomes Ambassador for Mumbai Marathon**

- ★ Katie Moon, a two-time pole vault world champion and Tokyo Olympics gold medallist, has been appointed as the event ambassador for the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the Tata Mumbai Marathon.
- ★ The Tata Mumbai Marathon is promoted by Procam International.
- ★ It holds the prestigious status of being a World Athletics Gold Label Race.
- ★ The Mumbai Marathon is recognized as one of the top 10 marathons in the world.
- ★ With a prize money of USD 405,000, Mumbai Marathon 2024 will witness participation from across the globe.

### **Australian Batter David Warner Announces Retirement**

- ★ Australian batter David Warner has announced his retirement from One Day Internationals (ODIs).
- ★ The 2-time ODI World Cup Winner had previously announced that he would be ending his Test career after Australia's upcoming Test against Pakistan in Sydney.
- ★ However, the opener has said that he will keep himself available for selection in the Champions Trophy in 2025.
- ★ Warner is Australia's sixth-highest run scorer in the ODI format and is only second to former captain Ricky Ponting's tally for most Centuries for Australia in ODIs.

### **Country's First Multi-Sports Games 2024**

- ★ The country's first 'Beach Games 2024' started on 04 January 2024 at Ghoghla beach in Diu.
- ★ This 'Beach Games 2024' will be organized from 4 to 11 January 2024. Meanwhile, a total of eight sports are being organized in the Games.
- ★ The closing ceremony of the Beach Games 2024 will be held at INS Khukri Memorial.

- ★ This year's edition in Diu will showcase sports disciplines that are less prevalent in our country, such as Beach Volleyball, Beach Boxing, Beach Soccer, Beach Kabaddi, Tug of War, Sea Swimming, Malkhamb, etc.
- ★ More than 1,200 participants from more than 20 states and union territories of the country are participating in this event.
- ★ The seven-day-long event sees players competing in eight sports across different age groups.

### **Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Jakarta**

- ★ Indian shooter Varun Tomar clinched the gold medal in the men's 10m air pistol event of the Asian Olympic Qualifiers in Jakarta.
- ★ Varun Tomar secured India's 14<sup>th</sup> Olympic quota with this win.
- ★ India started its campaign with three medals, including the team gold medal, on the first day of this continental competition.
- ★ Twenty-year-old Tomar topped the final with 239.6 points.
- ★ Arjun Cheema won the silver medal with 237.3 points.
- ★ Mongolia's Devakhu Enkhtaivan (217.2) won the bronze medal.

### **Zagreb Open 2024 Wrestling Tournament in Croatia**

- ★ Asian champion Aman Sehrawat won the Gold medal in Men's 57 kg at the Zagreb Open 2024 Wrestling Tournament in Croatia.
- ★ He defeated China's Zou Wanhao through technical superiority in the 57 kg final, to win India's first medal in this edition of the Ranking Series.
- ★ Deepak Punia, competing in the men's 86 kg category, lost by 6-2 against Kazakhstan's Azamat Dauletbekov in the qualification round.
- ★ Another Indian wrestler Yash Tushir was defeated by USA's Quincy by 15-4 in the round of 16 of the men's 74 kg category.

### **Australian Open**

- ★ India's Sumit Nagal entered the second round of the Australian Open tennis tournament for the first time by defeating Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik.
- ★ The Australian Open 2024 is being held at Melbourne Park from 14 January to 28 January 2024.
- ★ Australian Open 2024 is a Grand Slam tennis tournament. It is being held in Melbourne Park from 14 January this year to 28 January 2024.
- ★ The Australian Open marks the inaugural Grand Slam of the tennis calendar year.
- ★ It is the 112<sup>th</sup> edition of the Australian Open and the first major since 2024.

## India's Number-One Chess Player

- ★ India Chess Wizard Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa defeated World Chess Champion Ding Liren in the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee, in the Netherlands.
- ★ As a result of this victory, Praggnanandhaa became only the second Indian after Vishwanathan Anand to defeat a reigning champion.
- ★ He also overtook Anand to become India's new number one Chess player in terms of live ratings.

## Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun Tournament

- ★ Indian Shooter Raiza Dhillon has won silver in the women's skeet final at the ongoing Asia Olympic Qualification shotgun tournament in Kuwait.
- ★ With this win, Raiza secured Paris 2024 Olympic quota in shooting.
- ★ While Maheshwari Chauhan got Bronze and Ganemat Sekhon finished at 4<sup>th</sup>.
- ★ The trio also won team gold medal for India.
- ★ Dhillon was on top of the table with six out of six targets.
- ★ The Indian continued to lead the final with 14 hits.

## 2024 Asian Marathon Championships

- ★ India's Man Singh claimed the gold medal at the Asian Marathon Championships 2024 with a personal best timing of two hours 14 minutes and 19 seconds in Hong Kong.
- ★ The 34-year-old Indian marathon runner comfortably beat runner-up Huang Yongzheng of China with a time difference of 65 seconds in the men's event.
- ★ Kyrgyzstan's Tiapkin Ilya came third in 2:18:18.
- ★ Man Singh was part of the Indian contingent at the Asian Games 2023 and finished eighth with a timing of 2:16:59 in the marathon event.
- ★ In the women's event, India's Ashvini Jadhav finished eighth in 2:56:42 and Jyoti Gawate finished 11<sup>th</sup> in 3:06:20.
- ★ Khelo India Youth games – Rhythmic Gymnastics.
- ★ In the rhythmic gymnastics individual event of the Khelo India Youth games, Sanyukta Kale from Maharashtra won the gold, Muskan Rana from Jammu and Kashmir won the silver and Life Adlakha won the bronze medals.
- ★ Raja Babu Yadav, Gymnastics coach from Uttar Pradesh told Akashwani that Indian gymnastics players are ready to compete in international games.
- ★ In the women artistic individual gymnastics, Nishika Agarwal from Telangana won the gold, Soumili Karar from West Bengal won the silver and Sara Rawool won the bronze medals.

### **ICC Announces T20I Team of the Year for 2023**

- ★ The ICC announced the T20I Team of the Year for 2023.
- ★ India's Suryakumar Yadav was named captain of the ICC T20I team.
- ★ Premier batter Suryakumar recently captained the Indian team in the absence of skipper Rohit Sharma and his former deputy Hardik Pandya.
- ★ Under the leadership of Suryakumar, India played two T20I series against Australia and South Africa after the One Day International (ODI) World Cup.
- ★ Nicknamed SKY, the explosive batter retained the top spot in last year's ICC Men's T20I batting rankings.
- ★ Each year, the ICC recognises 11 outstanding individuals who earned plaudits for their remarkable performances in the shortest format.
- ★ Players who stood out throughout the 2023 season have been nominated in the ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year.

### **Khelo India Youth Games**

- ★ In the Khelo India youth games, Nikita Kumari of Rajasthan won the gold in the discus throw event.
- ★ She was followed by Riddhi from Haryana winning the silver while Bhakti Gawade from Maharashtra won the bronze.
- ★ In the triple jump match Paveena Rajesh from Tamil Nadu won the gold followed by Pamela Var Shini G. from Tamil Nadu winning silver and P.V. Abirami from Kerala taking the bronze medal.
- ★ In the volleyball girls' event, West Bengal defeated Kerala 3-0.
- ★ In the hammer throw boys' event, Omkar Prasad Nand from Odisha took the first place followed by Yashar Kurbar by Karnataka and the third place was taken by Nikhil Yadav, Haryana.
- ★ In the 800m girls athletics, M. An Silin and Aksilin from Tamil Nadu won the gold and silver medals while Priyanka Olkar from Karnataka won the bronze.
- ★ In Mallakhamb events, on the whole Maharashtra won the gold medal with 209.25 points followed by Tamilnadu at a score of 207.35 points and Madhya Pradesh stood third with 205.30 points.

### **Virat Kohli wins ICC ODI Player of the Year Award**

- ★ Indian batting star Virat Kohli bagged the ICC ODI Player of the Year award for the fourth time, following his record-breaking performance in the World Cup 2023.
- ★ Kohli had previously won the award in 2012, 2017, and 2018 and also stands amongst the four nominees for the ICC Cricketer of the Year 2023 award.
- ★ Notably, Kohli has become the first-ever cricketer to clinch this award four times, surpassing AB de Villiers' tally of three awards.



- ★ Virat Kohli built on his comeback in 2022 with a spectacular 2023, where he won the Player of the Tournament performance at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

### **Australia Open 2024**

- ★ Grand Slam Australian Open 2024, India's famous tennis player Rohan Bopanna has created history by winning the men's doubles title.
- ★ Rohan Bopanna got this opportunity with Matthew Ebden in the men's doubles of the Australian Open.
- ★ Bopanna-Ebden pair defeated Italy's Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori in the final in straight sets.
- ★ The pair of Rohan Bopanna of India and Matthew Ebden of Australia have won this title for the first time.
- ★ Bopanna and Ebden won the match 7-6 (7-0), 7-5. Both of them won the first set 7-6 (7-0) which went to the tiebreaker.
- ★ After this, the second set was won by a margin of 7-5.

### **ICC Lifts Suspension of Sri Lanka Cricket after Two-Months**

- ★ The International Cricket Council (ICC) has lifted the suspension of Sri Lanka Cricket with immediate effect.
- ★ Sri Lanka Cricket has been reinstated as a member of the International Cricket Council after a two-month suspension.
- ★ Sri Lanka Cricket was suspended for violation of responsibilities as an ICC Member, in particular, the requirement to manage its affairs autonomously and ensure that there is no government interference in the governance, regulation, and administration of cricket in Sri Lanka.

### **ISSF World Cup**

- ★ In air rifle shooting, Indian Olympian Divyansh Singh Panwar had won gold in the men's event with a world record score in the final.
- ★ Sonam Uttam Maskar, bagged silver in the women's 10-metre event in Cairo.
- ★ India is now firmly on the top of the table in the season-opening World Cup stage with two gold and three silver medals in their kitty after three days of competition.
- ★ This was Divyansh's fifth overall World Cup stage gold and second individual gold.

## **RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS**

### **RBI Released a Report ‘Trend And Progress Of Banking In India’**

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a report titled ‘Trend and Progress of Banking in India’.
- ★ As per the report, the Indian scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio improved in the second quarter of this financial year.
- ★ According to the report, the consolidated balance sheet of SCBs grew by 12.2% in 2022–23.
- ★ The improvement in asset quality is measured by GNPA ratios.
- ★ The GNPA ratio for Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) dropped to 3.9% at the end of March 2023 and further decreased to 3.2% at the end of September 2023.
- ★ The agricultural sector had the highest GNPA ratio, while retail loans had the lowest.
- ★ The capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR) of SCBs was 16.8 per cent at end-September 2023.

### **India will remain the Fastest Growing Economy in 2024**

- ★ The United Nations released its annual report, ‘World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2024’.
- ★ WESP said India’s economic growth rate will be 6.2% in 2024. This growth rate is highest in South Asia.
- ★ The Indian economy will remain the fastest-growing country in 2024, with a growth rate of 6.2 percent. India’s GDP is expected to grow by 6.6 percent in 2025.
- ★ The estimated growth rate of the Indian economy in 2023 was 6.3 percent.
- ★ The Indian economy will help increase the overall growth rate of Asia and the world.
- ★ GDP in South Asia is estimated to grow by 5.2%.
- ★ The main reasons behind India’s fast economic growth rate are domestic demand and the good performance of the service sector.

### **List of Source Markets for Tourism into Sri Lanka in 2023**

- ★ India has topped the list of source markets for tourism into Sri Lanka in 2023.
- ★ The island has welcomed 1.487 Million tourists during 2023 with India contributing over 20% arrivals.
- ★ In all, over 3 lakh Indian tourists reached Sri Lanka in 2023 followed by Russia which contributed 1.97 lakh.
- ★ Tourism holds a pivotal position in Sri Lanka’s economy as a top foreign revenue source.
- ★ Tourism contributed 2.1 billion US Dollars.

- ★ The connectivity between the two countries has improved over the last year as air travel resumed between Jaffna and Chennai in December 2022.
- ★ In addition, Connectivity between Colombo and Mumbai has also been improved with daily flights operating on the sector.
- ★ Apart from this, the starting of Ferry services between Nagapattinam and Kankesanthurai has also boosted connectivity between the two countries.

### **Global Unemployment set to Reach 5.2% in 2024, ILO Reports**

- ★ The International Labour Organization (ILO) released a report named 'World Employment and Social Outlook Report 2024' on 10 January 2024.
- ★ ILO claimed in its report that the global unemployment rate is expected to increase to 5.2 percent in the year 2024.
- ★ The ILO's 2024 'World Employment and Social Outlook' report estimates that the number of unemployed people will increase to 2 million.
- ★ The global unemployment rate will increase from 5.1 percent in 2023 to 5.2 percent in 2024.
- ★ The main reason for the rising unemployment rate is the increase in unemployment in advanced economies.
- ★ The report underscores inequalities between nations with high and low incomes. Refers to high unemployment and poverty rates in low-income countries.
- ★ It also reveals that a significant portion of the global workforce remains in informal employment.

### **Henley Passport Index 2024**

- ★ The Henley Passport Index 2024 was released by Henley & Partners, a global citizenship and residency consultancy, which evaluated passports of 199 countries.
- ★ A total of 6 countries across the world have secured top positions in the 2024 Henley Passport Index.
- ★ The countries with the most powerful passports in the world include France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan and Singapore.
- ★ Passports from all these countries provide visa-free access to 194 destinations.
- ★ South Korea, Finland and Sweden are second in this list. These three countries facilitate visa-free access to 193 countries.
- ★ Austria, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands are in third place. These countries facilitate visa-free travel to 192 countries.
- ★ India ranks 80<sup>th</sup> in the 2024 Henley Passport Index.
- ★ India's passport facilitates visa-free access to 62 countries.
- ★ The world's least powerful passport is from Afghanistan. It is ranked 104<sup>th</sup> with a reach of 28 countries.

## **Global Firepower Military Strength Ranking 2024**

- ★ Global Firepower a website and a leading authority on military might has released its annual ranking report of the world's most powerful Armies.
- ★ In the Military Strength Ranking Report 2024, America's military capability has been rated the highest in the list of the most powerful armed forces in the world.
- ★ Russia is in second place, with China being in third.
- ★ India is ranked fourth in this list.
- ★ This year 145 countries have been assessed in the Global Fire Power Rankings for the year 2024.
- ★ This year's rankings took into account more than 60 factors.

## **India's Masala Chai the World's Second-Best Non-Alcoholic Beverage**

- ★ TasteAtlas named India's Masala Chai the world's second-best non-alcoholic beverage for 2023–24.
- ★ Masala chai is a warm beverage created by simmering tea, milk, spices, and sugar.
- ★ TasteAtlas is a popular food and travel guide in the world.
- ★ Simple masala chai is popular throughout the Indian subcontinent, and people love it.
- ★ Mexico's 'Aguas Frescas' was ranked the best non-alcoholic beverage in the world.
- ★ Aguas Frescas is a drink made by mixing fruits, cucumbers, flowers, seeds, cereals and grains blended with sugar and water.

## **AWARDS & PRIZES**

### **M.S. Swaminathan Award**

- ★ Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University's Vice Chancellor Prof. B.R. Kamboj has been honoured with the prestigious M.S. Swaminathan Award in recognition of his contributions as a scientist and extension specialist in the field of agronomy.
- ★ Thawar Chand Gehlot, the Governor of Karnataka, presented him with this award.
- ★ The award ceremony took place at the International Conference on 'One Health One World', held at Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia Agricultural University at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ A special committee, constituted for the M.S. Swaminathan Award, selected Prof. B.R. Kamboj for his excellent achievements in the field of education, research, technology development and extension in agricultural science.
- ★ Kamboj has published about 300 research papers and articles in national and international journals, books and technical magazines.

### **‘Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar’ 2023**

- ★ The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar 2023.
- ★ Odisha Mining Corporate Limited has been awarded in the category of Encouragement to Sports through Corporate Social Responsibility.
- ★ Jain Deemed to be University, Bengaluru has been awarded for identifying and nurturing budding and young talent.
- ★ The awardees will receive their awards from President Droupadi Murmu at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 09 January 2024.
- ★ Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar is given to corporate entities, Sports Control Boards, NGOs, including sports bodies at the State and National level, which have played a visible role in the area of sports promotion and development.

### **National Awards for e-Governance 2023**

- ★ SVAMITVA Scheme had won the prestigious Gold Prize in National Awards for e-Governance 2023 in the category “Use of Emerging Technology for Providing Citizen-Centric Services”.
- ★ It was organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions at Indore, Madhya Pradesh in October 2023.
- ★ SVAMITVA Scheme of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj is a Central Sector Scheme that has significantly contributed to the empowerment of rural communities in India.
- ★ The Ministry of Panchayati Raj participated in the Innovation Sandbox presentation and showcased the “Digital Transformation Initiatives in Land Governance through SVAMITVA Scheme” detailing the processes followed by States to digitalize land governance systems transparently and efficiently.
- ★ The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been conferred with the prestigious 1<sup>st</sup> Prize in the Innovation Sandbox presentation for “Digital Transformation Initiatives in Land Governance through SVAMITVA Scheme”.

### **Former President Kovind to Award Diplomas at IIMC’s 55<sup>th</sup> Convocation**

- ★ Former President Ram Nath Kovind will confer Post Graduate Diploma degrees at the 55<sup>th</sup> Convocation ceremony of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in New Delhi.
- ★ The diplomas will be given to students from the 2021-22 and 2022-23 batches from all the six centres of the Institute.
- ★ A total of sixty-five students will also be awarded different medals for outstanding performances.
- ★ The IIMC is one of India’s leading institutions that offers education in the field of media and communication in nine different courses in six centres across the country.

### **ISRO Awarded “Indian of the Year 2023”**

- ★ Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh presented the “Indian of the Year Award” for the year 2023 in the ‘Outstanding Achievement’ category to ISRO.
- ★ The award was received by ISRO Chairman S. Somnath and Chandrayaan 3 Project Director Dr. P. Veeramuthuvel.
- ★ The award citation states that the award recognises the work done by ISRO in pushing the boundaries of space exploration.
- ★ In the year 2023, India’s space agency demonstrated unparalleled skill and flexibility in facing challenges.
- ★ The culmination of ISRO’s achievements in 2023 was the first successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the unexplored south-polar region of the Moon.
- ★ Chandrayaan-3 was not only indigenous, but it was also a very cost-effective mission with a budget of around ₹600 crore.

### **Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023**

- ★ The President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu conferred Swachh Survekshan awards 2023 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- ★ 13 awardees received felicitations under categories of Clean Cities, Cleanest Cantonment, SafaiMitra Suraksha, Ganga Towns and Best Performing State were given away.
- ★ Port city Surat bagged the top honours, and Indore, who had conquered the top spot alone for 6 consecutive years.
- ★ In the category of cities with a population of less than 1 lakh, Sasvad, Patan and Lonavala secured the top three spots.
- ★ Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh was adjudged the Cleanest Cantonment Board.
- ★ Varanasi and Prayagraj won the top two awards amongst the Cleanest Ganga Towns.
- ★ Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh won the top three awards for Best Performing State.

### **FIFA Male and Female Players**

- ★ Argentina’s star football player Lionel Messi has won the FIFA Best Men’s Player award for the third time in the last four years.
- ★ Barcelona striker Aitana Bonmati received the Best FIFA Women’s Player award.
- ★ Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola won the Best Male Manager of 2023 award.
- ★ On the other hand, England coach Sarina Wiegman won the women’s best coach award for a record fourth time.

### **Assam's Highest Civilian Award 'Assam Baibhav'**

- ★ Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi will be honored with Assam's highest civilian award 'Assam Baibhav'.
- ★ Athlete Hima Das will be awarded the Assam Saurav Samman.
- ★ Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on 16 January announced the annual state civilian award for the year 2023.
- ★ As an award, Gogoi will be given a citation, certificate, medal and a cash prize of ₹5 lakh.
- ★ Ranjan Gogoi was the 46<sup>th</sup> CJI of India and the first judge from the Northeast to hold the post.
- ★ During his tenure, the Supreme Court had given a historic verdict on the decade-old Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case.
- ★ This year the state government will confer civic awards on a total of 22 personalities including four Assam Saurav and seventeen Assam Gaurav awards.
- ★ Assam Saurav award will be given to four personalities.
  - Hima Das – Athletics
  - Dr. Kishan Chand Nauriyal – Art and Culture
  - Elvis Ali Hazarika – Swimming
  - Nadiram Deuri – Tiwa Dance
- ★ This award will include a citation, certificate, medal and a cash prize of ₹4 lakh.

### **ICAI Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting**

- ★ REC Limited, a Maharatna Public Sector Unit and a leading NBFC under the Ministry of Power, has been awarded 'Plaque' under the 'Financial Services Sector (Other than Banking and Insurance)' category at the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the financial year 2022-23.
- ★ This is the only award bestowed by the ICAI under this category.
- ★ The selection has been made based on the company's accounting practices, disclosure policies, presentation of financial statements, other information contained in the Annual Report and degree of compliance with Indian Accounting Standards, Statutory guidelines and Regulations.
- ★ The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India through its Research Committee has been organizing the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting since the year 1958.
- ★ It is given to recognize and encourage excellence in the preparation and presentation of financial as well as non-financial information in annual reports by entities across various sectors.

### **SCOPE Excellence Award for Digitalization**

- ★ REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been honored with the prestigious Scope Excellence Award in the category of Special Institutional Category (Digitalization).
- ★ The award acknowledges REC Limited's unwavering commitment to the digitalization of its workplace and the promotion of best practices in establishing a paperless office.
- ★ The award was presented by the Vice President of India, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar, at a ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.
- ★ Director (Finance), Shri Ajoy Choudhury and Executive Director (BDM), Shri Saurabh Rastogi of REC Limited graciously accepted the award from the Vice President of India at the ceremony.
- ★ This accomplishment underscores REC Limited's dedication to embracing technological advancements and fostering a culture of innovation within the organization.
- ★ The SCOPE Excellence Award recognizes and commemorates exemplary performances of Public Sector Enterprises.

### **Airport of the Year Award 2024**

- ★ Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) Bengaluru was awarded the Best Airport of the Year award at the Wings India Awards 2024.
- ★ The award was given jointly to KIA Bengaluru and Delhi International Airport Limited.
- ★ Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia presented the awards.
- ★ Delhi International Airport (Indira Gandhi) was also recognised as the best airport in the civil aviation sector in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of "Wings India Awards".
- ★ Mumbai and Delhi airports emerged as "Innovation" and "Sustainability Champions" respectively.
- ★ Apart from airports, awards were also given to airlines, with Vistara-Tata SIA Airlines Limited receiving the coveted title of Airline of the Year.
- ★ 'Air India' topped for international connectivity, while 'IndiGo' was given the award in the domestic category.
- ★ 'Alliance Air' was awarded the top honor for regional connectivity. While the Innovation Champion Award was given to: 'Vistara'.
- ★ Air India Express wins award for sustainability.

### **Delhi and Bengaluru Jointly Clinch 'Best Airport' Award**

- ★ Bangalore and Delhi airports jointly won the Best Airport award.
- ★ Both airports jointly won the award at the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of "Wings India Awards" in the Civil Aviation Sector.



- ★ Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia presented the Wings India Awards 2024 at an event organized in Hyderabad.
- ★ Vistara won the Best Airline of the Year award.
- ★ Air India has been recognised for International Connectivity.
- ★ Alliance Air has been recognized for Regional Connectivity.
- ★ Air India Express was declared a Sustainability Champion.
- ★ GMR Group has been honoured as the Best Aviation Service Provider.
- ★ Skyways Air Services has been honoured for cargo services.
- ★ Indian Oil Skytanking Pvt. Ltd has been honoured for Fuel Services and GMR has been honoured for Aero Academy.

### **Actress Alia Bhatt Honored at Saudi Arabia's Joy Awards**

- ★ Actress-producer Alia Bhatt became the first Indian woman to be honored at the Joy Awards 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- ★ She was awarded the Honorary Entertainment Makers Award at the Joy Awards ceremony 2024.
- ★ Before Alia Bhatt, Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan have been honored at the Joy Awards for their work and contribution to the entertainment business.
- ★ Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt is one of the most talented actresses in Bollywood.
- ★ She has created a distinct identity for herself with her brilliant performances in films.

### **Former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur Awarded Bharat Ratna**

- ★ The Government of India has announced that former Bihar Chief Minister, Karpoori Thakur, will be posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian award.
- ★ This recognition is a significant acknowledgement of Thakur's contributions to Indian politics and social reform.
- ★ Thakur was a strong advocate for the underprivileged, championing the cause of the socially and economically marginalized sections of society.
- ★ His tenure as Chief Minister was notable for implementing progressive policies, including land reforms and initiatives aimed at the upliftment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- ★ He is remembered for his dedication to social equality and justice.
- ★ His efforts in addressing the concerns of the less privileged have left an indelible mark on Bihar's socio-political fabric.

### **Freedom of the City of London Award**

- ★ Ajit Mishra, a prominent lawyer of Indian origin in the UK, has been awarded the prestigious “Freedom of the City of London” for his outstanding contributions to the legal and public sectors.
- ★ Mishra, the founder and chair of the UK India Legal Partnership (UKILP) was awarded the Freedom of the City of London award on January 23.
- ★ He is a dual-qualified lawyer and corporate partner at Knights and has over two decades of experience and commercial transactions between India and the UK.
- ★ Mishra has also been a partner and head of the India desk at some of the best domestic and international law firms.
- ★ UKILP, founded by Mishra, is a dynamic networking platform that is quickly gaining recognition as a leading hub for senior lawyers to foster connections between the legal communities of India and the UK.
- ★ The platform’s primary goal is to enhance understanding and collaboration within the common law system.
- ★ It stands out for its inclusive ethos, actively dedicated to promoting the rights of women and young lawyers in the legal sector.

### **Electoral Practices Awards for the year 2023 in New Delhi**

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu has informed that the Election Commission of India plays an important role in the diversity of democracy.
- ★ The President Informed, this year General Election will be conducted across the country, and during this mega-polling exercise, 12 lakh polling booths will be set up in the country.
- ★ There are over 96 crore voters in the country and Election Commission is taking every step to connect with the voters.
- ★ The Election Commission is celebrating the 14<sup>th</sup> National Voters’ Day with the theme ‘Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure’.
- ★ President presented the Best Electoral Practices Awards for the year 2023.
- ★ The awards were presented to State and District level Officers for their outstanding performance in the conduct of elections during 2023 in different spheres such as IT initiatives, Security Management, Election Management, Electoral Roll, and contribution in the field of voter awareness and outreach.
- ★ The awards were also given to important stakeholders including government departments, and media organizations for their valuable contribution towards voters’ awareness.

### **C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Awards**

- ★ Former India wicket-keeper Mr Farokh Engineer and all-rounder Mr Ravi Shastri were bestowed with the Col. C.K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Awards at Naman Awards ceremony in Hyderabad.

- ★ The Naman Award is given to celebrate Indian Cricket and recognising performances both at the domestic and international level.
- ★ For their outstanding performances, Mr Mohd. Shami (2019-20), Mr R. Ashwin (2020-21), and Mr Shubman Gill (2022-23) received the Polly Umrigar award for Best International Cricketer – Men while Mr Jasprit Bumrah, who had received this award in the 2018-19 season, received his second for the 2021-22 season.
- ★ Similarly, Ms Smriti Mandhana, who was named the Best International Woman Cricketer in 2017-18, claimed the top award for the second time for her breakthrough performances in 2020-21 and also 2021-22.
- ★ N. Ananthapadmanabhan, Vrinda Rathi, Jayaraman Madan Gopal, and Rohan Pandit were awarded the Best Umpire in Domestic Cricket for 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23, respectively.
- ★ Mumbai received the Best Performance Award in BCCI Domestic Tournaments for 2019-20.
- ★ Madhya Pradesh won the award for the 2021-22 season for winning the Ranji Trophy.
- ★ Saurashtra claimed the top prize for the 2022-23 season for their title triumph in the Ranji Trophy, the Vijay Hazare Trophy, the Men's U25 State A trophy, and finishing runner-up in the Irani Cup.

### **Blavatnik Award**

- ★ Three Indian scientists are also among the nine scientists selected for the prestigious 'Blavatnik Award' 2024 given to young scientists in Britain.
- ★ This award will be given to them for their excellent work in chemistry, physics and life sciences.
- ★ This award is given by 'Blavatnik Family Foundation' and 'The New York Academy of Sciences'.
- ★ This award is mainly given to young scientists for their research work. These selected young scientists will be honoured in a ceremony organised on 27 February 2024 for their research work in various fields of science.
- ★ Out of the total nine scientists honoured with the Blavatnik Award, three are young scientists of Indian origin include Professor Rahul R. Nair, Professor Mehul Malik and Dr. Tanmay Bharat.

## **APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS**

### **First Woman Chief of CISF**

- ★ The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was assigned its first Woman Chief in Nina Singh, who has been appointed as the Director-General (DG).

- ★ Nina Singh, a 1989-batch IPS Officer of Rajasthan cadre, is currently working as Special DG, CISF.
- ★ She has been appointed to the post till her superannuation on July 31, 2024, the order stated.
- ★ Nine Singh has been with the CISF since 2021 and will remain at the helm till her retirement on July 31 next year.
- ★ Further, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs headed by Amit Shah, appointed Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Chief Anish Dayal Singh as the Director General of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- ★ Anish Dayal Singh, a 1988-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) Officer of Manipur cadre, was holding the additional charge of the CRPF following the retirement of incumbent S.L. Thaosen on November 30.

### **Chairman of HDFC Bank**

- ★ HDFC Bank's board has approved a three year extension to Atanu Chakraborty as Non-Executive Chairman.
- ★ The board has recommended the re-appointment of Chakraborty as the part-time Non-Executive Chairman and independent Director of the bank to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), for a second term of three years with effect from May 5, 2024 to May 4, 2027.
- ★ Chakraborty, a 1985 batch IAS Officer of Gujarat cadre, retired as Secretary of Department of Economic Affairs in April 2020.
- ★ Prior to that, he was Secretary of the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).
- ★ Both departments come under the finance ministry.

### **New CMD of Power Grid Corporation**

- ★ Public sector Maharatna company, POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has appointed Ravindra Kumar Tyagi as its new Chairman and Managing Director (CMD).
- ★ Ravindra Kumar Tyagi will replace Srikanth Kandikuppa.
- ★ Tyagi has over 33 years of experience working in various positions leading CPSUs in the power sector.
- ★ He has handled various Power Grid business areas: Asset Management, Engineering, Business Development (Domestic and Overseas), Telecom, Load Despatch and communication NTAMC and DMS.
- ★ Tyagi has done Electrical Engineering from Punjab Engineering College (PEC), Chandigarh.

### **Head of the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission**

- ★ Arvind Panagariya, the former Vice Chairman of National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) has been named as the head of the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission.

- ★ Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey will hold the post of Secretary to the commission.
- ★ The Chairman and other members of the 16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission shall hold office from the date on which they respectively assume office up to the date of submission of report or October 31, 2025, whichever is earlier.
- ★ The report of the commission shall be made available by October 31, 2025, covering a period of five years commencing on April 1, 2026.
- ★ Arvind Panagariya served as the first Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog, a policy think tank created by the government of India and chaired by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from 2015 to 2017.
- ★ Panagariya, who is currently a Professor of Indian political economy at Columbia University, New York.

### **Vice Chief of the Naval Staff**

- ★ Vice Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, AVSM, NM, took over as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff.
- ★ Earlier, Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi served as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command.
- ★ Communications and electronic warfare expert Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi served as the Signals Communications Officer.
- ★ Dinesh Tripathi initially served on frontline warships of the Navy as an Electronic Warfare Officer.
- ★ Later served as Executive Officer and Principal Warfare Officer of the Guided Missile Destroyer INS Mumbai.

### **President of the European Investment Bank**

- ★ Nadia Calvino has become the President of the European Investment Bank in January 2024.
- ★ Nadia is the first woman to become President of the European Investment Bank.
- ★ Nadia Calvino is an economist from the European country Spain.
- ★ Nadia is the 8<sup>th</sup> President of the European Investment Bank.
- ★ She will replace Germany's Werner Hoyer, who held the post since 2012.
- ★ Nadia has also been the chairperson of the International Monetary and Financial Committee.

### **CEO of Indian Olympic Association**

- ★ Raghuram Iyer was appointed as CEO of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).
- ★ Prior to this he was the CEO of Rajasthan Royals.
- ★ His experience extends to prominent positions with IPL teams such as Lucknow Super Giants and Rising Supergiants.

- ★ Additionally, he has made contributions to ATK Mohun Bagan in the Indian Super League and served as the CEO of RPSG Mavericks, a table tennis team.
- ★ The appointment of Raghuram Iyer comes in response to repeated reminders from the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- ★ This move aims to strengthen the administrative structure of the IOA and enhance its capability to navigate the complexities of international sports governance.

### **Executive Director of Asian Development Bank**

- ★ Vikas Sheel was appointed as the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila.
- ★ He brings valuable experience from his current role as Additional Secretary and Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission, contributing to India's representation at this prestigious institution.
- ★ Smita Sarangi has been appointed as Adviser to the Executive Director at ADB.
- ★ Her expertise will play a vital role in India's collaboration with ADB on important development initiatives.

### **President of All India Rubber Industries Association**

- ★ Shashi Singh has been elected as the new President of the All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the apex body for rubber industries in India.
- ★ Shashi Singh will be succeeding Mr. Ramesh Kejriwal as the President of AIRIA, playing a pivotal role in steering the association forward.
- ★ Before assuming the role of President, Mr. Shashi Singh was the Senior Vice President within AIRIA.
- ★ The elections were held during the Annual General Meeting held on December 23, 2023, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ Zafar Ahmed, Managing Director of New India Rubber Works Pvt Ltd, has been elected as the Senior Vice-President of AIRIA for 2023-24.
- ★ Indra Parekh has been elected as the Vice President of the Association.

### **Prime Minister of Kuwait**

- ★ Kuwait's new emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad al-Sabah appointed Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as the country's Prime Minister (PM) of Kuwait.
- ★ He succeeds Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah.
- ★ Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah is a Kuwaiti politician, economist, and diplomat.
- ★ In 1993 he was appointed as the ambassador of Kuwait to the United States, serving until 14 February 2001, at which point he became the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

- ★ He held the position of Minister of Finance from January 2003 until July 2003.
- ★ On 11 February 2006, he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, continuing also as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

### **India's Representative to the World Trade Organization (WTO)**

- ★ Senthil Pandian, a 2002 IAS Officer of the Uttar Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as India's ambassador to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva.
- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved Pandian's appointment for a three-year term, effective from the date of assuming charge.
- ★ At the time of appointment, Senthil Pandian is serving as the Commissioner of Excise in Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The appointment comes as the tenure of Brajendra Navnit, India's current ambassador to the WTO, concludes on March 31, 2024.

### **Secretary General of BIMSTEC**

- ★ Indramani Pandey, a senior Indian diplomat has assumed the post of Secretary General of BIMSTEC.
- ★ He replaces Bhutan's Tenzin Lekfel.
- ★ He is the fourth Secretary General of BIMSTEC.
- ★ His appointment has been made for three years.
- ★ Prior to this, Indramani Pandey had been India's permanent representative to the United Nations.
- ★ BIMSTEC is an international organization of South Asian and Southeast Asian countries.
- ★ It was established in the year 1997.

### **Chairperson of Supreme Court Legal Services Committee**

- ★ Supreme Court judge Justice BR Gavai has been nominated as the Chairman of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC), replacing Justice Sanjiv Khanna – the senior most judge of the top court after the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- ★ The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee is constituted under Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, with the aim of providing “free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society” in cases under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- ★ Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, specifies that the Central Authority, which is the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), shall constitute the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.
- ★ The SCLSC is composed of a sitting Supreme Court judge who serves as the Chairman.
- ★ Other members possessing the experience and qualifications prescribed by the Centre are also part of the committee.
- ★ Both the Chairman and other members are nominated by the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

## **Gabriel Attal Has Been Named the Youngest PM in France**

- ★ French President Emmanuel Macron appointed Education Minister Gabriel Attal as his new Prime Minister of France on 09 January 2024.
- ★ 34-year-old Gabriel Attal is the youngest person to become the Prime Minister of France, replacing outgoing Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne.
- ★ Gabriel Attal also became the first Gay Prime Minister of France.
- ★ French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne had to resign from her post on January 8, 2024, due to great political pressure.
- ★ Attal, an associate of Macron, had earned much fame as the government spokesperson during the Covid pandemic.

## **MD and CEO of NARCL**

- ★ P Santhosh, Chief General Manager at Canara Bank, appointed as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL).
- ★ Natarajan Sundar, the former MD and CEO of NARCL, resigned from the post.
- ★ Natarajan Sundar is the second person among NARCL's top management to resign from the post before completing their tenure.
- ★ He carries over three decades of experience in the banking sector, spanning across Corporate & Wholesale Banking, Corporate Credit, International Banking, Project Finance, etc.

## **Prime Minister of Bangladesh**

- ★ Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will be sworn in as Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the fourth straight term.
- ★ Bangladesh's President will administer the oath to the new Prime Minister in Dhaka.
- ★ 25 ministers and 11 state ministers are also likely to be sworn in this occasion.
- ★ Cabinet Secretary announced the list of ministers and as per the list, 15 ministers of the last cabinet including some heavyweights like Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Agriculture Minister Dr Abdur Razzak, Foreign Minister Dr A.K. Momen, and Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi have been dropped from the new cabinet.
- ★ The new faces in the cabinet include former Commerce Minister Lt Colonel (retd) Mohammad Farooq Khan and former Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali.

## **India's Ambassador to WTO**

- ★ India has recently appointed Senthil Pandian C as its Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO), marking a significant development in the country's representation on the global trade stage.
- ★ Senthil Pandian C, an experienced diplomat with a proven track record, is set to take charge at a crucial time when international trade dynamics are evolving rapidly.



- ★ Over the years, India has been a vocal advocate for the interests of developing nations, emphasizing issues such as agricultural subsidies, intellectual property rights, and equitable trade practices.

### **Prime Minister of Bhutan**

- ★ The party of Bhutan's former Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay won general elections with nearly two-thirds of seats in parliament.
- ★ Tobgay's People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the 2024 National Assembly general elections with 30 seats, while the Bhutan Tendrel Party (BTP) took the remaining 17, local media reported.
- ★ Tshering Tobgay is expected to become Bhutan's PM for the second time.
- ★ He was leader of the opposition in Bhutan's first parliament when it was established in 2008 after the start of the reign of the present king.
- ★ Tshering Tobgay, 58, a former civil servant and a conservation advocate holds a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's in public administration from Harvard.
- ★ He served as Prime Minister from 2013 to 2018.

### **Deputy Governor of RBI**

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the reappointment of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Deputy Governor Michael Patra for one year.
- ★ The reappointment will be effective from January 15, 2024.
- ★ The term of Patra was scheduled to end on January 14, 2023, as per the RBI website.
- ★ Patra was appointed as RBI Deputy Governor in January 2020, and last year he got an extension of one year.
- ★ Patra joined RBI in 1985 and has worked in various positions at the central bank.

### **First Female Neutral Umpire Appointed by the International Cricket Council**

- ★ Sue Redfern will become the first female neutral umpire appointed by the International Cricket Council to work in a bilateral series, having been named for the upcoming ICC Women's Championship and T20I matches between Australia and South Africa.
- ★ Redfern's appointment ensures neutrality while fostering the growth of local female umpires who learn alongside seasoned professionals.
- ★ This builds upon the momentum created by the historic all-female match officials panel at the 2023 ICC Women's T20 World Cup.
- ★ The ICC prioritises female umpires for this neutral role, guaranteeing them equal match-day pay and perks as their male counterparts on ICC's elite panel.

### **Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal**

- ★ Senior IPS Officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary was appointed as the Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a Personnel Ministry order stated.
- ★ Chaudhary, a 1990 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) Officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Special Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).
- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the DG, SSB for a period up to November 2025.
- ★ The SSB guards India's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan.

### **Managing Director and CEO of DCB Bank**

- ★ Praveen Achuthan Kutty receives approval as the Managing Director and CEO of DCB Bank by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ The appointment is confirmed, and Kutty's tenure is set to begin on April 29, 2024, for a period of three years.
- ★ Kutty has over 32 years of experience in Retail and SME banking, with 16 years in leadership at DCB Bank.
- ★ His responsibilities at DCB Bank include overseeing Retail, SME, and Agri Banking.
- ★ Kutty's prior experience at Citibank, including a leadership role in New York, adds to his seasoned background.
- ★ The appointment will take place after the end of Murali Natarajan's term as MD and CEO on April 28, 2024.
- ★ DCB Bank will adhere to regulatory norms by promptly submitting the necessary application to the RBI.
- ★ Murali Natrajan, who served as MD and CEO since May 2009, had previous roles at Standard Chartered and Citibank.

### **WHO Regional Director for Southeast Asia**

- ★ Saima Wajid of Bangladesh has been sworn in as the Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) South-East Asia Region on 23 January 2024.
- ★ WHO's appointment of Saima Wajid as Regional Director of the South-East Asia Region was confirmed by its Executive Board in Geneva, Switzerland.
- ★ Bangladesh's Saima Wajid had won the election to become the Regional Director for South East Asia at the World Health Organisation in New Delhi on 01 November 2023.
- ★ Saima Wajid defeated Shambhu Prasad Acharya of Nepal by six votes in the election to become South East Asia Regional Director.

## **New Chairman of AEPC**

- ★ Shri Sudhir Sekhri, an Apparel industry veteran, has taken over as the new Chairman of Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC).
- ★ Shri Sekhri has been into the business of Readymade Garment Manufacturing for more than four decades and is currently Managing Partner of Trendsetter International.
- ★ He stated that ‘Our target to reach 40 billion USD of RMG export by 2030 can be a reality and my duty is to take every possible step to reach this target.
- ★ He has been an Executive Committee member of the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) since 1990, Chairman (Export Promotion Committee) of AEPC for several years and Vice Chairman, AEPC for the year 2022 and 2023.
- ★ He has been an Executive Committee member of the Garment Exporters and Manufacturers Association (GEMA) since its inception and is its current Senior Vice President.

## **Indian Army’s First Woman Subedar**

- ★ Havildar Preeti Rajak, a notable trap shooter, has made history by becoming the first woman within the Indian Army to be promoted to the rank of Subedar.
- ★ The promotion was announced as a significant milestone in the chapters of military history.
- ★ Subedar Rajak enlisted in the Army under the Corps of Military Police in December 2022.
- ★ She quickly emerged as a pioneer in the sports field, becoming the first outstanding female athlete in shooting to join the Army as a Havildar.
- ★ Rajak’s most notable achievement is securing a silver medal during the 19<sup>th</sup> Asian Games held in Hangzhou, China.
- ★ She showed exceptional skills in the trap women’s team event, further strengthening her reputation as a solid competitor on the international stage.
- ★ Currently ranked sixth in India in the trap women’s event, she continues to show her skills at the Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU) in preparation for the upcoming Paris Olympics in 2024.

## **DEFENCE**

### **Military Exercise Desert Cyclone-2024**

- ★ The joint military exercise Desert Cyclone-2024 between the armies of India and UAE will be conducted in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan from January 2 to January 15, 2024.
- ★ Desert Cyclone aims to learn and share best practices in urban operations.
- ★ The potential areas of bilateral co-operation in the defence sector include the production and development of defence equipment, joint exercises of the armed forces, especially naval exercises, sharing information on tactics and doctrines, etc.

### **Defence Ministry signs ₹802 Crore Contract for Military Equipment**

- ★ The Defence Ministry of the Government of India has signed contracts worth approximately ₹802 crore to purchase military equipment.
- ★ The Ministry of Defence has signed this contract to purchase military equipment with many companies.
- ★ A contract worth ₹473 crore was signed with Jupiter Wagons Limited for Bogie Open Military Wagons.
- ★ A contract worth ₹329 crore was signed with BEML Limited to procure Mechanical Minefield Marking Equipment.
- ★ Bogie Open Military Wagons are special wagons used by the Indian Army to transport military units.
- ★ They transport light vehicles, armoured vehicles and engineering equipment to operational areas.
- ★ According to the Ministry of Defence, this military equipment was made under the Indian procurement category.
- ★ This will promote indigenous manufacturing and help in realizing the vision of a self-reliant India.

### **Indian Navy's Elite Marine Commandos Effectively Rescue 21 Crew Members**

- ★ The Indian Navy's elite marine commandos successfully rescued 21 crew members, including 15 Indians, from the Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk.
- ★ The merchant vessel MV Lila Norfolk sent a distress message on the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) portal, reporting a boarding by five-six unknown armed personnel.
- ★ The Indian Navy diverted frontline warship INS Chennai from her anti piracy patrol and it intercepted the hijacked vessel.
- ★ The rescue operation involved deploying a range of assets, including a warship (INS Chennai), maritime patrol aircraft, helicopters, P-8I aircraft, and long-range aircraft, along with Predator MQ9B drones.

### **DRDO Launches an Indigenous Assault Rifle Named 'Ugram'**

- ★ Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has launched an indigenous assault rifle, 'Ugram', of 7.62 × 51 mm calibre for the armed forces.
- ★ This assault rifle has been unveiled by Dr Shailendra V. Gade, Director General, Armament and Combat Engineering Systems, DRDO, in Pune.
- ★ These assault rifles have been designed considering the needs of the armed forces, paramilitary forces and state police units.
- ★ 'Ugram' is a state-of-the-art indigenous assault rifle.

- ★ It has been developed by DRDO's Pune-based lab Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in collaboration with Hyderabad-based Dwipa Armor India Private Limited.
- ★ It was developed in under 100 days.
- ★ This rifle has been designed on the basis of the General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR) of the Indian Army.
- ★ The rifle has an effective range of 500 meters and weighs less than four kilograms.

### **Indian Navy Unveils 'Drishti 10 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)'**

- ★ Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar has unveiled the 'Drishti 10 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle' (UAV) at a ceremony held at Adani Aerospace Park in Hyderabad.
- ★ Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) was built indigenously
- ★ Adani Defense and Aerospace developed it.
- ★ It is an advanced Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platform with 36 hours of endurance and 450 kg payload capacity.
- ★ It is an all-weather military platform.
- ★ One of the distinguishing features of the Vision 10 'Starliner' is its minimal maintenance requirements, making it cost-effective and operationally efficient.
- ★ This feature ensures increased operational readiness, minimising downtime and maximising deployment opportunities.
- ★ It has advanced communication systems, including satellite communications and line-of-sight (LOS) data links, ensuring reliable and secure data transmission.

### **Indian Navy Will Host The MILAN 24 Exercise**

- ★ Indian Navy's multinational exercise, MILAN 24, is all set to be held in Visakhapatnam from 19 to 27 February 24.
- ★ MILAN is a biennial multi-national naval exercise that started in 1995 with the participation of four foreign countries (Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand) under India's 'Look East policy'.
- ★ The MILAN Exercise flourished under the Andaman and Nicobar command's aegis till its 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Visakhapatnam has been selected as the preferred location for upcoming MILAN exercises.
- ★ The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of this exercise was held in Visakhapatnam under the Eastern Naval Command with the theme 'Camaraderie-Cohesion-Collaboration'.
- ★ MILAN 24 exercise would comprise the 'Harbour phase' and the 'Sea phase'.
- ★ The MILAN serves as a platform for nations to form partnerships, share ideas and strengthen maritime security in order to increase their maritime power.

## **20<sup>th</sup> India-Japan Coast Guard Exercise**

- ★ The 20<sup>th</sup> joint exercise between the Coast Guard of India and Japan took place off the coast of Chennai.
- ★ Indian Coast Guard ships Shaunak, Shaurya, Sujay, Samudra Paheredar, Rani Abbakka, Annie Besant, C-440, Sagar Anveshika and Matsya Drushti and six aircraft, and Japanese Coast Guard ship Yashima participated in the exercise.
- ★ A release stated the presence of Yashima in our country is a result of the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between India and Japan in 2006.
- ★ The MoC aims to facilitate interaction between the two Coast Guard, fostering high-level visits, annual joint exercises, and participation in short-term workshops.
- ★ The exercise aims to strengthen ties and mutual understanding between the maritime security agencies of India and Japan.
- ★ The exercise also aims to strengthen bilateral ties, enabling both Coast Guard to collaborate in protecting shared interests, search and rescue missions or marine environment protection.

## **NATO's Biggest War Exercise – Steadfast Defender 2024**

- ★ North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is going to start its biggest exercise since the Cold War in the fourth week of January 2024.
- ★ This exercise named 'Steadfast Defender 2024' will be conducted till May 2024.
- ★ The main objective of this NATO exercise is to ensure that the US military can help its European allies in the event of a major war with Russia.
- ★ This exercise is especially important for the countries bordering Russia and the eastern part of NATO.
- ★ The main attractions of this great exercise of NATO include 90 thousand soldiers, 50 warships, 80 fighter jets, helicopters and drones and 1100 combat vehicles, 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles.
- ★ The massive "Steadfast Defender" exercise will take place across multiple countries, underscoring NATO's commitment to collective defense and regional security.

## **India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR**

- ★ India-Kyrgyzstan's 11<sup>th</sup> joint special forces exercise 'Khanjar' has commenced at Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- ★ Exercise 'Khanjar' will be conducted from 22 January to 3 February 2024.
- ★ Exercise 'Khanjar' is an annual event conducted alternately in both countries.
- ★ The exercise emphasizes on developing special forces skills, advanced insertion and extraction techniques.

- ★ This exercise will provide an opportunity for both sides to strengthen defence ties while addressing the common problems of international terrorism and extremism.
- ★ This exercise will provide an opportunity to achieve common security objectives.

### **Exercise Desert Knight**

- ★ Exercise Desert Knight was conducted over Arabian Sea by the Indian Air Force with the French Air and Space Force (FASF) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) AirForce.
- ★ The Indian Air Force contingent had Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, Jaguar, AWACS, C-130-J and Air to Air Refueller aircraft.
- ★ The French Air and Space Force (FASF) included the Rafale fighter aircraft and a Multi Role Tanker Transport while the UAE Air Force fielded the F-16.
- ★ The Exercise Desert Knight exercise was mainly focussed on enhancing synergy and interoperability between the three Air Forces.
- ★ Army personnel interacting during the exercise facilitated the exchange of operational knowledge, experiences and best practices amongst the participants.

### **Indian Air Force Locates Debris of Missing An-32 Aircraft from 2016**

- ★ The Indian Air Force (IAF) announced that the debris of the An-32 aircraft, which went missing over the Bay of Bengal in 2016 with 29 people onboard, has been found after 7 years.
- ★ The missing aircraft carried 29 individuals, including 6 crew members, 11 Indian Air Force personnel, two Indian Army soldiers, one each from the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard, and 8 defense civilians working with the Naval Armament Depot.
- ★ An Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV), deployed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology, located the missing aircraft on the sea bed approximately 310 kilometres from the Chennai coast.
- ★ The search was conducted at a depth of 3,400 meters, employing various payloads such as multi-beam SONAR (Sound Navigation and Ranging), synthetic aperture SONAR, and high-resolution photography.

### **Joint Special Forces Exercise Cyclone II Commenced in Egypt**

- ★ The Indian Army contingent comprising 25 personnel reached Egypt to take part in the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE.
- ★ It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Exercise Cyclone which will be conducted at Anshas, Egypt from 22<sup>nd</sup> January to 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024.
- ★ Cyclone is an annual exercise held alternatively in India and Egypt.
- ★ It is to acquaint both the sides with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of Special Operations in desert/semi desert terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.

- ★ The Indian contingent is being represented by troops from the Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and an Egyptian contingent comprising 25 personnel is being represented by Egyptian Commando Squadron and Egyptian Airborne Platoon.
- ★ The Exercise will involve planning and execution of special operations in sub conventional domain and conducted in three phases.
- ★ While the first phase will include Military Exhibitions and Tactical Interactions, the second phase will focus on training on Improvised Explosive Device (IED), counter IED and Combat First Aid.
- ★ The third and final phase will encompass Joint Tactical Exercise based on Fighting in Built-up Area and Hostage Rescue Scenarios.

### **Tata Group and Airbus Sign to Manufacture H125 Civil Helicopter**

- ★ Tata Group and France's Airbus signed an agreement to manufacture civil helicopters "with significant indigenization and localization components".
- ★ Under this agreement, both companies will manufacture H125 helicopters, which were signed during the visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to New Delhi.
- ★ The agreement was signed during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India as the Chief Guest at India's 75<sup>th</sup> Republic Day celebrations.
- ★ Both companies finalised this agreement during the visit of Emmanuel Macron.
- ★ Under this, Tata and Airbus will work together on the manufacturing of H125 helicopters.
- ★ Its manufacturing will be done in Vadodara, Gujarat. The H125 helicopter, jointly manufactured by Airbus and Tata Group, is a single engine helicopter.
- ★ This multi-mission workhorse will revolutionise passenger and freight transportation.
- ★ It will also be used for areas such as emergency medical services (HEMS), disaster management, law enforcement, tourism and air task missions.

### **'Sada Tanseeq' Joint Military Exercise**

- ★ The joint military exercise between the armies of India and Saudi Arabia – Sada Tanseeq is going to start in Rajasthan from 29 January 2024.
- ★ This 'Sada Tanseeq' will be organised in Rajasthan from 29 January to 10 February 2024.
- ★ According to the information given by the Indian Army, 'Sada Tanseeq' is the first exercise of its kind to be organised between the two countries.
- ★ The objective of this exercise is to share the best military activities and experiences between the armies of the two countries. This exercise will promote military co-operation and interoperability between India and Saudi Arabia.
- ★ The objective is to enhance synergy, interoperability and joint skills by learning and sharing best practices between the armies of the two countries.
- ★ This joint exercise will focus on counter-terrorism operations under the UN mandate.



- ★ During this exercise, participants will engage in missions ranging from joint planning, operations, joint tactical exercises.
- ★ This exercise will provide an opportunity to field commanders and soldiers to interact with each other.

### **Ministry of Defence Signs Contract with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders**

- ★ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) to acquire 14 Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).
- ★ The value of the 14 Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) will be ₹1,070 crore.
- ★ These FPVs will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by MDL under the 'Buy (Indian-IDDMM)' acquisition category.
- ★ These FPVs will be delivered in 63 months.
- ★ Along with several high tech advanced features and equipment, these FPVs will be equipped with multipurpose drones, wirelessly controlled remote water rescue craft lifebuoy and Artificial intelligence capability enabling greater flexibility and operational edge to the ICG to face new age multidimensional challenges.
- ★ The acquisition of these FPVs is aimed to boost ICG's capability and reinforces the increased focus of the government towards maritime security.

## **BOOKS & AUTHORS**

### **Raghuram Rajan has released a new book**

- ★ The former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Raghuram Rajan, and fellow economist Rohit Lamba's new book titled 'Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future', will be released.
- ★ It was announced by Penguin Random House India.
- ★ This is not the first book by the Ranjan on Indian Economy.
- ★ His earlier books included Fault Lines: How Hidden Fractures Still Threaten the World Economy which had also won Financial Times Business Book of the Year Award.

### **Governor of Kerala has Released the Book**

- ★ Mohammad Arif has recently released the book 'Ram Mandir Rashtra Mandir A Common Heritage'.
- ★ This book has been jointly written by Geeta Singh and Arif Khan Bharti.
- ★ The book release program was held from Akashvani Bhawan in New Delhi, Delhi.
- ★ This book explores the deep influence of Lord Rama not only in India but throughout the Asian continents.

- ★ This book throws light on the historical, cultural, and spiritual aspects related to the construction and significance of Ram Temple.

### **Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has released the Book ‘Maga Kavithai’**

- ★ Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M.K. Stalin has released the book ‘Maga Kavithai’.
- ★ This book has been written by poet Vairamuthu.
- ★ The book covers a wide range of topics including the origin of the universe, planet Earth, functions of the five elements, climate change, and its effects.
- ★ The book also emphasizes the urgent need to prevent the threats faced by humans due to the ever-increasing global temperature and deteriorating environment.

### **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Releases Book**

- ★ Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar released the book ‘Fertilising the Future: Bharat’s March Towards Fertilizer Self-Sufficiency’ written by Chemicals and Fertilizers Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya.
- ★ The Hindi version of the book is titled ‘Urvarak-Atmanirbharta ki Raah’.
- ★ The book delineates the journey of making India self reliant in the fertilizer sector under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the revolutionary changes that have taken place till date.

### **Autobiography Titled “Time Spent Distance Travelled”**

- ★ Former Supreme Court judge Shivaraj V. Patil is set to release his autobiography titled “Time Spent Distance Travelled”.
- ★ The 400-page book will be available in English and Kannada (Kaleda Kaala, Nadedda Doora) and is scheduled for release on January 21.
- ★ Patil, aged 84, initially had no plans to write an autobiography but was encouraged by well-wishers to share his life experiences.
- ★ The autobiography aims to impart knowledge gained over his 84 years, with a focus on inspiring youngsters and reflecting on his life journey.
- ★ The book covers aspects of his life, including childhood, education, legal career as an advocate, judicial tenure, and post-retirement activities, and social service.

### **Amit Shah Launched the Book “Assam’s Braveheart Lachit Barphukan”**

- ★ Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the book “Assam’s Braveheart Lachit Barphukan” by Arup Kumar Dutta in Guwahati.
- ★ Shah stated that almost all disputes and conflicts in Assam have concluded with the signing of several accords.
- ★ Shah emphasized the strength of multilingualism, considering it an asset for the country.

- ★ Lachit Barphukan, an iconic figure in Assam, was lauded by Shah as a national hero, and he stressed the importance of promoting Barphukan's greatness and valor.
- ★ The book, published by the State government, is available in English and translated into 24 Scheduled Indian languages.
- ★ Shah commended Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for efforts to promote and honor Lachit Barphukan.

### **Shri Amit Shah Launched a New Book**

- ★ Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah launched a book titled, 'A Promised Nation Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi – the Maker of New India', written on the life and works of PM Modi in Braille script in New Delhi.
- ★ Launched the book 'A Promised Nation Hon'ble Shri Narendra Modi – the Maker of New India' written on the life and works of Modi Ji in Braille script.
- ★ The book will help people with visual impairment to know about the life journey of Modi Ji and the transformation he has ushered in.
- ★ It will also act as a platform to achieve shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations between two friendly nations.

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

### **Pakistan Conducts Successful Flight Test Fatah-II**

- ★ Pakistan has successfully conducted the flight test of the indigenously developed rocket system known as Fatah-II.
- ★ Fatah-II is a guided multi-launch rocket system developed by Pakistan.
- ★ Fatah-II is capable of hitting targets with high precision up to a range of 400 kilometres.
- ★ The 'Fatah-II' is "equipped with state-of-the-art avionics, sophisticated navigation system and unique flight trajectory", the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the military.
- ★ The launch of Fatah-II was witnessed by Senior Officers from tri-services, as well as dedicated Scientists and Engineers.
- ★ Fatah-II features a sophisticated navigation system, enhancing its accuracy in hitting targets.
- ★ The rocket system has a unique flight trajectory, contributing to its effectiveness in various scenarios.

## Reliance Jio and IIT-Bombay Collaborate to Develop 'BharatGPT'

- ★ Reliance Jio Infocomm, an Indian telecom operator in India, is set to launch a groundbreaking initiative in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay — the 'Bharat GPT' program.
- ★ The program aims to leverage the power of large language models and generative artificial intelligence (GPT) to transform various sectors in the country.
- ★ The Bharat GPT program is part of Jio's broader vision, known as "Jio 2.0".
- ★ Its main aim is to create a comprehensive ecosystem of development.
- ★ The program's main aim is to explore the vast potential of artificial intelligence in driving innovation across products and services.
- ★ In addition to the Bharat GPT program, Ambani revealed that Reliance Jio is working on developing its own operating system (OS) for televisions.
- ★ This operating system is envisioned to enhance the user experience on Jio's devices and contribute to the company's ecosystem of services.

## Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre Unveils 'FEAST' Analysis Software

- ★ The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) of the Indian space agency Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has developed an analysis software 'FEAST' for Indian academia and industries.
- ★ FEAST is designed for use in performing Finite Element Analysis (FEA) of various structures, including rockets, aircraft, satellites, buildings, etc.
- ★ The software predicts how a component or structure reacts to real-world forces such as structural loads, thermal conditions, and other physical effects.
- ★ FEAST will be available for three broad categories of users.
  - **Academic:** Aimed at students and educational institutions.
  - **Premium:** Designed for small and medium-scale industries.
  - **Professional:** Tailored for general large-scale applications.
- ★ A free trial of the FEAST software is offered and can be accessed on the ISRO/VSSC website.

## India's ISRO is to Launch GSAT-20 Satellite

- ★ Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch a communication satellite on a SpaceX rocket.
- ★ Using SpaceX's services for the first time, ISRO will deploy its heavy communications satellite GSAT-20 through the Falcon-9 rocket in 2024.
- ★ This will be India's first partnership with a venture led by Elon Musk who also wants to expand his other businesses in the country.
- ★ GSAT-20 can enable telecom providers to offer very high-speed Internet services.

- ★ It weighs about 4,700 kg, much heavier than the launch capacity of ISRO's most powerful rocket, the LVM-3.
- ★ For its heavier satellites, weighing more than 4,000 kg, India was dependent on European launch provider Arianespace.
- ★ GSAT-20 will address high-speed connectivity deficiencies in rural and remote parts of the country and also enable in-flight internet services.

### **Researchers Develop 'Electronic Soil' that Enhances Crop Growth by 50%**

- ★ Scientists have developed an electrically conductive "soil" named eSoil, leading to a 50% increase in barley seedling growth in 15 days.
- ★ This soilless cultivation method, known as hydroponics, uses a root system that is stimulated electrically through a new cultivation substrate.
- ★ The team developed an electrically conductive cultivation substrate, tailored to hydroponic cultivation, that they call eSoil.
- ★ The main advantage of eSoil is that it has very low energy consumption and no high-voltage danger.
- ★ As per the study, hydroponics cultivation will have a better growth rate due to electrical stimulation.

### **Aditya L1 Successfully Injected Into Orbit**

- ★ ISRO reached its destination on 06 January 2024, India's first Sun mission, Aditya-L1.
- ★ Aditya-L1 is set to orbit around the Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1) in a coronal orbit.
- ★ Aditya-L1 was launched on 02 September 2023 by PSLV-C57.
- ★ Aditya-L1 is the first space-based observatory-class Indian solar mission to study the Sun from a distance of 1.5 million km. It took approximately 125 days to reach the L1 point.
- ★ Aditya-L1 is also ISRO's second astronomy observatory-class mission after Astrosat (2015).
- ★ This orbit is also important because it enables the satellite to avoid eclipses. Here solar observations are made continuously without interference from the Earth's magnetic field.
- ★ Aditya-L1 mission is for a duration of about 5 years.
- ★ The primary objective of this mission is to study the solar atmosphere, especially the chromosphere and corona.

### **NSPAAD Launches Mobile App 'Report Fish Disease'**

- ★ National Surveillance Programme for Aquatic Animal Diseases (NSPAAD) project, under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, has launched the 'Report Fish Disease-App' on the Google Play Store.

- ★ This innovative mobile application aims to empower fish farmers with a convenient and efficient platform to report diseases on their farms, stated ICAR-CIFT (Central Institute of Fisheries Technology) in a statement.
- ★ Its intuitive and user-friendly interface enables easy accessibility for fish farmers. This data is crucial for a rapid response and an accurate diagnosis.
- ★ Geo-tagging is a technology to pinpoint the exact location of the farm and facilitate swift responses from authorities and the receivers to get real-time updates on the status of their reported cases, ensuring transparency and accountability in the disease management process.

### **Indian Immunologicals Launches Indigenous Hepatitis-A Vaccine**

- ★ Indian Immunologicals Ltd. has launched the country's first indigenously developed Hepatitis A vaccine named 'Havisure'.
- ★ Indian Immunologicals Ltd. is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).
- ★ Vaccine HeaviSure represents an important step in the country's fight against hepatitis A.
- ★ The Havisure vaccine is at par with the world's leading vaccines sold by multinational companies.
- ★ Havisure is a two-dose vaccine. The first dose is given at the age above 12 months. Whereas the second dose is given at least 6 months after the first dose.
- ★ The Hyderabad-based company's vaccine approved by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) is effective in preventing the disease. It is recommended for children in routine vaccination.
- ★ The vaccine is also recommended for individuals who are at risk or traveling to areas with high Hepatitis A prevalence.

### **Japan Becomes 5<sup>th</sup> Country to Land Spacecraft on the Moon**

- ★ Japan became the 5<sup>th</sup> country in history to reach the moon when one of its spacecraft successfully made a soft landing on the lunar surface.
- ★ Japan follows the United States, the Soviet Union, China and India in reaching the moon.
- ★ SLIM, which was aiming to hit a very small target, is a lightweight spacecraft about the size of a passenger vehicle.
- ★ It was using "pinpoint landing" technology that promises far greater control than any previous moon landing.
- ★ While most previous probes have used landing zones about 10 kilometers (six miles) wide, SLIM was aiming at a target of just 100 meters (330 feet).
- ★ A landing of such precision would be a world's first, and would be crucial technology for a sustainable, long-term and accurate space probe system, stated Hiroshi Yamakawa, President of Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA.

### **Iran Successfully Launches Sorayya Satellite Into Orbit**

- ★ The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) successfully launched its Sorayya satellite into a 750-kilometer orbit.
- ★ The launch marks a significant milestone for Iran's aerospace capabilities and further demonstrates its growing ambitions in space technology.
- ★ The three-stage solid-fuel Qaem 100 satellite carrier, developed by the IRGC Aerospace Force, carried the Sorayya satellite into space.
- ★ The satellite's successful placement in orbit has set a new record for Iran, as it represents the first time the country has launched a satellite into this altitude.
- ★ Sorayya is a research satellite with a mass of approximately 50 kilograms.
- ★ It is equipped with a variety of scientific instruments that will be used to collect data on various aspects of space, including weather patterns, Earth's resources, and the environment.
- ★ The sub-orbital launch of the Qaem 100 satellite carrier was successfully conducted in October 2022.
- ★ This successful orbital launch marks a significant step forward in Iran's space program and further strengthens its position as a regional space power.
- ★ The Qaem 100, with its three stages of solid fuel, is capable of placing satellites weighing up to 80 kilograms in an orbit of 750 kilometers from Earth's surface.

### **ICAI Collaborates with IIM Ahmedabad to Develop 'Vision 2049'**

- ★ CA Institute, which is the world's largest accounting body, has initiated an exercise to develop a 'Vision 2049' document to position itself as a globally recognised leader in the accounting profession.
- ★ This vision document will be prepared in collaboration with IIM Ahmedabad.
- ★ All members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), students, and stakeholders can provide their inputs and suggestions for this exercise by February 9.
- ★ ICAI will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> year of existence in the year 2049.
- ★ ICAI Vision 2049 aims to empower chartered accountants as catalysts for economic progress, fostering a dynamic environment that seamlessly integrates with India's overarching objectives.

### **North Korea Conducts Test of Underwater Nuclear Weapon System**

- ★ North Korea has conducted a test of its underwater nuclear weapons system in a protest against this week's joint military drills by South Korea, the United States and Japan.
- ★ The test of the "Haeil-5-23", a name North Korea has given to its nuclear-capable underwater attack drones, was carried out by the defence ministry's think tank in the waters off its east coast.
- ★ "Haeil", which means tsunami, is the new Nuke drone system that was first reportedly tested in March 2023.

- ★ It was intended to make sneak attacks in enemy waters and destroy naval strike groups and major operational ports by creating a large radioactive wave through an underwater explosion.

### **ISRO to Launch INSAT-3DS Satellite**

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch its latest meteorological satellite, INSAT-3DS, marking a significant advancement in India's space capabilities.
- ★ This satellite, designed to enhance weather forecasting and disaster management, represents a culmination of rigorous testing and collaboration between ISRO and various stakeholders.
- ★ INSAT-3DS is engineered to provide continuity of services to its predecessors, INSAT-3D (launched in 2013) and INSAT-3DR (2016), while also augmenting the capabilities of the INSAT platform.
- ★ Its design, based on ISRO's well-proven I-2k bus platform, boasts a lift-off mass of 2,275 kg, making it a robust addition to India's satellite fleet.

## **IMPORTANT DAYS**

### **Global Family Day**

- ★ Global Family Day 2024 is observed every year on 01 January.
- ★ Every year, Global Family Day, also known as World Peace Day, is observed to encourage the idea of peace and unity in the world.
- ★ Additionally, it highlights the notion that everyone on the planet is related to one another regardless of nationality, borders, or ethnicity.

### **World Braille Day**

- ★ World Braille Day is celebrated every year on 04 January.
- ★ It aims to raise awareness about the importance of Braille. Braille is the only medium of communication for blind and partially sighted people.
- ★ January 4 is the birthday of Louis Braille, the inventor of the Braille script. Louis Braille was born in France in 1809.
- ★ Theme of the year 2024 is 'Reaching the blind and visually impaired'.
- ★ This theme aims to make access to more and more facilities easier for blind and visually impaired persons.
- ★ The United Nations declared January 4 as World Braille Day in a proclamation issued in 2018.

### **Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**

- ★ Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on 09 January.



- ★ This day is celebrated to mark the contribution of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.
- ★ This day also marks the homecoming of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to Mumbai on January 9, 1915.
- ★ It provides a common platform for the overseas Indian community to connect with the government and the native people of the country.
- ★ Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is a major program of the Ministry of External Affairs. It is organized in different cities to showcase the diversity and progress of different regions of India.
- ★ On this occasion, the government also confers the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. These have made a significant contribution to a better understanding of India in foreign countries.

### **World Hindi Day**

- ★ World Hindi Day is celebrated every year on 10 January.
- ★ The day is celebrated with the aim of giving special status to Hindi at the global level.
- ★ The theme of World Hindi Day is “Hindi from traditional knowledge to artificial intelligence”.
- ★ National Hindi Day is celebrated every year on 14 September.
- ★ The objective of this day is to create awareness about the Indian language and promote it as a global language across the world.
- ★ It is also used to spread awareness about the use of the Indian language and issues related to the use and promotion of the Hindi language.

### **National Human Trafficking Awareness Day**

- ★ National Human Trafficking Awareness Day is observed every year on 11 January.
- ★ The fight against human trafficking made progress in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
- ★ The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which was passed in 2000, was the first federal statute to address contemporary slavery.
- ★ The resolution designating January 11 as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day was approved by the US Senate in 2007.
- ★ The entire month of January 2010 was devoted by President Obama to raising awareness and preventing human trafficking.
- ★ More than 50 recognized groups are working to stop this criminal activity on a global scale, and awareness of it is higher than ever.

### **International Day of Education**

- ★ International Day of Education 2024 is observed every year on the 24 January.
- ★ The International Day of Education was declared by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 as a way to honor education and to think about how crucial learning is to progress and peace.

- ★ The theme of International Education Day is 'Learning for lasting peace'.
- ★ The main objective of this theme is to highlight the importance of education in promoting peace and understanding.
- ★ Along with this, there is also a deep coordination with contemporary global issues.
- ★ The UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 has a specific objective to achieve "inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030.

### **National Girl Child Day**

- ★ National Girl Child Day is celebrated every year on 24 January to spread awareness about the inequalities faced by girls in Indian society.
- ★ On this occasion, awareness about the rights of girls is promoted in the country for their all-round development.
- ★ National Girl Child Day was established in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- ★ The main reason for celebrating Girls' Day on 24<sup>th</sup> January is that on this day in 1966, Indira Gandhi took the oath as PM. She became the country's first Female Prime Minister.
- ★ This annual event holds immense importance as it promotes gender equality and addresses the issues faced by girls in India.

### **International Customs Day**

- ★ International Customs Day 2024 is observed every year on 26 January.
- ★ The European Customs Union Study Group (E.C.U.S.G.) was established by the Committee for European Economic Cooperation in 1948 to investigate the feasibility of establishing one or more inter-European customs unions.
- ★ To increase the effectiveness of customs administrations around the world, the Customs Cooperation Council (C.C.C.) was established in 1952.
- ★ The C.C.C.'s first session was held on January 26, 1953, and there were 17 founding members present.
- ★ In 1983, the group established International Customs Day.
- ★ The C.C.C. became a global organization and was renamed the W.C.O. in 1994 after decades of growth and expansion outside of Europe.

### **National Voters Day**

- ★ National Voters Day 2024 is observed every year on 25 January.
- ★ The Election Commission of India (ECI), which was established in 1950, was founded on January 25.
- ★ To encourage young people to participate in the election process, the day was first observed in 2011.

- ★ The primary goal of the Election Commission is to promote voter registration, especially among qualified voters.
- ★ The voting age was once 21 years old, it was decreased to 18 years old in 1988.
- ★ The voting age in India was lowered by the Sixty-First Amendment Bill of 1998.

### **International Holocaust Remembrance Day**

- ★ International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2024 is observed every year on 27 January.
- ★ The UN General Assembly adopted resolution 60/7 on 01 November 2005, to designate January 27 as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD).
- ★ On 27 January 2006, the first commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day was held at the UN Headquartered in New York City.
- ★ After that UN Headquarters commemorates this day every year.
- ★ While UN offices and other state offices across the world conduct their ceremonies.

### **Martyr's Day**

- ★ India celebrates January 30 as Martyrs' Day to pay tribute to all those freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the country.
- ★ The day is also marked as the death anniversary of the country's 'Bapu', Mahatma Gandhi.
- ★ On this day in 1948, Nathuram Godse assassinated Mahatma Gandhi at Birla House in New Delhi.
- ★ Martyrs' Day is celebrated by paying tribute to the mausoleum of Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat in Delhi.
- ★ The President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Defence Minister and all three Service Chiefs (Army, Air Force and Navy) pay homage to the 'Father of the Nation'.
- ★ The significance of Martyrs' Day lies in the fact that Mahatma Gandhi led major movements against British rule through a non-violent approach.
- ★ His philosophy was based on the principles of non-violence, fighting for truth (Satyagraha), political and personal freedom (Swaraj) and his principles inspired millions of people.

## **OBITUTARY NEWS**

### **Padma Bhushan Awardee Ved Prakash Nanda**

- ★ Ved Prakash Nanda, an Indian-American academic, was an expert in international law has passed away.
- ★ He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in the year 2018.

- ★ As a renowned faculty member of International Law at the University of Denver, USA for the past 50 years, he has made immense contributions to the well-being of the Indian-American community.
- ★ He also served as Chairman of the Board of the Hindu University of America.

### **FIFA World Cup Champion Mario Zagallo**

- ★ Mario Zagallo, who won two World Cups as a player, one as a coach and another as an assistant coach for Brazil, has passed away at the age of 92.
- ★ Zagallo began his career as a striker with Rio's America and later also played for Flamengo and Botafogo, one of the few Brazilian clubs which rivalled Pele's Santos in the 1960s.
- ★ He holds the record for World Cup titles in general with four titles in total.
- ★ He also holds the record for World Cup finals with six participations.
- ★ He was the first person to win the FIFA World Cup as both a manager and as a player, winning the competition in 1958 and 1962 as a player, in 1970 as manager, and in 1994 as assistant manager.
- ★ In 1992, Zagallo received the FIFA Order of Merit, the highest honour awarded by FIFA, for his contributions to football.

### **Music Maestro Rashid Khan**

- ★ Famous music artist Ustad Rashid Khan passed away on 09 January 2024 at the age of 55.
- ★ Ustad Rashid Khan was battling prostate cancer. He was undergoing treatment at Peerless Hospital, Kolkata.
- ★ Rashid Khan performed his first concert when he was only 11 years old. At 26, the ITC Music Research Academy recognised him as a composer. In 1978, he performed on stage at the ITC concert in Delhi.
- ★ Khan attempted to blend classical Hindustani music with lighter musical styles. Additionally, Rashid Khan engaged in experimental collaborations, including concerts with Western instrumentalist Louis Banks.
- ★ Rashid Khan shared the stage with sitarist Shahid Parvez and many other musicians.
- ★ In the year 2022, he was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.
- ★ Apart from this, Rashid Khan was also awarded the Padma Shri, the country's fourth highest civilian award.
- ★ Rashid Khan was also awarded Bengal's highest civilian award, Banga Vibhushan and Sangeet Mahasamman.
- ★ Rashid Khan was also honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

### **Famous Malayalam Filmmaker Vinu**

- ★ Famous Malayalam filmmaker Vinu passed away in Coimbatore. The popular filmmaker was 73 years old. He was suffering from a stomach-related illness.
- ★ Vinu and Director Suresh had given many films to the cinema world. The Suresh-Vinu pair was very popular in Malayalam cinema.
- ★ Suresh-Vinu made many Malayalam films together. These include the names of ‘Mangalam Veetil Manaseshwari Gupta’, ‘Kusruthi Kattu’ and ‘Ayushman Bhava’.
- ★ The last film Suresh-Vinu made together was ‘Kanichukulangarayil CBI’, which was released in 2008.

### **Urdu Poet Munawwar Rana Passes Away**

- ★ Noted Urdu poet Munawwar Rana passed away at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow.
- ★ He was born on November 26, 1952, he left a mark on Indian literature and his work, “Shahdaba”, earned him the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2014 but he returned it due to political reasons.
- ★ During the anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act), his daughter and he supported the protesters. He was also in the news during the farmers’ agitation for purportedly controversial remarks.
- ★ Munawwar Rana suffered infection in the lungs and throat in 2017 and was also receiving treatment regularly due to kidney problems for which he had to undergo dialysis.

### **Former Olympic Pole Vaulter Shawn Barber**

- ★ Barber, a world champion pole vaulter, Olympian and three-time NCAA champ during his time at Akron, died at his home in Kingwood, Texas, from medical complications. Barber was 29.
- ★ Barber, a dual citizen of the United States and Canada, competed for Canada at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, finishing
- ★ He won three NCAA Division I pole vault championships as a member of the Akron track and field program from 2013-2015.
- ★ Barber became the first male individual national champion in Zips history, capturing the 2014 NCAA Division I indoor championship in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- ★ He earned the gold medal at the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto, Canada with a winning jump of 19¼.

### **Rana Talwar, First Asian to Head a Global Bank**

- ★ Rana Talwar, the first person from Asia to head a global bank (Standard Chartered) passed away at the age of 76 after being unwell for some time.
- ★ Talwar was a board member at DLF, having joined the realty major in 2006.

- ★ He began his career with Citibank India in 1969, swiftly ascending through the ranks to lead its retail businesses in Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Europe, and North America.
- ★ He was instrumental in major acquisitions, including the Trade Finance business of UBS, Grindlays Bank in India and the Middle East from ANZ, and the Credit Card business from Chase Manhattan in Hong Kong.

### **Dr Nitya Anand, Man Who Discovered India's First Oral Contraceptive Pill 'Saheli'**

- ★ Dr Nitya Anand, who discovered India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli', passed away after a prolonged illness at SGPGIMS Lucknow. He was 99.
- ★ Anand was also the former director of the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) from 1974 to 1984.
- ★ He was with CDRI since its inception in 1951.
- ★ He published over 400 research papers and over 130 patents and supervised 100 PhD students.
- ★ In 2016, Saheli was incorporated in the National Family Programme of India.
- ★ Anand is a Padma Shri recipient.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **First World Leader to reach 2 Crore Subscribers on Youtube**

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi becomes first world leader to reach 2 crore subscribers on YouTube channel.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the world's first leader to have 20 million subscribers on the YouTube channel.
- ★ He has surpassed global leaders in terms of both subscribers and video views.
- ★ Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro is second on the list of subscriber numbers with around 64 lakh.
- ★ In terms of views, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is in second spot with 22.4 crore views.
- ★ US President Joe Biden has 7.89 lakh subscribers while his Turkiye counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan has 3.16 lakh.
- ★ Among the Indian leaders, Rahul Gandhi's channel has more than 35 lakh subscribers.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi set up his YouTube channel in 2007.

