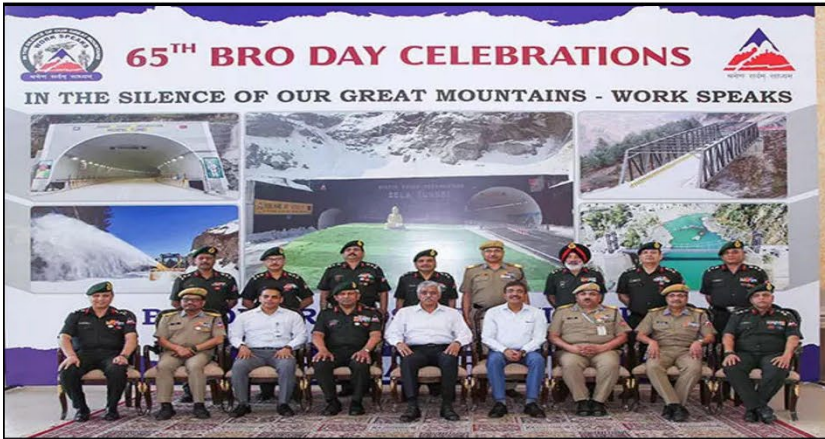




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NATIONAL NEWS

India to Host the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting

- ★ India will host the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46) and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP 26) from May 20 to 30, 2024, in Kochi, Kerala.
- ★ The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Union Ministry of Earth Science, will host the meeting.
- ★ Over 350 delegates from more than 60 countries are expected to attend the 46th ATCM and 26th CEP meetings.
- ★ The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting is a forum where the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties and other stakeholders meet to discuss the environmental, scientific, and governance issues affecting Antarctica.
- ★ The agenda of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting includes strategic planning for sustainable management of Antarctica and its resources; policy, legal, and institutional operations; inspections and exchange of information and data; biodiversity prospecting; research, collaboration, capacity building and co-operation; addressing climate change impacts; development of tourism framework; and promoting awareness.
- ★ The 26th Committee for Environmental Protection will focus on Antarctic environment evaluation, impact assessment, climate change response, area protection and management plans, management, and reporting, including marine spatial protection and conservation of Antarctic biodiversity.

Government Cancels FCRA Licences of 6 NGOs Over 'Violations'

- ★ The Union home ministry has cancelled the Foreign Contribution Registration Act (FCRA) licences of six non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for their alleged violation of the FCRA rules, misuse of foreign grants, and religious conversion, among others.
- ★ The cancellation came following a scrutiny by the Centre in March-April 2024
- ★ The NGOs whose registrations have been cancelled are CNI Synodical Board of Social Service, Voluntary Health Association of India, Indo-Global Social Service Society, Church's Auxiliary for Social Action, and Evangelical Fellowship of India.

Kundan Green Energy gets approval for a 42 MW Hydropower Plant

- ★ Kundan Green Energy has received approval for a 42 MW hydropower project in Okhali, Uttarakhand.
- ★ This project is part of an agreement with the Uttarakhand Government to develop a total of 80 MW greenfield hydropower capacity in the state, with an investment of ₹1,000 Crore.

- ★ The project is scheduled for completion by 2028 and will increase the company's combined hydropower capacity to 270 MW from the current 104 MW.
- ★ Kundan Green Energy, a subsidiary of Kundan Group, is dedicated to advancing sustainable energy solutions for India's energy security and transition to a greener future.
- ★ Committed to sustainability, the company aims to contribute to India's renewable energy target of 500 GW by 2030, leveraging efficient materials, techniques, systems, and processes.

SCOPE Organised an Art Exhibition cum Painting Competition

- ★ Encouraging creative minds, artists and upcoming talent, the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) organised an Art Exhibition cum Painting Competition at SCOPE Social Interaction Centre (SSIC), SCOPE Complex, New Delhi, as part of Public Sector Day celebrations.
- ★ Vasundhara Upmanyu, Joint Secretary, DPE, Ministry of Finance inaugurated the event in the presence of Shri Atul Sobti DG, SCOPE, senior officials of PSEs and participants.
- ★ SCOPE also felicitated its new members during the event participated by a large number of participants from various PSEs across the country.
- ★ The painting competition was held on the themes – 'My Vision for India of tomorrow', 'Nation 'Go Green', 'Nation Building by Public Sector' and 'Unleash your imagination through brushes and strokes'.
- ★ Live Art Sessions by talented artists and an Art exhibition were also organized in association with Vimla Art Forum during the event.
- ★ This unique initiative of SCOPE aimed at unleashing the hidden talents of PSE employees, while encouraging, and nurturing their creativity and imagination.

Railtel Signs MoU with Tech Firm for KAVACH Implementation Projects

- ★ The railways inked an agreement with a tech firm for "exploring and delivering" train collision avoidance system KAVACH implementation projects in India as well as other countries.
- ★ The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for this purpose was signed between RailTel Corporation of India Limited and Quadrant Future Tek Limited.
- ★ KAVACH is an indigenously developed automatic train protection (ATP) system of the Indian Railways.
- ★ According to RailTel, implementation of KAVACH on the Indian Railways network is one of the priority areas of the national transporter.

Free Hospital Care Under PM-JAY Touches ₹86,000 Crore

- ★ Free hospitalisation benefits worth ₹86,000 crore have been provided to beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) since the scheme was rolled out in September 2018.
- ★ More than 65 million people have so far benefited from the PMJAY scheme which offers ₹5,00,000-a-year free health cover.
- ★ The scheme was made available for 107 million poor households in the country, roughly covering the bottom 40% of the population.

- ★ The Centre launched the scheme on September 23, 2018, to alleviate the suffering of the people due to the rising cost of healthcare.
- ★ People from Tamil Nadu benefitted most under the scheme, followed by Karnataka, Rajasthan, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.
- ★ More than 34.29 crore Ayushman Cards have been issued to beneficiaries so far. As many as 30,162 public and private hospitals are empanelled under PM-JAY.
- ★ Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY is the largest health assurance scheme in the world which aims at providing a health cover of ₹5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization to over 12 crores poor and vulnerable families (approximately 55 crore beneficiaries) that form the bottom 40% of the Indian population.

First Constitution Park Was Inaugurated in Pune

- ★ Constitution Park, jointly developed by the Indian Army and Punit Balan Group, was inaugurated in Pune.
- ★ The park was inaugurated by GOC-in-C, Southern Command, Lt Gen Ajai Kumar Singh.
- ★ This Constitution Park is a tribute to the founding leaders of the Constitution.
- ★ This park is a symbol of unity and commitment towards values in the Constitution of India.
- ★ The Constituent Assembly of India developed the Constitution by taking provisions from other nations' constitutions.
- ★ The Constituent Assembly prepared it in about 2 years and 11 months.
- ★ It is the lengthiest written constitution in the world with approximately 1, 45,000 words.
- ★ It was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949 and came into force on 26th January 1950.

20 Firms Shortlisted Under New EV Subsidy Scheme

- ★ The Centre has given certification to over 20 vehicle OEMs to take part in the short-term e-mobility promotion scheme EMPS.
- ★ According to sources, these 20 companies, including all the major two and three-wheeler manufacturers, can now avail of incentives under the scheme.
- ★ The process for granting EMPS certificates has been completed.
- ★ The scheme is now expected to fully pick up pace and support EV adoption in the country.
- ★ The EMPS, which is valid for only four months (April–July 2024) with an outlay of ₹500 crore, aims to subsidise electric two-wheeler, three-wheeler, and e-rickshaw purchases by consumers.
- ★ It may be replaced or extended once a new Central Government is formed in June.
- ★ The new scheme aims to support the adoption of over 3,30,000 e-two-wheelers, over 40,000 smaller e-three-wheelers (e-rickshaws or e-carts), and over 25,000 large e-three-wheelers (L5 category).
- ★ As such, the maximum incentive per electric two-wheeler has been capped at ₹10,000, for e-rickshaws or e-carts at ₹25,000, and for L5 vehicles, it has been kept at ₹50,000 per vehicle.

Drone Destination Signs Pact with IFFCO

- ★ Drone company Drone Destination has signed an agreement with co-operative major IFFCO for spraying agricultural products on up to 30 lakh acres of farm land.
- ★ According to company officials, under the agreement Drone Destination could get paid in the range of ₹400 to ₹800 per acre at prevailing market rates, implying that the deal will fetch a revenue of ₹120 crore in the lower price band and up to ₹240 at upper price band.
- ★ The prevailing market rate of such agri spray is ₹400-800 per acre depending upon the region and the crop.
- ★ As part of the agreement, Drone Destination will undertake drone spray in 12 states across the country.
- ★ These states include Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.
- ★ The drones will spray IFFCO Nano Urea, Nano DAP, Sagarika, IFFCO MC Agro-Chemicals and other IFFCO and IFFCO joint venture's agri products, to enhance agricultural productivity and efficiency.

FPSB India, IFSCA Sign Pact to Promote GIFT IFSC as 'Global Finance Hub'

- ★ Financial Planning Standards Board India has announced that it has signed a pact with the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), GIFT City, Gandhinagar, to promote GIFT IFSC as a 'Global Finance Hub'.
- ★ FPSB India and IFSCA aim to enhance the financial market ecosystem and nurture skilled professionals for GIFT City's expanding financial workforce.
- ★ Both organisations will jointly organise international and domestic events to raise awareness and establish GIFT IFSC as a 'Global Finance Hub'.
- ★ Some key highlights of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) include talent pipeline support, ecosystem development, promotional activities and research collaboration.
- ★ FPSB India is the leading financial planning body in India and is dedicated to establishing, upholding, and promoting professional standards in financial planning across the country.

Uttarakhand Government Launches Pirul Lao Paise Pao Campaign

- ★ The Uttarakhand Government has launched the Pirul Lao-Paise Pao campaign to contain the raging forest fire in the state.
- ★ The Supreme Court recently expressed concern about the raging forest fire in the state, which has already killed five people.
- ★ The forest fires have already destroyed trees, medicinal plants and wildlife in the area, besides creating air pollution due to thick smoke and soot.
- ★ Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami urged the people to actively participate in the campaign to prevent forest fires.
- ★ Under the Pirul Lao-Paise Pao campaign, the local youth and villagers will collect dry Pirul (Pine tree leaves) in the forest and take them to the designated Pirul collection centre.

- ★ The Tehsildar in their respective areas will manage the pirul collection centre under the supervision of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate.

Renewable Energy Accounted For 71%

- ★ In India during FY 23-24, renewable energy (RE) contributed more than 71 per cent of the 26 GW (GigaWatt) of new power generated in the country.
- ★ According to the report by CEEW Centre for Energy Finance (CEEW-CEF), India's total installed energy capacity has now reached 442 GW, with RE comprising approximately 33 per cent (144 GW) and hydro contributing 11 per cent (47 GW).
- ★ The share of Coal in India's total installed capacity fell below the 50 per cent mark for the first time.
- ★ The report further highlights that solar energy, including both grid-scale and rooftop installations, continued to dominate India's RE capacity addition, constituting approximately 81 per cent (15 GW) of the total RE addition in FY24.
- ★ The wind capacity addition nearly doubled, reaching 3.3 GW compared to 2.3 GW in FY23.
- ★ Additionally, nuclear capacity (1.4 GW) was added for the first time since FY17.

Department of Pharmaceuticals Launches Meditech Stackathon 2024

- ★ The Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers launched the MEDITECH STACKATHON 2024.
- ★ MEDITECH STACKATHON 2024 was launched in New Delhi in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
- ★ Its goal is to transform the rapidly expanding MedTech industry in India by carefully examining the value chain of certain medical products.
- ★ Its objective is to address significant issues, encourage domestic production, reduce dependency on imports, and eventually position India as a world leader in medical technology.
- ★ The STACKATHON included several topics, including critical care, imaging, and cancer therapy.
- ★ India is the 4th largest market for medical devices in Asia and among the top 20 globally.
- ★ India's MedTech industry holds immense potential, with projections estimating a growth rate of 28% annually, reaching a size of USD 50 billion by 2030.

Kutch Ajrakh, Traditional Textile Craft, Has Recently Earned GI Tag

- ★ The traditional artisans of 'Kutch Ajrakh' in Gujarat have been awarded the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) certificate by the Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks (CGPDTM).
- ★ This recognition celebrates the intricate textile craft that has been a part of Kutch's vibrant culture for centuries.
- ★ Ajrakh, a textile craft that has been deeply rooted in Gujarat's cultural tapestry, holds a revered place in the regions of Sindh, Barmer, and Kutch, where its legacy spans millennia.

- ★ The art of Ajrakh involves a meticulous process of hand-block printing on treated cotton cloth, resulting in intricate designs infused with rich symbolism and history.
- ★ The word “Ajrakh” is derived from the word “Azrak”, meaning indigo, a well-known substance used to achieve a bluish effect.
- ★ Traditionally, Ajrakh prints consisted of three colours: blue, representing the sky; red, signifying the land and fire; and white, symbolizing the stars.

26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials’ Meeting Held in New Delhi

- ★ The 26th ASEAN-India Senior Officials’ Meeting was held in New Delhi
- ★ Singapore is the Country Coordinator of India for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations.
- ★ The meeting was attended by Senior Officials and representatives of all ASEAN Member States and Timor Leste which holds Observer Status in ASEAN, and Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN.
- ★ At the 26th AISOM, the gamut of ASEAN-India relations across the three pillars of engagement, namely, political-security, economic and socio-cultural, as reflected in the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025), was reviewed.
- ★ The Senior Officials’ also discussed implementation of Prime Ministers’ 12 Point Proposal announced at the 20th ASEAN-India Summit in Jakarta in 2023 to further strengthen the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Mahindra and Mahindra Sign MoU with MSDE for ‘Drone Didi’ Pilot Project

- ★ To boost rural women’s empowerment, the Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd. to conduct two Pilot Projects under the Drone Didi Yojana at Noida and Hyderabad.
- ★ The MoU was signed in New Delhi in the presence of Mahindra Group CEO and MD Dr Anish Shah and Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.
- ★ The pilot projects to train women to operate drones for agricultural purposes will be held at the National Skill Training Institute in Noida and Hyderabad.
- ★ The company will train 500 rural women farmers to operate drones for agricultural purposes, such as fertilising crops, monitoring crop growth, and planting seeds.
- ★ Mahindra and Mahindra will offer training in skills such as drone flying, data analysis, and drone maintenance.
- ★ The NSTI will provide the necessary infrastructure for the pilot training project. It will mobilise and select the trainee women with the help of the local Non-Governmental organisation (NGO) and the women Self Help Group (SHG).
- ★ The National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) is run by the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India.

Uttar Pradesh Government Plans to promote Agri Startups

- ★ The Uttar Pradesh Government has partnered with the agriculture industry to bolster agri startups and introduce artificial intelligence (AI) in farming to boost the rural economy and 'smart farming' practices.
- ★ The Yogi Adityanath Government is also planning to host a global farmers' summit 'Krishi Bharat' in November 2024 in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
- ★ The state is looking to host the farm summit on the same scale as the UP Global Investors Summit (GIS) held in February 2023, which fetched the state more than 19,000 investment proposals to the tune of ₹40 trillion from domestic and multinational companies.
- ★ In UP, the net cropped area is estimated at more than 20 million hectares, which is almost 85 per cent of the state's total land mass.

Krishikalpa in Partnership with NABARD Launches Programme for Farmers

- ★ Krishikalpa, a not-for-profit organisation for farmer producer organisations (FPOs) has launched an accelerator program in collaboration with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) with an aim to support 30 FPOs distributed across Karnataka.
- ★ The initiative aims to facilitate the transformation of FPOs into sustainable rural enterprises.
- ★ This will be achieved by delivering training sessions focusing on market orientation, business development, and entrepreneurial leadership skills.
- ★ The program comprises two FPOs with revenue exceeding ₹1 crore, ten FPOs generating between ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore, another ten FPOs with revenue ranging from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh, and eight FPOs generating between up to ₹10 lakh, per Krishikalpa.
- ★ The program includes a total of 30 FPOs, with an additional 6 reserve FPOs as stated by the organisation.
- ★ Krishikalpa, founded in 2020, has structured this program as a one year initiative. The primary goal is to double the revenue of the selected FPOs by the fiscal year 2024-25, with a three-month grace period.

IFFCO ties up with Marut Drones for Daas

- ★ The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Limited (IFFCO) has signed an agreement with Marut Dronetech Private Limited to launch Drone-as-a- Service (DAAS) operations in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- ★ One of the key components of this tie-up is the creation of demand for rural entrepreneurs who have already invested in drone technology.
- ★ This will also encourage rural youth to become drone service providers.
- ★ Through this initiative, the two entities are targeting to spray agri inputs over five lakh acres.
- ★ Under the agreement, Marut Dronetech will deploy its drone technology to administer a range of agricultural inputs developed by IFFCO agri-products.
- ★ DAAS enables farmers to access drone technology through rural drone entrepreneurs at a per-acre cost, ensuring affordability and accessibility even for small-scale farmers.

Indian AI Platform Hanooman Launches in 98 Global Languages

- ★ 3AI Holding Limited and SML India announced the launch of 'Hanooman', India's homegrown multilingual GenAI platform in 98 global languages, including 12 Indian languages, to build Gen AI ecosystem for India by leveraging the country's diverse linguistic and cultural heritage.
- ★ Derived from the name of Lord Hanuman, it symbolises the platform's commitment to using the power of GenAI for the greater good.
- ★ Hanooman, with all his knowledge, power and strength always served Ram loyally and we want Hanooman to bring the same GenAI power to humanity.
- ★ The AI tool has been developed by generative AI business SML India in partnership with 3AI Holding, an Abu Dhabi-based investment company.
- ★ The 12 Indian languages that the web version and app are currently available in include Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Kannada, Odia, Punjabi, Assamese, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Sindhi.
- ★ It is the largest multilingual and most affordable Gen AI platform.
- ★ It aims to cater to four sectors namely healthcare, governance, financial services, and education.
- ★ It offers an open-source alternative to commercially accessible Large Language Models (LLMs).

Centre Plans a Unified Portal for All Digital Public Goods

- ★ The Government is planning a unified portal to list all its digital public goods (DPGs) such as Aadhaar, Unified Payments Interface and Open Network for Digital Commerce in one place to provide easy access to all the apps and services.
- ★ The electronics and information technology is likely to be tasked with creating the portal and co-ordinating with all the ministries and their respective departments and agencies to detail the digital public infrastructure (DPI) created by them.
- ★ The idea is to enable not just easy access for users but also promote ease of doing business as multinational companies have also been seeking the services of these DPIs.
- ★ Apps and services under DPGs which are currently being developed and have not been launched for public service may also be listed in the portal for application developers and software engineers in case they wish to collaborate.
- ★ According to estimates, the global market size of DPGs is likely to be \$100 billion in the next five-six years.
- ★ As per EY estimates, the total cost per person for developing a DPG in countries with more than 50 million people is as low as 74 cents.

Bharti Airtel Communications and Google Cloud

- ★ Bharti Airtel announced a long-term collaboration with Google Cloud to deliver cloud solutions to Indian businesses.
- ★ Airtel will also leverage Google Cloud's generative artificial intelligence capabilities to transform its customer experiences and interactions across mobile, broadband, and digital television.

- ★ These capabilities will be extended to the telecommunications company's business-to-business customers in India and globally.
- ★ Additionally, Airtel will provide a suite of cloud-managed services to its customer base of more than 2,000 large enterprises and one million emerging businesses.
- ★ To power its cloud-based solutions business, Airtel has set up a managed services centre in Pune with over 300 experts who are being extensively trained to champion Google Cloud services and develop world-class tech solutions.

NTPC Talcher Launches 'Girl Empowerment Mission'

- ★ NTPC Talcher Thermal inaugurates its flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, the "Girl Empowerment Mission 2024".
- ★ This one-month-long initiative aims to support 40 young girls from eight Government schools covering four Gram Panchayats by providing them with access to quality education, health, life skills training, and mentorship.
- ★ The inauguration ceremony was attended by a distinguished panel of guests including Goutam Deb, Executive Director, Talcher Thermal; Dr JP Roy, GM (Project); Chander Shekhar, GM (CCD); Deepak, GM (Engineering) along with Bipasha Deb, President, Sagarika ladies Club and senior members of the club.
- ★ With this one-month-long mission, NTPC Talcher Thermal is planting seeds of possibility.
- ★ By nurturing the minds, bodies, and dreams of 40 girls, NTPC TTPS reaffirms its commitment to driving positive change and building a brighter future for generations.

Indian Air Force Tests BHISHM Portable Hospital for Airdrop in Agra

- ★ BHISHM Portable Hospital tested in Agra for airdrop from aircraft by the Indian Air Force.
- ★ This is the first time that the Indian Air Force has tested this portable hospital.
- ★ This test was done so that the portable hospital could be deployed anywhere to deal with emergencies.
- ★ According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, BHISHM Portable Cubes are a part of a broader initiative called "Project BHISHM" (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita and Maitri).
- ★ It is designed to treat up to 200 casualties with an emphasis on quick response and comprehensive care.
- ★ Specifically, the Aid Cube is equipped with a number of innovative tools designed to enhance disaster response and medical assistance during emergencies.
- ★ Additionally, it incorporates data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to support efficient management, real-time monitoring, and effective co-ordination of medical services in the field.
- ★ The entire unit consists of 72 easily transportable components that can be easily transported by hand, bicycle or even by drone, providing unmatched flexibility.

Ambaji Marble from Gujarat Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- ★ Marble mined in Gujarat's Ambaji has been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Central Government.
- ★ Ambaji Marble is renowned for its stunning white appearance and unique natural patterns.
- ★ Mined since the early medieval period from Ambaji in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, it is one of the most popular marbles in India.
- ★ It is also known as Amba White Marble and Ambe White Marble.
- ★ It's to be noted that Ambaji is famous for its white marble as it has the maximum whiteness in the range of 95.80 – 96.30 percent.
- ★ A GI, a kind of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), is primarily an agricultural, natural or manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- ★ A GI is a label that is applied to products that have a specific geographical origin and that have characteristics related to a particular location.
- ★ The tag is valid for a period of 10 years after which it is renewed.

Buddhist Festival Saga Dawa Celebrated in Sikkim

- ★ Sikkim is celebrating the festival of Saga Dawa on 23 May 2023 on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.
- ★ The Buddhist across the world are celebrating the Buddha purnima which marks the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama as Lord Buddha.
- ★ The Saga Dawa, also known as the 'Triple Blessed Festival'.
- ★ Saga means the fourth and Dawa means month in Tibetan. It is the most sacred Buddhist festival, commemorating the birth, enlightenment, and Mahaparinirvana (passing away) of Buddha Shakyamuni.
- ★ During this month, Buddhists of Sikkim offer prayers in various monasteries of the state.

Uttarakhand Initiates 'Pirul Lao-Paise Pao' Scheme

- ★ The Uttarakhand Government has launched the 'Pirul Lao-Paise Pao' campaign to address the issue of forest fires.
- ★ Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami inaugurated the campaign in Rudraprayag district.
- ★ The campaign encourages active participation from co-operatives, Yuva Mangal Dal, and Van Panchayat.
- ★ Local youth and villagers will collect dry Pirul (Pine tree leaves) from forests and deliver them to designated Pirul collection centers.
- ★ The Tehsildar, supervised by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, will manage these centers.
- ★ The collected Pirul will be weighed, and villagers/youth will receive ₹50 per kg, directly transferred to their bank accounts.
- ★ The collected Pirul will be processed, packed, and sold to industries.

- ★ Pirul has traditionally been used as bedding for domestic animals, fertilizer, and fruit packaging, but it poses a fire hazard due to its burning capacity.
- ★ Uttarakhand has established a 25-kilowatt power plant in Chakori Dhanari village, Uttarkashi district, using Pirul as a raw material.
- ★ The state produces an estimated 23 lakh metric tonnes of Pirul annually, with the potential to generate about 200 megawatts of electricity.
- ★ The State Government has allocated ₹ 50 crore for the campaign, funding the payments to Pirul collectors.

Google Partners with Foxconn

- ★ Internet major Google will partner with iPhone manufacturer Foxconn to produce its ultra-premium Pixel smartphones for the first time in Tamil Nadu (TN).
- ★ The move aims to scale up Google's Pixel smartphone business in India to tap into the growing demand for premium smartphones in the world's second-largest smartphone market.
- ★ Google's partnership with Foxconn is in addition to its plan to manufacture Pixel smartphones at the Dixon facility.
- ★ Dixon will produce Pixel smartphones under an arrangement with Compal Electronics, which already manufactures Google's devices.
- ★ Google will also export smartphones produced in India.

First Hydrogen Plant of GAIL Inaugurated in Vijaipur, MP

- ★ The Government of India-owned GAIL (India) Limited's first green hydrogen plant has become operational at Vijaipur in Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ The plant was jointly inaugurated by Pankaj Jain, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Sandeep Gupta, Chairman and Managing Director of GAIL.
- ★ This innovative Green Hydrogen plant boasts a capacity to produce 4.3 Tons Per Day (TPD) of hydrogen.
- ★ It achieves this through 10 Megawatt (MW) PEM (Proton Exchange Membrane) Electrolyzer units, utilizing the process of electrolysis of water powered by renewable energy sources.
- ★ Initially, the hydrogen generated by this facility will serve as a fuel alongside natural gas for internal consumption within various processes and equipment at the existing Vijaipur plant.
- ★ In addition to tapping into renewable power through open access, GAIL is actively installing approximately 20 MW of solar power plants at Vijaipur, including both ground-mounted and floating units.
- ★ The GAIL effort is part of the National Hydrogen Mission, which aims to develop a green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million Metric Tonnes) annually in the country by 2030.

Uttar Pradesh Tops in Transmission Line Addition By State Utilities

- ★ According to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Uttar Pradesh has emerged as the leading state in terms of adding transmission lines by state transmission utilities in FY24.

- ★ In FY24, the Uttar Pradesh Power Transmission Corporation Ltd (UPPTCL) outperformed other state utilities by adding 1,460 circuit kilometers (ckm) of transmission lines rated at 220 KV or higher.
- ★ The Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation Ltd (GETCO) ranked second followed UPPTCL with an addition of 898 ckm by the end of FY24.
- ★ Following Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar ranked next in the addition of transmission lines.

Reliance Industries to begin Construction on India's First Multimodal Logistics Park

- ★ India's first Multimodal Logistics Park, conceptualized 12 years ago and located at Mappedu near Chennai, will finally see construction commence in June, led by Reliance Industries.
- ★ In 2022, Reliance Industries won the bid for the ₹ 1,424 crore project on 184.27 acres of land in Tiruvallur district, surpassing Adani Group.
- ★ The contract was awarded by the Centre, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying the foundation stone on May 26, 2022.
- ★ A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in October 2021 among Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation, National Highways Logistics Management Limited, and Chennai Port Trust.
- ★ The park is strategically located 52 km from Chennai Port, 80 km from Ennore Port, and 87 km from Kattupalli Port, positioning it as a key logistics hub in the southern region.
- ★ The logistics park is expected to handle approximately 7.17 million tonnes of cargo over the next 45 years.
- ★ Its proximity to the automobile and electronics manufacturing clusters in the Sriperumbudur-Oragadam industrial belt and the Chennai Peripheral Ring Road further enhances its strategic importance.

NSDC and ILO Signed MoU

- ★ The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) join forces under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to bolster skill development and lifelong learning initiatives in India and beyond.
- ★ This partnership empowers individuals worldwide by providing them with essential competencies and qualifications, fostering employability and sustainable economic growth
- ★ A pivotal component of this collaboration is the implementation of the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), aimed at digitizing skill development initiatives to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and global reach.
- ★ The partnership seeks to facilitate public-private partnerships and knowledge exchange to strengthen Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), develops micro-credentials, and promotes Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) through a global knowledge-sharing platform.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India to Train Bangladeshi's Civil Servants for the Next 5 Years

- ★ The Government of India has signed an agreement with the Government of Bangladesh to renew the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to train 1500 Bangladeshi officers from 2025 to 2030.
- ★ The agreement was signed by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), the Government of India and the Bangladeshi Ministry of Public Administration, Government of Bangladesh.
- ★ The agreement was signed during the 3-day visit of a 4-member DARPG delegation to Bangladesh, which focused on mid-career capacity-building programs in field administration for Bangladesh Civil Servants.
- ★ The Indian delegation was led by V. Srinivas, Secretary, DARPG.
- ★ An MoU was signed between the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), India and the Bangladesh Ministry of Public Administration in 2014 to train the Bangladeshi civil servants.
- ★ Since then, they have collaborated in conducting capacity-building programs for Bangladesh Civil Servants.
- ★ The MoU has been periodically renewed, and the current MoU will end in 2025. The latest agreement has extended the Mou by five more years to 2030.

Group of Seven Nations Agree to Phase Out Coal-Fired Power Plants by 2035

- ★ Energy Ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) wealthy countries reached a deal to shut down their coal-fired power plants by 2035 at the latest, in a significant step towards the transition away from fossil fuels.
- ★ The accord will be included in the G7 Energy Ministers' final communique to be released at the end of a two-day meeting in Turin.
- ★ The agreement aligns with the objectives set out by the Conference of the Parties (COP28) United Nations climate summit, emphasizing a global transition away from fossil fuels, especially coal, which is the most polluting among them.
- ★ Italy produced 4.7% of its total electricity through its six remaining coal-fired stations in 2023.
- ★ The country plans to shut down its coal plants by 2025, except for those on Sardinia, where the deadline is 2028.
- ★ Germany and Japan have a greater reliance on coal, with the fuel accounting for more than 25% of their total electricity production last year.
- ★ In 2023 under Japan's presidency, the G7 had pledged to prioritise concrete steps towards phasing out coal power generation, falling short of indicating a specific deadline.

Dubai Plans World's Largest Airport Terminal at Al Maktoum International

- ★ Dubai has announced plans to build the world's largest airport terminal at Al Maktoum International Airport, aiming to revolutionize the aviation industry and solidify Dubai's status as a major global transportation hub.

- ★ The ambitious project has been approved by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai.
- ★ The project is set to revolutionize the aviation industry and strengthen Dubai's position as a global transportation hub.
- ★ After completion, Al Maktoum International Airport will have an annual capacity of 260 million passengers, making it the largest airport terminal in the world.
- ★ The new terminal is expected to be five times the size of the current Dubai International Airport, indicating a significant expansion in infrastructure and operational capabilities.
- ★ The project is part of a strategic initiative by the Dubai Aviation Corporation to enhance Dubai's transportation infrastructure.

UNCTAD has been rebranded as “UN Trade And Development”

- ★ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been rebranded as “UN Trade and Development” to mark its 60th anniversary.
- ★ This rebranding reflects the organization's commitment to enhancing its impact and amplifying its advocacy for developing countries.
- ★ The rebranding initiative includes a new visual identity designed to better reflect the organization's work and values.
- ★ The new name and logo will be adopted across all official channels in the 6 United Nations (UN) languages.
- ★ The theme for the 60th anniversary is “Charting a new development course in a changing world”.
- ★ The focus is on addressing finance, technology, investment, and sustainable development, with a specific emphasis on UNCTAD's work in Africa, least developed countries, small island developing states (SIDS), and landlocked developing countries.
- ★ The rebranding aims to strengthen UNCTAD's role in shaping global trade and development policies that benefit developing nations.
- ★ It also seeks to raise the organization's visibility and influence in international forums and discussions.

CAG and Nepal's Auditor General Sign MoU

- ★ The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), Girish Chandra Murmu has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Toyam Raya, Auditor General of Nepal to enhance co-operation between the two institutions.
- ★ Girish Chandra Murmu, who is on an official visit to Nepal, signed the MoU in Kathmandu, Nepal, in the presence of dignitaries from both countries.
- ★ The MoU seeks to enhance collaboration between the two Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) and the exchange of expertise in the field of auditing.
- ★ CAG is the supreme auditing institution in India while in Nepal Auditor General of Nepal is the supreme auditing institution.

- ★ This MoU will establish a platform between the two countries for developing and strengthening professional capacity, exchanging knowledge in the field of public sector audit, and mutually assisting in conducting audits.
- ★ During his visit to Nepal, the CAG also met with Nepal's Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, and Finance Minister Barsaman Pun.
- ★ Murmu also met the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of the Nepali Parliament, Mr Rishikesh Pokharel, to discuss mutual co-operation in the field of public sector audit.

India, Nigeria to Finalise Local Currency Settlement System Agreement

- ★ India and Nigeria have agreed to an early conclusion of the Local Currency Settlement System Agreement to boost bilateral trade between the two countries.
- ★ Under the local currency settlement system, the trade will be settled in India's local currency and Nigerian local currency, Nigerian naira.
- ★ This was decided at the 2nd session of the India-Nigeria Joint Trade Committee held in Abuja, Nigeria.
- ★ The second session of the India-Nigeria Joint Trade Committee was held in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja.
- ★ The Indian delegation was led by Amardeep Singh Bhatia, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- ★ Officials from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), EXIM Bank of India, and the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) also accompanied the Indian delegation.

India and New Zealand Signed MoU

- ★ India and New Zealand signed MoU to collaborate in goods and services sectors like pharmaceuticals, digital trade, and cross-border payment systems to promote bilateral trade.
- ★ Issues to promote trade through these collaborations were discussed during the recent visit of Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal to New Zealand from April 26-27.
- ★ Deliberations also included increasing co-operation in kiwi fruit as well as the dairy sector.
- ★ The meetings addressed bilateral trade matters of mutual interest, including issues related to market access, non-tariff barriers, and sanitary (human and animal health) and phytosanitary (plant health) measures on products like grapes, okra and mangoes.
- ★ Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) in organic products, and simplified homologation, including through mutual recognition of comparable domestic standards for vehicles, also figured in the discussions.

National Ambassador for UNICEF Every Child Campaign

- ★ UNICEF India has appointed famous Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan as its National Ambassador for its # For Every Child campaign in the country.
- ★ As a national ambassador, Kareena Kapoor will support the UNICEF India campaign to further every child's right to early childhood development, health, education, and gender equality.

- ★ Kareena Kapoor was appointed UNICEF India's Celebrity Advocate in 2014.
- ★ UNICEF appoints Goodwill Ambassadors and Celebrity Advocates to increase public awareness of the rights of children and women and UNICEF's work in protecting those rights.

China Signs MOU with Airbus to Deepen Aviation Co-operation

- ★ China's state planner signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Airbus to deepen aviation co-operation.
- ★ President Xi Jinping and his French counterpart President Emmanuel Macron released joint statements and reached interdepartmental agreements on several areas including artificial intelligence, the Middle East and agriculture during his trip to France.
- ★ China has historically signalled large jet orders timed to coincide with state visits, but the negotiations between Airbus and China's CASC buying agency are likely to go down to the wire and are not guaranteed to result in a deal, the people said.
- ★ Xi was in France to firm up bilateral ties amid wider strained trade tension with the European Union over several investigations targeting China.

Arabian Travel Mart 2024

- ★ The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India is participating in Arabian Travel Mart 2024, is being held in Dubai.
- ★ The event marks a significant step in strengthening India's presence in the Middle East tourism market.
- ★ Ministry of Tourism has launched the 'Cool Summers of India' campaign at Arabian Travel Mart.
- ★ This digital campaign challenges the notion of India being too hot for summer travel, emphasizing its offerings in hill resorts, including the Himalayas.
- ★ The event provides a platform for Indian tourism players to exhibit their offerings, forge alliances within the industry, and attract visitors from the MENA region.

Thailand Extends Visa Waiver Program for Indian and Taiwanese Tourists

- ★ Thailand's cabinet approved a 6-month extension of the visa exemption program for tourists from India and Taiwan to boost foreign tourist arrivals and support the country's economy.
- ★ The extended visa waiver will run until November 11, 2024, after the existing program.
- ★ Tourists from India and Taiwan can stay in Thailand without a visa for up to 30 days.
- ★ The extension follows the success of the initial waiver introduced in November 2023.
- ★ Without the visa waiver, Indian and Taiwanese tourists would be limited to a 15-day stay under the visa-on-arrival scheme.
- ★ Thailand has been relaxing visa rules for travelers from key markets, including China and Russia, as part of its strategy to boost tourism.
- ★ In the first four months of 2024, Thailand welcomed over 12 million foreign tourists, a 39% increase from the same period in 2023.

- ★ The largest groups of visitors to Thailand are from China, Malaysia, Russia, South Korea, and India, accounting for half of the total tourist arrivals.
- ★ Tourism accounts for about 20% of total jobs and makes up about 12% of Thailand's \$500 billion economy.
- ★ The Thai Government under Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin aims to attract 80 million tourists by 2027.

India Contributes \$5,00,000 to U.N. Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund

- ★ India has contributed \$500,000 to the U.N. Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund, underscoring its unwavering commitment to support multilateral efforts in the global fight against the scourge of terrorism.
- ★ India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj handed over to Under Secretary General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov the country's voluntary financial contribution of half a million dollars towards the U.N. Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund (CTTF).
- ★ Since 2018, India has also been actively supporting programmes combating this threat.
- ★ With its current contribution, India's cumulative financial support to the trust fund now stands at \$2.55 million.
- ★ United Nations Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund was established in 2009 and transferred to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) in 2017.
- ★ The Fund accepts contributions from Governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, private institutions and individuals.

India to Operate a Terminal of Iranian Chabahar Port for Next 10 Years

- ★ India and Iran have signed an agreement under which India will operate the strategically important Shahid Beheshti terminal of Chabahar Port of Iran for the next 10 years.
- ★ India operated the Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar on a short term contract which was renewed periodically. This is the first international terminal which will be operated by India.
- ★ The agreement was signed in the Iranian capital city of Tehran by the Indian Ports Global Ltd and the Port and Maritime Organisation (PMO) of Iran.
- ★ The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Iranian Minister for Roads & Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.
- ★ As part of the agreement the India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) will invest around \$120 million in developing the Shahid Beheshti terminal.
- ★ To improve the rail and road infrastructure for better connectivity to the terminal the Government of India has given \$250 million to Iran.

World Hydrogen Energy Summit

- ★ India has set up its maiden pavilion at the World Hydrogen Summit and Exhibition 2024.

- ★ The Pavilion was set up by the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and it was inaugurated by the Secretary of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Bhupinder Singh Bhalla.
- ★ The World Hydrogen Summit 2024 is being held in Rotterdam, Netherlands, from 13-15 May 2024.
- ★ The Summit is being attended by 15,000 delegates from around the world.
- ★ The 2024 World Hydrogen Summit and Exhibition is the largest global green hydrogen event which seeks to promote the use of green hydrogen technology and green hydrogen based fuel in the world.
- ★ The Indian pavilion will showcase the progress made by India in the use of Green Hydrogen.
- ★ The pavilion will also highlight the government policy in promoting green hydrogen and various steps taken by the Government of India to promote the use of green hydrogen in India.

India Grants \$1 Million Humanitarian Assistance to Flood Hit Kenya

- ★ The Government of India has announced humanitarian assistance worth \$ one million to the Government of Kenya to deal with the devastation caused by the floods in the country.
- ★ More than 267 people in the country have been killed by the devastating flood, which has displaced more than 3,80,00 people in the country.
- ★ According to the Ministry of External Affairs, an Indian Air Force plane with 22 tons of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief items (HADR), including basic sanitary utilities and hygiene kits, tents, sleeping bags/mats, blankets, power generation sets, ready to eat meals etc has been sent to Kenya.
- ★ To provide immediate emergency medical relief to the people of Kenya who have been injured due to floods and resultant house collapse, 18 tons of medical aid, comprising essential life-saving drugs and surgical equipment required for critical care and wound management, has been sent by the Government of India.
- ★ The Government of India sent a similar relief consignment through its Indian Naval ship, INS Sumedha, which docked in the Port of Mombasa.

TCS Unveils Global AI Centre of Excellence in France

- ★ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has announced the creation of a Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) Centre of Excellence in the French capital, Paris.
- ★ The announcement was made during the prestigious “Choose France Summit” hosted by President Emmanuel Macron, underscoring TCS’s commitment to the French market and the global AI landscape.
- ★ The new AI centre will be based in the upcoming TCS PacePort in the La Défense area of Paris, set to be inaugurated in June 2024.
- ★ This state-of-the-art facility will become the seventh addition to TCS’ global Pace network.
- ★ The TCS AI Centre of Excellence in Paris will leverage the company’s global ecosystem of startups, academia, and research organizations to bring the best of global AI capabilities to French companies.

UAE-India CEPA Council and Indian Chamber of Commerce

- ★ To enhance economic and trade relations, the UAE-India CEPA Council (UICC) and the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- ★ The main aim is to promote awareness of the UAE-India bilateral economic partnership and the benefits of the UAE-India CEPA.
- ★ The MoU established a comprehensive collaboration between the UICC and the ICC, focusing on public promotion, and increasing awareness.
- ★ Both organizations will engage in dialogue, and information sharing, and host joint events.
- ★ This partnership will boost trade volumes and bring the benefits of favourable trade policies to enterprises.
- ★ The UICC is dedicated to promoting economic co-operation and trade relations between the UAE and India.
- ★ The UICC, established in early 2024, has played a pivotal role in significantly enhancing the economic, investment, and trade ties between the two nations.
- ★ Over the fiscal year from April 2022 to March 2023, bilateral trade surged from USD 72.9 billion to USD 84.5 billion, marking an impressive expansion of almost 16%.

Renew Inks Initial Pact with Societe Generale

- ★ Energy firm ReNew announced that it has signed an initial pact with European bank Societe Generale for up to \$1 billion in financing as debt and advisory solutions over the next three years.
- ★ ReNew has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Societe Generale, to support the financing and development of the company's various strategic energy transition projects both in India and globally.
- ★ Both parties will leverage their respective expertise to strengthen the collaboration on utility-scale energy projects including solar, wind, complex renewables, green hydrogen, energy storage and solar modules manufacturing.
- ★ ReNew has a clean energy portfolio of 15.6 GW on a gross basis as of May 9, 2024.

TVS Motor Company Begins Operations in Italy

- ★ TVS Motor Company (TVSM) unveiled operations in Italy via its branch office TVS Motor Italia headed by Giovanni Notarbartolo di Furnari.
- ★ The company will introduce a selection of its advanced, high-quality thermic and electric scooters and motorcycles, the leading two and three wheeler manufacturer.
- ★ It is a strategic step towards our global ambitions. Italy's rich automotive culture and its embrace of cutting-edge transport solutions present a perfect backdrop for our product range.
- ★ TVS Motor Company is extending its operations in Italy through its branch office, TVS Motor Italia, headed by Giovanni Notarbartolo di Furnari.
- ★ TVS says Furnari brings comprehensive experience from senior managerial roles in major automotive companies in Italy, Latin America, the UAE, and Europe.

IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi to commence its First Academic Session in 24-25

- ★ The first international campus of IIT Delhi will commence its first academic session in 2024-25 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Initially, the IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi campus will offer undergraduate courses.
- ★ The IIT Delhi announced that students can secure admission either through the Combined Admission Entrance Test 2024 or the Joint Entrance Test (JEE) 2024.
- ★ As part of the Central Government's effort to internationalise the Indian education sector, the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) has set up two campuses outside India.
- ★ IIT Madras has set up a campus in Zanzibar, Tanzania, which commenced its academic season in 2023-24.
- ★ IIT Delhi Abu Dhabi will start its academic season this year.
- ★ The IIT Delhi has signed an agreement with Zayed University to use its infrastructure till its own campus is built in Abu Dhabi.

India and Zimbabwe

- ★ The delegates of India and Zimbabwe held the third session of the India-Zimbabwe Joint Trade Committee (JTC) in Delhi.
- ★ During the session, both sides reviewed the bilateral trade and noted the vast potential that exists between the two countries.
- ★ India and Zimbabwe have agreed to explore an opportunity to ink a pact for regulatory co-operation in tele-medicines, rough diamonds, and fast payment systems.

UAE Cabinet Approves 10-Year Blue Visa

- ★ The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Cabinet has approved a 10-year Blue Residence visa for individuals who have made outstanding contributions to environmental protection, reflecting the country's commitment to sustainability.
- ★ The introduction of the Blue Visa is in line with the UAE's year of sustainability (2023–2024) and its long-term objectives of promoting environmental protection and sustainable practices.
- ★ The 10-year visa is specifically designed for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional contributions and efforts towards environmental protection.
- ★ The Blue Visa will be granted to individuals who have shown remarkable dedication and impact across various environmental fields, including marine life, land-based ecosystems, air quality, sustainability technologies, the circular economy, and more.
- ★ This initiative aims to incentivize and recognize individuals who are actively contributing to environmental conservation and sustainability efforts in the UAE.

South African Government Urges Faster Visa Issuance for Indian Tourists

- ★ The South African Government is developing mechanisms for the speedy clearance of visa applications from India and is working on a proposal to introduce E-Visas for Indian tourists.
- ★ In the first quarter of 2024, 16,000 Indian visitors travelled to South Africa.

- ★ The initiative was announced during an event organised by South Africa Tourism.
- ★ South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has requested a joint report from the Ministers of Tourism, Home Affairs, and State Security on measures to expedite visa clearance.
- ★ The Tourism Ministry has proposed a 90-day visa waiver for passengers from both China and India.
- ★ Currently, passengers from Russia and Brazil receive a visa waiver for up to 90 days in one calendar year. They also have the option to apply for a visa extension while in South Africa.
- ★ The visa waiver facility will be extended to passengers from India and China, who are also members of the BRICS alliance.

Norway, Spain, and Ireland to Recognise Palestinian State

- ★ The Governments of Norway, Spain, and Ireland announced on 22 May 2024 that they would recognise the Palestinian state.
- ★ The official recognition by the three nations of an independent Palestinian state will take effect on 28 May 2024.
- ★ Among the three European Countries, Norway was the first to announce the recognition of the Palestinian State.
- ★ Norway supports a two-state solution, which calls for an independent country of Palestine along with the state of Israel.
- ★ According to the Palestinian Authority, 142 out of the 193 member countries of the United Nations already recognise a state of Palestine.

Spain Joins International Solar Alliance as 99th Member

- ★ Spain has become the 99th member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- ★ This information was given by the Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Randhir Jaiswal on 22 May 2024.
- ★ Spain has ratified the International Solar Alliance Instrument of Ratification and has deposited it with the ISA Head of Depository.
- ★ India is the host country of the International Solar Alliance and the Joint Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry Abhishek Singh is the Head of Depository at the moment
- ★ The ISA aims to bring together the countries of the world to promote the extensive use of solar energy as a counter to fossil fuels. Solar energy is considered to be more environment friendly than fossil fuels like coal, petroleum oils etc.
- ★ 119 countries have till date signed the ISA Framework Agreement. 99 countries have ratified and submitted the necessary International Solar Alliance Instrument of Ratification to become a full member.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

China Launches First of Eight Hangor-Class Submarines Built for Pakistan

- ★ China has launched the first of the eight Hangor-class submarines to be built for its all-weather ally Pakistan to provide it with state-of-the-art warships, adding a new dimension to their growing bilateral military co-operation.
- ★ The development comes as part of the agreement between Islamabad and Beijing under which the latter had agreed to provide the former with 8 state-of-the-art advanced submarines.
- ★ Of the 8 submarines, 4 are being built by WSIG (Wuhan Shipbuilding Industry Group) in China, and the other 4 at Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KS&EW) in Pakistan under a Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement.
- ★ The Hangor-class is an export variant of the Chinese Type 039A Yuan class, a diesel-electric attack submarine named after the former PNS Hangor, which famously sank the Indian frigate INS Khukri during the 1971 war.
- ★ The submarines have advanced stealth features and are equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, designed to operate in multi-threat environments and engage targets at stand-off ranges.
- ★ The Hangor-class features four diesel engines and is equipped with an air-independent propulsion (AIP) system, providing extended underwater endurance.
- ★ The Hangor-class has six 21-inch torpedo tubes and can launch anti-ship missiles and the Babur-3 subsonic cruise missile with a range of 450 km.
- ★ This class of submarines can be used for various strategic missions, including anti-ship warfare, and has increased stealth capabilities.³

China Launches Chang'e-6 Probe to Collect Moon's Far Side Sample

- ★ China has launched the Chang'e-6 probe to collect samples from the far side (dark side) of the Moon.
- ★ If the mission is successful, then China will become the first country in the world to collect lunar samples from the far side of the Moon.
- ★ China was the first country in the world to land on the far side of the moon. In 2019, its Chang'e 4 probe landed on the far side of the moon, but it did not bring any samples from the moon.
- ★ The China National Space Administration launched the 53-day lunar mission from the Wenchang Space Launch Site on the island of Hainan.
- ★ The 8.3-tonne probe named Chang'e 6 was launched through a Long March 5 rocket on 3 May 2024. Chang'e, in Chinese mythology, is a woman who consumed an elixir of life before flying to the moon.
- ★ According to CNSA, Chang'e 6 consists of four components: an orbiter, a lander, an ascender and a re-entry module.
- ★ The Chang'e 6 probe will make a soft landing in the South Pole-Aitken Basin. The basin is 2500 km wide and up to 8 km deep.

- ★ The 53-day mission will bring around two kilograms of lunar soil to Earth for scientific analysis.

Indian-Origin Astronaut Sunita Williams Set to Pilot Boeing's Starliner

- ★ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Boeing Crew Flight Test will launch Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams and her colleague Butch Wilmore on their third space mission to the International Space Station (ISS).
- ★ The astronauts will launch aboard Boeing's Starliner spacecraft atop an Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral's Space Launch Complex-41 on May 7, 2024.
- ★ This mission marks the first crewed trip on Boeing's Starliner spacecraft and its third orbital flight test overall.
- ★ Previous orbital flight tests, Boe-OFT and Boe-OFT 2, were unmanned and conducted in 2019 and 2022, respectively.
- ★ The CST-100 Starliner test mission follows years of delays and over \$1 billion in cost overruns.
- ★ Sunita Williams is of Indian-American and Slovene-American descent, born in Euclid, Ohio.
- ★ She received her commission as an Ensign in the United States Navy in 1987 and was selected as an astronaut by NASA in 1998.
- ★ Williams is a veteran of two space missions, serving as a flight engineer on Expedition 32 and commander of Expedition 33.
- ★ She holds the record for the total cumulative spacewalk time by a female astronaut, with a total of 322 days spent in space across her two previous missions.

Google Introduces Google Wallet for Android Users in India

- ★ Google announced the launch of the Google Wallet app in India, providing users a centralized platform to save travel tickets, gift cards, event passes, and other digital documents.
- ★ It however does not support payment features such as saving credit cards or debit cards in the wallet for on-tap payments.
- ★ This Wallet app offers fast and secures access to everyday essentials, enabling people to conveniently store and retrieve important digital documents like boarding passes, loyalty cards, movie tickets, and more.
- ★ Google Wallet complements Google Pay, which will continue to serve the payments needs of users across India.
- ★ Google has partnered with 20 of India's top brands to enable the Google Wallet experience, including PVR and INOX, Air India, Indigo, Flipkart, Pine Labs, Kochi Metro, Abhibus and many others, with more partners to be added in the months to follow.

Japan Reveals World's Inaugural 6G Device

- ★ A Japanese consortium unveiled the world's first high-speed 6G prototype device.
- ★ The prototype device can transmit data at a remarkable speed of 100 gigabits per second (Gbps), covering a distance of more than 300 feet.

- ★ This represents a significant advancement over current 5G technology, boasting a 20x improvement.
- ★ The prototype device was a result of collaboration among Japan's leading telecom companies, including DOCOMO, NTT Corporation, NEC Corporation, and Fujitsu.
- ★ The successful test results were announced on April 11th, showcasing the device's capability to achieve speeds of 100 Gbps indoors using the 100 gigahertz (GHz) band and outdoors using the 300 GHz band.
- ★ Tests were conducted over a distance of 328 feet (100 metres).
- ★ 6G utilizes even higher frequency bands than 5G, making it challenging for devices to receive necessary frequencies for faster downloads.
- ★ Factors like distance and environmental conditions (e.g., walls, rain) can significantly disrupt 6G signals, even during tests conducted over 328 feet (100 meters).
- ★ With its increased speed, 6G could enable advancements such as real-time holographic communication and immersive virtual and mixed-reality experiences.

Google Unveils New Personal AI Assistant at I/O Event

- ★ During high-profile I/O event, Google announced a brand new personal AI Assistant that could be the successor to the Google Assistant.
- ★ It's called "Project Astra" and it's powered by Gemini AI, Google's advanced artificial intelligence technology.
- ★ Project Astra can see the world around you and answer questions about it.
- ★ It can answer real-time questions fed to it through various modalities: text, video, images, and speech.
- ★ The AI can remember the location of objects, verify computer code accuracy via a phone's camera, and provide relevant information based on its observations.
- ★ Project Astra is a multimodal AI agent, meaning it can process information from different modalities, including images, videos, and text.
- ★ A multimodal model is a machine learning (ML) model capable of processing diverse information types from various sources like images, videos, and text, providing a comprehensive understanding and response capability.

Japan and US Ink Deal to Collaborate on Hypersonic Missile Interceptor Development

- ★ Japan and the United States (US) are planning to develop interceptors to shoot down hypersonic missiles by the 2030s under a contract signed by the two countries.
- ★ The plan, which will reportedly cost more than \$3 billion, was first announced in August when the nations' leaders met at a summit with South Korea in Camp David outside Washington.
- ★ The Japanese Government has already included 75 billion yen (\$480 million) in its 2024 budget for development of the interceptors.

- ★ Hypersonic missiles fly at more than five times the speed of sound and have irregular trajectories, making them difficult to intercept.
- ★ The 75 billion yen is part of a record defence budget of 7.95 trillion yen approved last year, as tensions rise with China and North Korea.
- ★ Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has pledged to double defence spending to the NATO standard of 2% of GDP by 2027.

SpaceX Deploys First Batch of Satellites for New US Spy Constellation

- ★ SpaceX has launched the first batch of operational spy satellites as part of a new American intelligence network.
- ★ The Falcon 9 rocket, operated by SpaceX, lifted off from Vandenberg Space Force Base in Southern California for this launch.
- ★ It marks the first deployment of the NRO's comprehensive system featuring responsive collection and rapid data delivery.
- ★ It is designed to significantly upgrade the country's space-based surveillance powers, with the first deployment of several more planned this year.
- ★ Northrop Grumman NOC.N, a long time space and defence contractor, is also involved in the project.
- ★ Hundreds of satellites are being built by SpaceX for the US National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) for a massive system in orbit.
- ★ It will be capable of rapidly identifying ground targets almost anywhere in the world.
- ★ Around half a dozen launches supporting the NRO's massive system are scheduled for 2024, with additional launches anticipated through 2028.

Agnikul Launches World's First Rocket With 3D-Printed Rocket Engine

- ★ Chennai-based startup Agnikul Cosmos has launched the world's first space rocket with a single-piece three-dimensional (3D) printed engine.
- ★ The rocket named Agnibaan is India's first semi-cryogenic engine-powered rocket launch, which was completely designed and manufactured indigenously.
- ★ Agnikul used Inconel material to build the 3D-printed rocket. Inconel is an alloy that is oxidation-corrosion-resistant and well-suited for space travel.
- ★ Agnikul became the second Indian private company to launch its rocket in space.
- ★ Agnikul's patented Agnilet engine is the world's first single-piece 3D-printed engine. The Agnilet engine was designed tested and manufactured in India and was successfully test-fired in 2021.
- ★ The Agnibaan rocket is a customisable two-stage rocket with a height of about 20 meters.
- ★ The rocket can carry a payload of up to 300 kg to the low earth orbits (LEO) roughly 700 km above Earth. Agnibaan is a SOrTeD (SubOrbital Technological Demonstrator) that has a plug-and-play configuration.
- ★ The plug-and-play configuration means that the rocket can be expanded or shrunk depending on the satellite that is to be taken to space.

- ★ The rocket uses liquid propellant-liquid oxygen or kerosene.

Tata Consultancy Services and Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay

- ★ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has joined forces with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay) to create India's inaugural Quantum Diamond Microchip Imager.
- ★ This collaboration aims to develop a tool for assessing the quality of semiconductors.
- ★ This collaboration is aligned with the Government of India's National Quantum Mission.
- ★ The Quantum Diamond Microchip Imager leverages quantum diamond technology to visualize magnetic fields, facilitating non-invasive and non-destructive semiconductor chip mapping, akin to MRI technology in hospitals.
- ★ The imager capitalizes on defects within diamond structures, specifically Nitrogen-Vacancy (NV) centers, to achieve its functionality.
- ★ Over the next two years, experts from TCS will collaborate with Kasturi Saha, an Associate Professor in IIT Bombay's electrical engineering department, to realize the quantum imaging platform within the PQuest Lab.
- ★ TCS and IIT Bombay have engaged in numerous joint initiatives since the 1990s, fostering a longstanding partnership.

BANKING, FINANCE, ECONOMICS & BUSINESS NEWS

RBI Permits SFB to Trade in Authorised Rupee Interest Rate Derivative Products

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to permit Small Finance Banks (SFBs) to deal in permissible rupee interest rate derivative products for hedging interest rate risk.
- ★ It is to expand the avenues available to the SFBs for hedging interest rate risk in their balance sheets and commercial operations more effectively and to provide them with greater flexibility.
- ★ Prior to this decision, Small Finance Banks were only allowed to use interest rate futures (IRFs) for proprietary hedging.
- ★ The circular permitting SFBs to deal in rupee interest rate derivatives is effective immediately and applies to all Small Finance Banks.
- ★ An interest rate derivative is a financial instrument with a value that is linked to the movements of an interest rate or rates.
- ★ These may include futures, options, or swaps contracts.

RBI Introduces Two Vital Surveys to Gather Insights for Upcoming Monetary Policy

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced two key surveys, the 'Inflation Expectations Survey of Households' and the 'Consumer Confidence Survey', to gather data for the upcoming bi-monthly monetary policy.
- ★ The next bi-monthly monetary policy meeting is scheduled for June 5-7, 2024.

- ★ This survey captures subjective assessments of price movements and inflation from households across 19 cities, including Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Kolkata, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram.
- ★ It gathers qualitative responses from households regarding expected changes in prices (general prices and specific product groups) for the 3 months ahead and 1-year ahead.
- ★ It also seeks quantitative responses on current, 3 months ahead and 1-year ahead inflation rates.
- ★ This survey collects qualitative responses from households about their sentiments on various aspects of the economy, including the general economic situation, employment scenario, price levels, household income, and spending.
- ★ It is also conducted in 19 cities, including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, and Delhi.
- ★ The results of the surveys provide useful inputs for monetary policy.

Groww and Worldline-Online Payment Aggregators

- ★ Financial services platform Groww and digital payment processing company Worldline ePayments have secured a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) licence to operate as online payment aggregators.
- ★ An online payment aggregator licence allows companies to offer payment services for merchants, typically e-commerce firms, by accepting various payment instruments from customers.
- ★ Groww has secured the licence for its UPI payments platform Groww Pay.
- ★ Worldline ePayments India, received the licence enabling the company to provide payment services for merchants including e-commerce firms or online businesses
- ★ With these additions, the total number of firms obtaining RBI approval to operate as payment aggregators in the first four months of 2024 has reached
- ★ Over 28 companies have received an in-principle approval from the RBI to operate as payment aggregators.

YES Bank Partners with ANQ

- ★ YES Bank has partnered with Bengaluru-based financial services provider ANQ to launch two co-branded credit cards, Pi and Phi.
- ★ The partnership focuses on bridging the gap between traditional banking and the fintech industry, offering innovative solutions to meet evolving consumer needs.
- ★ It is a digital-only card designed to offer seamless credit on UPI for domestic transactions.
- ★ It provides convenient and secure payment options, aligning with the growing digital-first economy.
- ★ The card offers accelerated rewards on UPI spending, providing enhanced value for users.
- ★ As YES BANK and ANQ embark on this journey, they highlight a broader transition towards a digital-first economy, with their collaboration serving as a guiding light for the future of the Indian fintech ecosystem.

- ★ ANQ is a digital banking platform that uses decentralized finance (DeFi) to deliver next-generation financial services.

State Bank of India Receives Government Approval to Exit YES Bank

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) has received Government approval to divest its entire 25.02% stake in YES Bank, following the end of a lock-in period in March 2024.
- ★ SBI is likely to sell its stake in YES Bank through a block deal, a common method for selling large volumes of shares.
- ★ The block deal could be valued between ₹ 5,000 crore and ₹ 7,000 crore, with no taxes applied to the sale.
- ★ YES Bank reported a more than two-fold jump in standalone net profit to ₹ 452 crore for the March quarter of fiscal 2023-24, compared to ₹ 202.43 crore in the corresponding period last year.

OECD Raises the Indian Economy Growth Rate Forecast to 6.6% in 2024-25

- ★ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in its latest report, “Economic Outlook”, released on 2 May 2024, has raised its economic growth rate forecast for the Indian economy for 2024-25 to 6.6%.
- ★ In its earlier report, it had projected a growth rate of 6.2 per cent for the Indian economy in 2024-25.
- ★ It has also forecasted a growth rate of 6.6% for 2025-26.
- ★ The OECD is the latest international institution which has raised the growth rate prospect for the India economy.
- ★ Recently International Monetary Fund raised the expected growth rate of the Indian economy in 2024-25 to 6.8%.
- ★ The OECD expects the world economy to grow by 3.1 percent in 2024 and 3.2 percent in 2025.
- ★ According to the OECD, the Indian economy is expected to grow faster in 2024-25 due to an increase in public investment and improved business confidence.

NPCI International Payments Limited Signs Agreement with Bank of Namibia

- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) has signed an agreement with the Bank of Namibia (BoN) to support them in developing an instant payment system like Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for Namibia.
- ★ Aim is to enhance digital financial services and bolster real-time Person-to-Person (P2P) and Merchant payment transactions (P2M) in the African nation.
- ★ By leveraging technology and experiences from India's UPI, the partnership seeks to help Namibia modernise its financial ecosystem.
- ★ The partnership will provide BoN access to best-in-class technology and insights from NIPL, allowing Namibia to create an efficient digital payment platform.
- ★ The new platform will improve accessibility, affordability, and connectivity with both domestic and international payment networks.

- ★ It is expected to facilitate digital transactions, contributing to financial inclusion and reducing cash dependency, especially in rural and informal sectors.

RBI Removes Restrictions on Bajaj Finance's 'eCOM' and 'Insta EMI Card' Lending Products

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lifted restrictions on Indian non-banking financial company, Bajaj Finance's 'eCOM' and 'Insta Existing Member Identification card (EMI card)' segments, allowing the company to resume the sanction and disbursement of new loans in these segments.
- ★ The RBI had imposed restrictions in November 2023 due to concerns raised by the regulatory authority regarding these lending segments.
- ★ Bajaj Finance took remedial actions to address the concerns raised by the RBI, leading to the lifting of restrictions.
- ★ With the lifting of restrictions, Bajaj Finance can now restart the sanction and disbursement of loans in the 'eCOM' and 'Insta EMI card' segments, including the issuance of EMI cards to new customers.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Launches 'Prive'

- ★ Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, a leading private general insurer in India, has launched Prive, an exclusive customer experience program designed to offer exceptional customer service and coverage.
- ★ Prive is an exclusive customer experience program crafted for a special segment of policyholders. Prive provides access to elevated and unmatched customer service at every touchpoint.
- ★ To qualify for the Prive program under the My Health Care Plan, customers must have a minimum sum insured of ₹ 1 crore.
- ★ Customers who meet this criterion will have access to Privé Connect, a dedicated customer support team for handling insurance queries, service requests, and claims.

Foreign Portfolio Investors Registered with SEBI

- ★ Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) domiciled at the GIFT International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) are now permitted to issue offshore derivative instruments (ODIs), commonly known as participatory notes (P-Notes).
- ★ At present, the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA), the unified regulator for GIFT City, allows banking units to issue P-Notes.
- ★ In the first phase, IFSC banking units, registered with Sebi as FPIs, were allowed to issue derivative instruments with Indian securities as underlying.
- ★ In the second phase, IFSCA permitted IFSCA-registered non-bank entities, also registered with Sebi as FPIs, to issue derivative instruments with Indian securities as underlying.
- ★ Currently, about 46 FPIs are domiciled at the GIFT IFSC.
- ★ Experts believe some of the relatively-large ones will start issuing P-Notes.

- ★ P-Notes, short for Participatory Notes, are financial instruments that enable foreign investors to invest indirectly in Indian securities without having to register with the SEBI.

RBI's Innovation Hub Collaborates with mysaltapp and FICCI Ladies Organisation

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India's Innovation Hub (RBIH) subsidiary collaborated with mysaltapp and the FICCI Ladies Organisation to release a white paper titled "At The Helm: Women Entrepreneurs Transforming Middle India".
- ★ The white paper revealed that only 3% of women entrepreneurs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities have access to external funding.
- ★ This indicates a significant gap in funding availability for women entrepreneurs in smaller cities compared to major urban areas.
- ★ About 20% of India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are women-led.
- ★ The majority of these are sole proprietorships, with 5.2% of small enterprises being women-led and 2.6% of medium enterprises being women-led.
- ★ Indian women often bear the majority of family care responsibilities, affecting their business ventures and career opportunities.
- ★ 86% of women relocated due to marriage, impacting continuity and access to employment or entrepreneurship opportunities.
- ★ Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities generally lack scalable employment opportunities compared to Tier 1 and a few Tier 2 cities, limiting economic growth for women entrepreneurs.

India and Ghana Agree to Implement Unified Payments Interface

- ★ India and Ghana have agreed to operationalize India's Unified Payment Interface (UPI) of the National Payments Corporation (NPCI) on Ghana's Ghana Interbank Payment and Settlement Systems (GHIPSS) within 6 months.
- ★ This was a key outcome from the fourth session of the India-Ghana Joint Trade Committee (JTC) held in Accra.
- ★ The meeting also discussed opportunities for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on digital transformation solutions and Local Currency Settlement System.
- ★ Deliberations included the opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).
- ★ Ghana is an important trading partner of India in the Africa region.
- ★ Bilateral trade between India and Ghana increased to USD 2.87 billion in 2022-23, up from USD 2.6 billion in 2021-22.
- ★ India stands as a leading investor in Ghana and emerged as the 3rd-largest investor.

Indian Overseas Bank to Sell Two NPA Portfolios Worth ₹ 13,472 Crore

- ★ Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has published sale notification pertaining to the sale of 92 Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) loans, collectively amounting to an aggregate Book Outstanding of

₹ 13,471.68 crores, offered on portfolio basis in 2 lots through e-auction under the open auction method.

- ★ Aim is to enhance the bank's financial health, particularly as its Gross NPA levels have reduced significantly from 11.69% in March 2021 to 3.90% by December 2023.
- ★ The first portfolio includes 46 accounts financed under consortium arrangements, three accounts under multiple banking arrangements, and two sole banking ventures.
- ★ Within this portfolio, 38 accounts are formally admitted under the purview of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- ★ The second portfolio consists of 41 sole banking accounts.
- ★ Interested Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) and other eligible transferees have been invited to submit their Expressions of Interest (EOI) by May 13, 2024.
- ★ The e-auction for the NPAs is scheduled for May 28, 2024.

ICICI Bank Facilitates UPI Payments for Non-Resident Indians

- ★ ICICI Bank has enabled instant payment facility Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for its non-resident Indian (NRI) customers in India through their international mobile numbers.
- ★ This feature aims to enhance convenience for NRIs in India, allowing them to make everyday payments with ease.
- ★ With this facility, NRIs can pay for utility bills, merchant transactions, and e-commerce purchases through their international mobile numbers linked to their Non-Resident External (NRE) or Non-Resident Ordinary (NRO) bank accounts with ICICI Bank in India.
- ★ ICICI Bank provides this service through its mobile banking app, iMobile Pay.
- ★ This advancement eliminates the need for NRIs to have an Indian mobile number to conduct UPI transactions in India.
- ★ Previously, NRIs had to register an Indian mobile number with their bank accounts to use UPI payments across 10 countries: the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada, Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

HDFC Bank and Atal Innovation Mission

- ★ HDFC Bank and Atal Innovation Mission, under NITI Aayog, have empowered social sector startups in India by providing grants totalling ₹ 19.6 crore in FY24.
- ★ This initiative, known as the 'Parivartan Start-up Grants programme', supported 170 startups through 41 incubators.
- ★ It focuses on critical areas such as climate innovation, financial inclusion, agriculture, healthcare, education, livelihood enhancement, and gender diversity.
- ★ A notable aspect of this initiative is its inclusive reach, with over half of the supported startups originating from more than 60 tier 2 and 3 cities.
- ★ This underscores the program's commitment to fostering innovation beyond metropolitan areas and ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

RBI Instructs NBFCs to Maintain ₹20,000 Limit For Cash Disbursement in Gold Loans

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a caution to non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) that offer gold loans, warning them against exceeding the ₹20,000 limit for cash loan disbursal.
- ★ The advisory refers to Section 269 SS of the Income Tax Act, 1961, which prohibits any individual from receiving more than ₹20,000 as a loan amount in cash.
- ★ This move by the RBI aims to discourage cash transactions, promoting transparency and traceability in financial transactions.
- ★ Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are significant providers of gold loans.
- ★ The gold loan asset under management for this NBFC is about ₹24,700 crore, accounting for about 31% of its total asset under management.
- ★ NBFCs hold a substantial share in the gold loan market, although their growth has lagged behind banks. In 2022-23, gold loans accounted for 59.7% of total loans issued by NBFCs, a slight decline from 61.7% in the previous year.
- ★ NBFCs offering gold loans are required to maintain a Loan-to-Value (LTV) ratio not exceeding 75% for loans backed by gold jewellery.

Setu Launches Sesame, India's First Domain-Specific Large Language Model

- ★ Setu, an Indian fintech company part of the Pine Labs Group, unveiled Sesame, India's first Large Language Model (LLM) specifically designed for the banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sector.
- ★ Sesame was developed in collaboration with Sarvam AI, an Indian AI research firm.
- ★ Setu claims that Sesame represents a "ChatGPT moment" for the financial services sector, indicating a breakthrough in AI technology for BFSI.
- ★ The unveiling took place at Adbhut India, an event organised by the non-profit People+ai.
- ★ The model's design is both domain and region-specific, having been trained on custom data relevant to India's BFSI sector.
- ★ It also aims to provide hyper-personalised financial services to its customers across their entire lifecycle.

All Inactive Accounts to be Closed on 1 June 2024: PNB

- ★ Punjab National Bank (PNB) has announced that it will close all its customers' inactive bank accounts on 1 June 2024.
- ★ Customers whose accounts have become inactive can activate their accounts by completing their KYC (Know Your Customer) by 31 May 2024.
- ★ The bank has taken this step to reduce expenses and prevent fraud in such accounts.
- ★ According to the PNB, those customers' accounts will be closed where there has been no transaction (deposit or withdrawal) by the customer for the past three years, and the account balance has been zero.

- ★ The bank announced that if these account holders do not complete their KYC by 31 May 2024, then they will not be given further notice, and their account will be closed permanently on 1 June 2024.
- ★ However, the bank said that it will not close certain inactive accounts.
- ★ The exempted accounts are student accounts for customers under the age of 25, Minor accounts, accounts opened for specific schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY), Atal Pension Yojana, and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and those frozen by statutory authorities like court orders, income tax department orders, etc.
- ★ The bank will also not close bank accounts linked with Demat accounts, lockers, or active standing instructions accounts.

Small Finance Banks to Request Reserve Bank of India Guidance on Loan Book Diversification

- ★ Small finance banks (SFBs) are likely to seek clarification from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on loan portfolio diversification, as the regulator has not specified the extent of diversification that should be seen as desirable.
- ★ In the recent guidelines provided by the RBI for the voluntary transition of SFBs to universal banks, the regulator indicated a preference for eligible SFBs with diversified loan portfolios.
- ★ Presently, there are 11 SFBs in operation, with AU and Fincare merging earlier in the year.
- ★ However, two of these banks, Unity and Shivalik, have not completed 5 years of operation, and NE SFB is not listed.
- ★ A satisfactory track record of performance for a minimum period of 5 years and being listed on a recognised stock exchange are the first two criteria mandated by the regulator for conversion into a universal bank.
- ★ Eight out of the 10 SFBs licensed in the first phase in 2015 were converted from microfinance institutions, highlighting their roots in financial inclusion.
- ★ All SFBs are required to allocate at least 75% of their lending to the priority sector, with 50% of loans below ₹25 lakh. Consequently, their exposure is primarily in the priority sector.
- ★ The largest SFB in the country, AU SFB, which has a well-diversified loan book, meets all the parameters set by the regulator for conversion to a universal bank.

RBI Removes Restrictions on Bank of Baroda World App

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed the Bank of Baroda (BoB) to onboard new customers through the 'Bob World' mobile application, lifting a restriction imposed in October 2023 due to material supervisory concerns.
- ★ The restriction lasted over 6 months.
- ★ The bank will now resume onboarding new customers on the Bob World application, adding that it remains committed to ensuring adherence and compliance with regulatory guidelines.
- ★ In May 2024, the RBI lifted a restriction on Bajaj Finance, allowing it to resume sanctioning and disbursing loans through its eCOM and Insta EMI Card.

- ★ In April 2024, the RBI imposed restrictions on Kotak Mahindra Bank from onboarding new customers via online and mobile banking platforms and to stop issuing fresh credit cards with immediate effect following scrutiny.
- ★ In December 2020, the RBI barred HDFC Bank from issuing new cards and launching new digital initiatives after repeated instances of technical outages.
- ★ Following remedial action by HDFC Bank, the RBI partially lifted the ban on card issuances in August 2021.
- ★ However, the ban on launching new technology initiatives was lifted in 2022

HDFC Life Launched “No Jhanjhat Life Insurance Fatafat Campaign”

- ★ HDFC Life has launched the “No Jhanjhat Life Insurance Fatafat” campaign to simplify and expedite the process of purchasing life insurance through its online platform.
- ★ Aim is to address India’s low insurance penetration and significant protection gap by promoting a simple and quick life insurance purchase experience.
- ★ The campaign emphasizes the use of advanced technology to provide accessibility and convenience to customers, making it easier to understand and buy life insurance online.
- ★ From customisable plans like Click2Achieve to professional advice and rapid quotations, HDFC Life provides a hassle-free path to financial stability.
- ★ By developing products that are simple to comprehend and purchase online, HDFC Life hopes to close the protection gap and improve awareness about life insurance in India.
- ★ Through the “No Jhanjhat Life Insurance Fatafat” campaign, HDFC Life reaffirms its commitment to the mission of achieving ‘Insurance for All by 2047’, encouraging people across India to secure themselves and their families financially through a digital platform.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Introduces ICICI Pru Platinum

- ★ ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Platinum, the company’s first unit-linked product (ULIP) which aligns distributor payouts to their customers’ fund value.
- ★ The distributor commissions are linked to their customers’ Assets under Management (AUM).
- ★ Aim is to foster the sustained growth of assets under management while offering customers a cost- and tax-efficient means of wealth accumulation over extended periods.
- ★ Customers enjoy unlimited free switches between asset classes without incurring any costs or tax implications.
- ★ The product offers a choice of 21 funds, including 13 equity funds, four debt funds, and four balanced funds.
- ★ Additionally, customers can select from four portfolio strategies tailored to their investment preferences.
- ★ The product incentivizes distribution partners to encourage their customers to remain invested throughout the policy term.

SBI Becomes Inaugural Bank to Join International Bullion Exchange

- ★ Public sector lender, State Bank of India (SBI), has become the first trading-cum-clearing member (TCM) at the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) – the country's first bullion exchange in GIFT City Gandhinagar.
- ★ This enables SBI's IFSC Banking unit (IBU) to trade on the IIBX platform.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India recently permitted IBUs to act as trading members and trading and clearing members at IIBX as special category clients (SCCs) to import gold through the bullion exchange.
- ★ SBI's participation is expected to boost trading volumes in gold and silver at the IIBX.
- ★ IIBX is a platform that enables trading in bullion with adherence to OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chain of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas for establishing supply chain integrity.

Zomato to Discard RBI License for Online Payment Aggregator Operations

- ★ Zomato, a prominent foodtech company, revealed that its subsidiary Zomato Payments Private Limited (ZPPL) has chosen to voluntarily surrender the certificate of authorization obtained from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to function as an online payment aggregator under the Payment and Settlements Systems Act 2007.
- ★ In connection with this decision, Zomato has incurred an impairment loss of ₹39 crore for its investment in ZPPL, its fintech subsidiary.
- ★ The prepaid payment instrument license allowed Zomato to provide wallet and cash card services to its users, while the online payment aggregator license granted the platform greater control over payments on its platform, including those made through third-party apps.
- ★ While ZPPL has opted to surrender its online payment aggregator license, its other operations will persist.
- ★ To recall, Zomato had incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary (ZPPL) in August 2021 to comply with RBI regulations for payment aggregator services and payment gateway services.
- ★ The firm received the RBI's nod to carry out business as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments in January, 2024.

South Indian Bank Collaborates with Northern Arc Capital

- ★ South Indian Bank has formed an association with Northern Arc Capital aiming to explore and maximise commercial prospects by combining efforts in loan origination, underwriting, disbursement, collection, and reconciliation procedures.
- ★ The collaboration will concentrate on co-lending and partnership lending activities, as well as facilitating smooth loan transfers between banks and originators.
- ★ This collaboration has been formalised with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), demonstrating both institutions' commitment to a mutually beneficial partnership.
- ★ The co-operation will allow South Indian Bank to use nPOS, Northern Arc's unique technology platform for co-origination, co-lending, and pool buyouts, as well as interact with numerous originators for loan origination, underwriting, disbursement, and reconciliation.

HDFC Bank Introduces PIXEL Lineup of Digital Credit Cards

- ★ HDFC Bank has launched “PIXEL”, an end-to-end, mobile app-based customisable DIY digital card range.
- ★ PIXEL is aimed at customers characterised by digital fluency, unique preferences, and distinct financial behaviours.
- ★ PIXEL is a first-of-its-kind range of digital credit card series that offers seamless app-based issuance, complete digital lifecycle management, user engagement and digital servicing.
- ★ Customers can customise the maximum value, choice of merchants for earning cashback, choice of online platforms for cashback, card colours, billing dates, and repayment options including low-cost EMIs. Users can earn up to 5% cashback on dining and entertainment, travel, fashion, electronics, and grocery purchases.
- ★ Additionally, they can earn 3% cashback on select online platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and PayZapp, and 1% cashback on other spends.
- ★ PIXEL will be offered in 2 variants – PIXEL Play and PIXEL Go.
- ★ Both card variants offer up to 50 days credit-free period.
- ★ PIXEL Play: A ‘Build Your Own Card’ variant offering customisable benefits including merchants for accelerated cashbacks, card color, and billing date.
- ★ PIXEL Go: Designed for beginners entering the credit card world, offering flexibility in payments through pay-in-parts.

India Renews \$50 Million Budgetary Assistance to Maldives

- ★ India has decided to extend its budgetary support to the Maldives Government by rolling over a \$50 million treasury bill for another year.
- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) has subscribed for one more year to the \$50 million Government Treasury Bill, issued by the Ministry of Finance of Maldives, upon maturity of the previous subscription.
- ★ These treasury bills are subscribed by SBI under government-to-government, a unique arrangement at zero cost (interest-free) to the Government of Maldives.
- ★ The continuation of the subscription has been made at the special request of the Government of Maldives to secure budgetary support from India.
- ★ Treasury bills or T-bills are money market instruments.
- ★ These are short term debt instruments issued by the Government of India.
- ★ T-bills are issued in three maturities – 91-day, 182-day, and 364-day, and they are zero coupon securities, paying no interest.

Paytm Shifts Focus to UPI Lite Wallet for Low-Value Payments

- ★ One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, has launched the UPI Lite wallet to simplify payments, particularly for low-value transactions.
- ★ Paytm’s UPI Lite wallet offers a seamless payment experience, eliminating the need to enter a PIN for each transaction.

- ★ Users can make instant transactions of up to ₹ 500 each using the UPI Lite wallet.
- ★ Additionally, they can add up to ₹ 2,000 to their wallet twice a day, totalling ₹ 4,000 daily.
- ★ Paytm emphasizes the UPI Lite wallet as an essential tool for everyday transactions, providing convenience and efficiency.
- ★ Leading banks such as Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, and YES Bank are part of this collaboration.
- ★ The UPI Lite wallet is designed for small transactions, with transaction limits set by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) at up to ₹ 500 per transaction.

PhonePe Partners with LankaPay

- ★ PhonePe, a leading fintech company based in Bengaluru, has partnered with Sri Lanka-based LankaPay to enable Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions for PhonePe users in Sri Lanka.
- ★ PhonePe users travelling to Sri Lanka can now make payments using UPI's rails across LankaPay's merchants throughout the country.
- ★ Transactions will be conducted in Indian Rupees (INR), with currency exchange rates applied to such transactions.
- ★ Apart from the National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI) UPI, these transactions will be facilitated by the LankaPay National Payment Network.
- ★ LankaPay is owned by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.
- ★ This partnership aims to provide greater convenience to Indian tourists and business travelers in making seamless UPI payments at all LankaQR merchant points in Sri Lanka via the PhonePe app.

EaseMyTrip Partners with SIDBI and the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board

- ★ EaseMyTrip partners with the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) to introduce a Homestay Entrepreneurship Training Programme.
- ★ The program aims to empower homestay owners along the Chardham Yatra route by enhancing their hospitality skills and promoting eco-friendly practices.
- ★ Launched in April and continuing through May, the training program targets 150 homestay owners. It integrates classroom learning with practical sessions.
- ★ Upon completion of the training, participants receive a certification jointly issued by EaseMyTrip, SIDBI, and UTDB, validating their newly acquired skills.
- ★ The training curriculum covers essential topics including hygiene, environmental safety, waste management, guest safety, housekeeping management, customer support, booking management, and technology training.
- ★ Training sessions have been conducted in Joshimath (Badrinath), Guptkashi (Kedarnath), and Ukhimath (Kedarnath), with pending sessions scheduled in Gangotri (Uttarkashi) and Yamunotri (Uttarkashi).

- ★ As of now, certificates have been awarded to 31 homestay owners in Joshimath, 25 in Guptkashi, and 39 in Ukhimath.

IFC Lends \$500 Million to HDFC Bank for Financing Micro Loan To Women

- ★ The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has provided \$500 million loan to HDFC Bank to provide loans to the women microfinance borrowers.
- ★ India's largest private sector bank will use the loan amount to provide loans to the women's self-help group (SHG) and the joint liability group (JLG) that is engaged in a sustainable livelihood initiative (income generation).
- ★ Microfinance in India is dominated by non-banking finance companies (NBFC) and small finance banks.
- ★ The NBFC provides loans at a higher rate to the SHG or JLG. Banks with access to cheap funds in the form of CASA (Current Account and Saving Account) deposits can provide cheaper loans to the women SHG or JLG.
- ★ Microfinance refers to the financial service provided to the poor and low-income individuals or groups living in the rural, semi-urban and urban areas, not served by the traditional banking system.
- ★ The Joint Liability Group (JLG) is an informal group of 4 to 10 members who have come together to take loans from financial institutions.

ADB Grants \$148 Million Loan to Enhance Power Supply in Sikkim

- ★ Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a USD 148.5 million loan to help modernise and enhance the reliability, quality and resilience of electricity supply in Sikkim.
- ★ This project fully supports Sikkim's Power for All initiative, ensuring round-the-clock uninterrupted access to quality electricity for households, industries, businesses, and the public.
- ★ The project will modernise Sikkim's power distribution system by upgrading it with approximately 770 kilometres of climate-resilient medium-voltage underground and/or covered conductors.
- ★ Additionally, it will replace 580 kilometres of ageing and low-capacity bare conductors with new ones to increase distribution network capacity.
- ★ It will upgrade 26 existing power substations, including the installation of a supervisory control and data acquisition system, install 15,000 units of public street lighting in remote areas, and conduct electricity conservation and safety awareness programmes in 28 villages.
- ★ The project will enhance the livelihoods of a minimum of 1,100 women, comprising self-help groups, producer groups and individual businesses through the installation of tailored renewable energy systems and improving their vocational skills.
- ★ Additionally, it will deploy solar energy systems and energy-efficient electrical equipment in 24 primary healthcare subcenters to enhance the capacity of rural healthcare facilities to offer in-patient treatments, especially during the winter months.

Tata AIG General Insurance Collaborates with Aurm for Vault Services

- ★ Aurm, an asset protection firm, has announced a strategic partnership with Tata AIG General Insurance, to provide comprehensive insurance coverage to its customers for their valuables.
- ★ Under this partnership, Aurm's vaults will be fully insured for up to INR 25 lakh, by TATA AIG, India's general insurance provider.
- ★ Aurm partners with banks and real estate companies to offer state-of-the-art safe deposit storage facilities that are fully automated and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- ★ Aurm vaults are equipped with military-grade security infrastructure, active surveillance, and intrusion detection systems.

TATA AIG Launches India's First Satellite-based In-Orbit Third-Party Liability Insurance

- ★ General insurance provider Tata AIG launched the 'Satellite In-Orbit Third-Party Liability Insurance' policy to provide critical financial support to satellite manufacturers and operators in the Indian space industry.
- ★ The new insurance product, claimed to be India's first, is designed to provide critical financial protection for satellite manufacturers and operators.
- ★ It is designed to offer comprehensive coverage for third-party bodily injury and property damage in the event of an incident involving an orbiting satellite.
- ★ With the privatisation of space launches, India aims to quintuple its share in the global launch market, which is expected to reach \$47.3bn (Rs3.95 trn) by 2032.

UN Upgrades India's Expected Economic Growth Rate to 6.9% for 2024

- ★ The United Nations has revised its growth rate forecast for the Indian economy in 2024 to 6.9 per cent.
- ★ The latest forecast regarding the India economy was made in the World Economic Situation and Prospects.
- ★ The World Economic Situation and Prospects report is released by the United Nations Economic Analysis and Policy Division.
- ★ The main reason cited by the report for an improvement in Indian economy has been the strong public investment and resilient private consumption.
- ★ According to the UN World Economic Situation and Prospects report the global economy is expected to grow by 2.7 per cent in 2024 and 2.8 per cent in 2025.
- ★ World's largest economy, the United States is expected to grow by 2.3 percent in 2024.
- ★ World's second largest economy, China is expected to grow by 4.8 per cent in 2024.

RBI Plans ₹ 1.25 Trillion 14-Day Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRR) Auction

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct a 14-day Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction for a notified amount of ₹ 1.25 trillion.
- ★ A repo auction is conducted by the central bank to inject liquidity into the banking system.

- ★ Currently, liquidity in the banking system is estimated to be in deficit of around ₹ 1.20 lakh crore, as per the RBI's Money Market Operations as of May 15, 2024.
- ★ On May 17, 2024 there was a reversal of 3 VRR auctions conducted by the RBI on May 3, May 13, and May 14, totalling ₹ 2.50 lakh crore, with banks having parked ₹ 2.33 lakh crore.
- ★ The RBI conducted VRR auctions of various durations, including three-day, four-day, and 14-day auctions, as per RBI data.

YES BANK Introduces YES Grandeur

- ★ YES BANK has announced the launch of YES Grandeur, an exclusive banking programme designed to address the unique financial and lifestyle needs of India's fast-growing Emerging Affluent segment.
- ★ The Emerging Affluent segment is projected to grow by 2.3 times over the next decade, according to BCG CCI Proprietary Income Model, indicating a significant shift in consumer banking preferences driven by increased disposable income and refined consumer behaviors.
- ★ The expansion of the Indian middle class, expected to nearly double to 61% by 2046-47 as per the PRICE Report, along with rising incomes, will further shape future consumption patterns.
- ★ YES Grandeur is aimed at catering to the evolving market dynamics where the affluent are increasingly seeking personalised services that complement their lifestyle.
- ★ With an eligibility threshold of Average Monthly Balance (AMB) of ₹5 Lakh or a Net Relationship Value (NRV) of ₹20 Lakh, with additional consideration given to loan relationships, YES Grandeur is positioned to enhance the banking experience for this discerning customer base.

Bank of Maharashtra Tops Among PSU Banks in Business Growth in FY24

- ★ Bank of Maharashtra has emerged as a top performer among public sector banks, showcasing impressive growth in total business and deposit mobilization.
- ★ With a 15.94% rise in total business and a 15.66% increase in deposits, it outshines competitors like State Bank of India.
- ★ The bank's focus on low-cost CASA deposits, coupled with robust loan growth and exemplary asset quality, positions it as a resilient and efficient player in the banking sector.
- ★ Bank of Maharashtra also maintained its leading position in terms of deposit mobilization growth, achieving a notable 15.66% rise in the last fiscal year.
- ★ This places it ahead of other major players like SBI, Bank of India, and Canara Bank, all of whom registered growth rates below 12%.

IFC Provides \$500 Million Financing to HDFC Bank to Boost Microloans

- ★ The International Finance Corporation (IFC) has extended \$500 million in financing to HDFC Bank to expand microloans for underserved women borrowers in India.
- ★ Women, particularly microloan borrowers in semi-urban and rural areas, will benefit from increased access to finance due to IFC's financing of up to \$500 million to HDFC Bank.
- ★ HDFC Bank will utilize IFC's financing for on-lending as microloans to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) enrolled in the Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative (SLI).

- ★ SLI is HDFC Bank's business line dedicated to microfinance lending programs exclusively for women borrowers.
- ★ The International Finance Corporation is an international financial institution that offers investment, advisory, and asset-management services to encourage private-sector development in less developed countries.
- ★ The IFC is a member of the World Bank Group and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. in the United States.

SBI General Insurance Partners with CAMS

- ★ SBI General Insurance Company Limited, one of India's top general insurance carriers, has partnered with Bima Central, built by CAMS Insurance Repository, to launch the industry-first policyholder servicing platform, Bima Central.
- ★ The platform allows consumers to aggregate their insurance portfolios via an electronic Insurance Account (eIA).
- ★ Users can manage their insurance policies effortlessly through a single digital portal, Bima Central.
- ★ For the first time in the market, SBI General Insurance customers with an eIA through CAMS Rep Bima Central will have immediate access to their insurance portfolio via the SBI General Insurance Mobile App.
- ★ The integration enables seamless management and access to insurance portfolios, enhancing convenience and efficiency for policyholders.

Policybazaar Introduces Claim Assurance Program

- ★ Online insurance marketplace Policybazaar has introduced its 'Claim Assurance Program' to accelerate the motor insurance claims process.
- ★ The program aims to provide swift and efficient claims support across more than 1000 PIN codes, targeting both metropolitan areas and tier 2 and 3 regions.
- ★ The initiative is part of Policybazaar's broader strategy to enhance its claims assistance across all insurance verticals.
- ★ Policybazaar is an Indian insurance aggregator and multinational financial technology company.
- ★ Policybazaar is the flagship subsidiary of PB Fintech Limited., which also owns the credit product aggregator Paisabazaar.

RBI Dividend to Central Government for 2023-24

- ★ The Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the transfer of ₹2.11 lakh crore as a dividend to the Government of India for the financial year 2023-24.
- ★ This was announced by the RBI after the meeting of its Central Board of Directors on 22 May 2024 in Mumbai.
- ★ The Government of India is the 100 per cent owner of the RBI.

- ★ This is perhaps the highest-ever dividend announced by RBI despite the Contingent Buffer Risk being increased to 6.5% for 2023-24.
- ★ A dividend is the part of the profit distributed by a company to its shareholders.
- ★ Contingent buffer risk refers to the amount of money the RBI has to maintain to meet its current liabilities (such as day-to-day running costs, employee salaries, etc.) and perform its statutory duties, such as monetary and foreign exchange functions.
- ★ The Contingent Buffer Risk is part of the Economic Capital Framework of the RBI.

HSBC and Standard Chartered Obtain Stakes in Clearing Corporation of India-IFSC

- ★ British lenders HSBC and Standard Chartered have acquired stakes in the Clearing Corporation of India-IFSC (CCIL IFSC), the proposed entity to operate a real-time foreign currency settlement system at GIFT City.
- ★ Through its branch in GIFT City, HSBC executed transaction documents on May 17, 2024 for the acquisition of a 6.125% stake in the CCIL IFSC.
- ★ HSBC holds similar minority shareholdings in the National Payments Corporation of India and the Clearing Corporation of India through earlier investments.
- ★ Standard Chartered Bank also picked up a 6.125% stake in the CCIL IFSC.
- ★ Standard Chartered Bank is the only other foreign bank which has also acquired a stake in the CCIL IFSC.
- ★ On the domestic side, HDFC Bank and State Bank of India have also invested in the CCIL subsidiary.

RBI Imposes Penalty on Hero Fincorp

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has levied a penalty of ₹3.1 lakh on Hero FinCorp Limited for non-compliance with specific provisions concerning fair practices code.
- ★ RBI clarified that the penalty is not a judgement on the validity of transactions or agreements made by the company with its customers.
- ★ It is solely based on regulatory compliance deficiencies.
- ★ Hero FinCorp did not convey the terms and conditions of loans in writing to borrowers in the vernacular language understood by them.
- ★ This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers conferred on RBI under the provisions of section 58B of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

NPCI Releases Guidelines for Merchant Acquisition on BHIM Aadhaar Pay

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has published guidelines for acquiring banks to validate merchant details for BHIM Aadhaar Pay.
- ★ BHIM Aadhaar Pay allows merchants to receive digital payments from customers through Aadhaar Authentication over the counter.
- ★ The guidelines specify key responsibilities and accountabilities for acquiring member banks in managing merchants.

- ★ An Acquiring Member Bank must monitor its Merchant activity (viz., on-boarding criteria, transaction monitoring and control, training, assessment of the portfolio metrics, etc.) periodically.
- ★ Acquiring banks can use both manual and digital modes for merchant due diligence.
- ★ A merchant acquirer, also known as an acquirer or acquiring/merchant bank, is a financial institution authorized by major card networks such as Mastercard or Visa to process credit and debit card transactions for merchants.
- ★ This bank plays a crucial role in the payment processing system, handling the acceptance and settlement of card transactions on behalf of the merchants.

“Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited” Removed from Second Schedule to RBI Act, 1934

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) informed that “Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited” has been excluded from the Second Schedule to the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 with effect from April 01, 2024, as the bank has ceased to carry on banking business with effect from April 01, 2024.
- ★ The RBI approved the merger of Fincare Small Finance Bank Ltd with AU Small Finance Bank Ltd.
- ★ All branches of Fincare Small Finance Bank started functioning as branches of AU Small Finance Bank Ltd. from April 1, 2024.
- ★ Scheduled banks are listed in the second schedule of the RBI Act, 1934.
- ★ These banks are required to have a minimum paid-up capital of at least ₹5 lakhs.

Maldives Plans Launch of RuPay to Enhance Bilateral Ties with India

- ★ Maldives intends to launch India’s RuPay service, reflecting the strengthening of ties between the two nations.
- ★ The specific launch date for the RuPay service has not yet been disclosed.
- ★ The upcoming launch of RuPay in Maldives is expected to enhance the value of the Maldivian currency, the rufiyaa (MVR).
- ★ RuPay, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), is India’s first domestic card payment network.
- ★ It is widely accepted at ATMs, point-of-sale (POS) devices, and e-commerce platforms across India.
- ★ The move is likely to help Male save almost 50% of the annual \$1.5 million import bill from the two countries.

BharatPe and PhonePe Resolve Long-Standing Trademark Dispute Over ‘Pe’ Suffix

- ★ BharatPe Group and PhonePe Group have settled all long-standing legal disputes related to the use of the trademark with the suffix ‘Pe’.
- ★ The fintechs have been engaged in a legal dispute across multiple courts for the past 5 years.
- ★ The settlement will bring an end to all ongoing judicial proceedings.

- ★ Further, both entities will undertake other necessary steps to comply with the obligations under the settlement agreement in respect of all cases before the Delhi and Bombay High Courts.
- ★ BharatPe, a brand name of Resilient Innovations, was established in 2018.
- ★ It introduced India's first UPI interoperable QR code for zero MDR payment acceptance service.
- ★ PhonePe Group's digital payments app, PhonePe, was launched in August 2016.

South African Regulator Imposes Fine on SBI Branch

- ★ The Prudential Authority of the South African Reserve Bank has imposed a financial penalty of 10 million rand (₹4.5 crore) on the State Bank of India's South Africa branch.
- ★ The penalty includes an immediately payable portion of 5.50 million rand, which has already been paid by the SBI branch in South Africa.
- ★ The remaining 4.50 million rand is suspended for 36 months, conditional on compliance within this period.
- ★ The penalty was imposed under Section 45C of South Africa's Financial Intelligence Centre Act 38 of 2001 (FIC Act).
- ★ The fine is due to non-compliance with certain provisions of the FIC Act or other related orders or directives.

Burgan Bank Chooses TCS BaNCS for Core Banking Transformation

- ★ Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has signed a deal to modernize the core banking technology of Burgan Bank, a leading commercial bank in Kuwait.
- ★ The bank will deploy TCS BaNCS to consolidate multiple standalone legacy applications into a contemporary universal banking solution that drives innovation and strengthens customer relationships.
- ★ Burgan Bank is one of the youngest commercial banks in Kuwait, with a regional network of over 160 branches and 360 ATMs.
- ★ The TCS BaNCS solution will enable the bank to manage higher transaction volumes, enhance automation, and improve staff productivity.
- ★ With TCS BaNCS, Burgan Bank will provide an integrated solution to its diversified customer base across corporate, retail, and private banking segments.

Government Receives ₹3,662 Crore Dividend from LIC

- ★ The Government of India, being the largest shareholder in Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), will receive a dividend of ₹3,662 crore.
- ★ LIC reported a net profit of ₹13,782 crore for the quarter, up by 4.5 percent from the previous year.
- ★ An interim dividend of ₹6 per share was declared, resulting in a ₹3,662 crore dividend for the Government.
- ★ LIC's gross non-performing asset (GNPA) decreased to 2.01 percent from 2.56 percent in the previous year.

- ★ Value of New Business (VNB) increased by 4.66 percent to ₹9,583 crore, with a VNB margin increase of 60 bps to 16.8 percent.

India In Trade Deficit with Nine of Top 10 Trading Partners in 2023-24

- ★ China emerged as India's largest trading partner with \$118.4 billion in two-way commerce in 2023-24, surpassing the USA.
- ★ Bilateral trade between India and the US stood at \$118.28 billion in 2023-24.
- ★ The US had been India's top trading partner during 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- ★ India has a free trade agreement with four of its top trading partners: Singapore, the UAE, Korea, and Indonesia (as part of the Asian bloc).
- ★ India recorded a trade surplus of \$36.74 billion with the US in 2023-24. The US is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus.
- ★ Other countries with a surplus include the UK, Belgium, Italy, France, and Bangladesh.

RBI Launches PRAVAH Portal and Mobile App

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched three major initiatives on 28 May 2024: the PRAVAH portal, a mobile app for retail investors to trade in government securities, and a Fintech Repository.
- ★ These three initiatives were launched by the RBI Governor, Shaktikanta Das, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- ★ The PRAVAH (Platform for Regulatory Application, Validation and Authorisation) is a centralised web-based portal that provides a secure platform for individuals or entities to seek authorisation, license, or regulatory approval from the Reserve Bank.
- ★ An individual or entity can submit 60 application forms covering different regulatory and supervisory departments of the RBI online.
- ★ Applicants can also track their applications online, monitor their status, and receive a decision from the RBI in a time-bound manner.
- ★ The RBI Governor also launched a mobile app for retail investors to buy and sell government securities.
- ★ The Fintech Repository will be a storehouse of data on Indian Fintech companies.
- ★ It will keep essential information about the regulated and unregulated FinTech entities, their activities, technology uses, etc.
- ★ A separate EmTech Repositories is being launched for the Fintechs (Banks and NBFC) regulated by RBI.
- ★ The FinTech and EmTech Repositories are secure web-based applications managed by the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI.

RBI Fines ICICI Bank ₹1 Crore, YES Bank ₹91 Lakh for Regulatory Violations

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a penalty of ₹1 crore on ICICI Bank and fined Yes Bank ₹91 lakh for non-compliance with regulatory directions.

- ★ ICICI Bank was penalized for non-compliance with certain directions related to 'Loans and Advances – Statutory and Other Restrictions'.
- ★ The bank had sanctioned term loans to certain entities instead of utilizing budgetary resources intended for specific projects, as revealed during the statutory inspection for FY22.
- ★ Yes Bank faced a penalty for violating norms concerning 'Customer Service in Banks' and 'Unauthorized Operation of Internal/Office Accounts'.
- ★ The inspection for FY22 disclosed that the bank levied charges for non-maintenance of minimum balance in specific savings accounts with insufficient or zero balance.
- ★ Yes Bank also opened and operated internal accounts in customers' names for unauthorised purposes.
- ★ The penalties were imposed by RBI under the powers conferred by section 47A read with section 46 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

SEBI Reduces Commodity Derivatives Delivery Period to 3 Days

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has reduced the deliverable period for commodity derivatives to 3 days from the previous 5 days.
- ★ Objective is to improve liquidity in delivery-based commodity derivatives.
- ★ The new regulation will be effective from July 1, 2024, for contracts with staggered delivery scheduled after this date.
- ★ The decision was based on representations from market participants and recommendations from the Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee.
- ★ Staggered delivery is the period before contract expiry when buyers and sellers with open positions can indicate their intent to give or take delivery.
- ★ All compulsory delivery commodity futures contracts must include a staggered delivery period.

ADB Approves \$2.6 Billion in Sovereign Lending to India in 2023

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has sanctioned \$2.6 billion in sovereign lending to India in the calendar year 2023.
- ★ The loan sanctioned by ADB in 2023 will be used to finance urban development projects, promote the power sector, support industrial corridor development, support horticulture, enhance connectivity and build India's climate resilience.
- ★ Sovereign loan means a loan given to the Government of India.
- ★ It provided loans to fund projects to improve urban services in the states of Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, and Tripura; road connectivity in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, Boosting horticulture development in Himachal Pradesh and the expansion of the Delhi–Meerut rapid rail transit corridor.
- ★ Apart from sanctioning \$2.6 billion in loans to the Government of India, the ADB has also sanctioned \$23.53 million as loans for technical assistance and a grant of \$4.1 million.
- ★ A grant means that the Government of India will not return the money to the ADB.
- ★ The ADB has also sanctioned over \$1 billion in loans to the private sector in 2023.

RBI Fines HSBC Bank for Violation of FEMA Regulation

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India fined HSBC Bank ₹36.38 lakhs for violating the provision of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999.
- ★ According to the RBI, the HSBC bank failed to follow the required reporting requirements under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme of FEMA.
- ★ The Liberalised Remittance Scheme was introduced by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 2004 under the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999.
- ★ Under this scheme, all resident individuals, including minors, can send up to \$2,50,000 in a financial year (April to March) abroad without the permission of the Reserve Bank of India.
- ★ However the money which is remitted (transferred) has to be for activities which are allowed under FEMA.
- ★ The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) was enacted in 1999 and was implemented on 1 January 2000. It replaced the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) 1973.
- ★ The FEMA Act lays down the rules and regulations regarding foreign exchange transactions. Certain sections of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999 empower the RBI regarding transactions and management of foreign exchange in India.

TATA AIG General Insurance Introduces Surety Insurance Bonds

- ★ TATA AIG General Insurance, a leading private insurer, launches Surety Insurance Bonds to bolster infrastructure development, aligning with the government's allocation of 3.3% of GDP in FY 2024.
- ★ These bonds, offered in conditional and unconditional formats, are tailored to streamline the execution of infrastructure projects and commercial contracts in both government and private sectors, addressing various project requirements effectively.
- ★ A surety bond is a legally binding agreement involving three parties: the obligee, the principal, and the surety.
- ★ Primarily utilized in construction and infrastructure ventures, a surety bond guarantees the principal's fulfillment of contract obligations.
- ★ In case of default, the surety compensates the obligee, mitigating financial risks.

DEFENCE

DRDO Successfully Test SMART Missile System

- ★ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully tested the next-generation Supersonic Missile-Assisted Release of Torpedo (SMART) system on 1 May 2024 from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.
- ★ According to DRDO, several state-of-the-art mechanisms, such as symmetric separation, ejection and velocity control, were validated during the test.

- ★ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and DRDO Chief Dr Samir V Kamat lauded the efforts of the entire SMART team.
- ★ The SMART (Supersonic Missile Assisted Release of Torpedo) system is a next-generation missile-based lightweight torpedo delivery system being developed by DRDO for the Indian Navy. It is likely to boost the anti-submarine capability of the Indian Navy.
- ★ A torpedo is a cigar-shaped, self-propelled underwater missile launched from a submarine, ship, or aeroplane. It is designed to explode upon contact with submarines or surface ships.
- ★ The SMART missile system comprises a long-range supersonic missile carrier that can travel up to 643 km, a lightweight torpedo with a range of 20 km, and a 50 kg high-explosive warhead as the payload.

India to Collaborate with United Kingdom to Develop Electric Propulsion System

- ★ India is planning to develop an electric propulsion system for its domestic warships in partnership with the United Kingdom (UK).
- ★ The UK sent a letter of intent last month for a government-to-government agreement, indicating its willingness to support India in developing this capability.
- ★ Electric propulsion systems can power larger warships with a displacement of over 6,000 tonnes, a key development for India's naval modernization.
- ★ This represents a shift from the traditional diesel engines, gas turbines, or steam turbines currently used in Indian warships.
- ★ The formal proposal is currently under examination, with details and conditions to be finalized after acceptance.
- ★ The agreement is expected to cover training, equipment, and infrastructure requirements.

65th Raising Day of BRO

- ★ The Border Road Organisation (BRO) celebrated its 65th raising day on 7 May 2024.
- ★ A ceremony was organised in New Delhi on the occasion, presided over by the Union Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane.
- ★ The Defence Secretary praised BRO's contribution to building infrastructure in inhospitable areas and tough weather conditions.
- ★ The Border Road Organisation was set up on 7 May 1960 by the Pandit Nehru Government to execute crucial road projects vital for the Army.
- ★ The BRO's main function is to construct and maintain roads in the border areas, which have been classified as General staff roads per the country's defence requirements.
- ★ It specialises in building roads of strategic importance for the armed forces at an altitude of 9,000 feet to 19,000 feet along the northern and Western borders.
- ★ The BRO also executes Agency Works entrusted to it by other Central Government Ministries and Departments, State Governments, and other Semi-Government Organisations.
- ★ It has now diversified into building airfields, permanent steel and pre-stressed concrete bridges and accommodation projects.

India French Military Exercise Shakti 2024 to be held in Meghalaya

- ★ Joint military Exercise Shakti between the Indian and the French forces will be held at the Joint Training Node of the Indian Army in Umroi, Meghalaya, from 13-26 May 2024.
- ★ The opening ceremony of the 7th edition of Exercise Shakti will be attended by the French Ambassador to India, Thierry Mathou. Brigadier Mayur Shekatkar, Commander of the 24 Mountain Brigade, and other civilian and military dignitaries.
- ★ The military exercise between the Indian Army and the French Army is a biennial exercise which started in 2011 and is conducted alternately in India and France.
- ★ The main aim of the 7th edition of the Shakti exercise will be to develop the capacity of both forces for joint planning on developing strategies and tactics for a war-like situation.
- ★ The exercise aims at enhancing co-operation, understanding, and interoperability between the two Armies.
- ★ The joint exercise will facilitate both armies to know each other better and share their wide experiences and combat experience in countering terrorist operations.

Indian Coast Guard Partners with Jindal Steel and Power

- ★ Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Jindal Steel & Power(JSP) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in New Delhi for the supply of indigenous marine-grade steel to enhance the local content in shipbuilding.
- ★ Through this partnership, both entities have committed to fostering indigenisation, enhancing capabilities to produce and use these items in the nation's interest.
- ★ The MoU underscores the importance of public-private partnerships in addressing complex security challenges, emphasising the need for collaboration between government agencies and the private sector.
- ★ The Indian Coast Guard is a coast guard of India with jurisdiction over its territorial waters including its contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone.
- ★ It was formally established on 1 February 1977 by the Coast Guard Act, 1978 of the Parliament of India. It operates under the Ministry of Defence.

Indian Naval Ship Concludes Visit to Malaysia and Vietnam

- ★ The Indian Navy's Eastern fleet operation deployment to the Southeast nations of Vietnam and Malaysia has concluded.
- ★ The Indian Navy, as part of the Government of India's diplomacy, regularly undertake Operational Deployment of its ships to friendly countries to boost the long-standing friendship, co-operation and goodwill among the people of both countries.
- ★ The deployment of Indian naval ships in this region is part of the Government of India's Act East and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All) policies.
- ★ Under the command of Rear Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar, Flag Officer Commanding the Eastern Fleet, the Indian Naval Ship Delhi and Shakti of the Eastern Naval Fleet arrived at Kota Kinabalu port of Malaysia on 12 May 2024.

- ★ The Indian Ships also participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX)/ PASSEX at sea with ships of the Royal Malaysian Navy. The PASSEX exercise will strengthen the degree of interoperability between the two Navies.
- ★ During the harbour visit, the two navies engaged in professional exchange and other activities to strengthen their naval personnel's bonds.
- ★ On 12 May 2024, the INS Kiltan of the visited the Eastern Fleet docked at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.
- ★ The visit's main aim is to increase co-operation between the two navies through professional interactions, sporting events, social exchanges, and community outreach.

Parivartan Chintan II, a Two-Day Conference

- ★ The two-day conference of "Parivartan Chintan II" was held in New Delhi under the chairmanship of the Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Anil Chauhan.
- ★ The event was attended by the officers from the three Services Headquarters, Department of Military Affairs, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and members of various sub-committees of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), mandated to oversee the initiatives undertaken and to generate novel ideas to give impetus to the ongoing process of Theaterisation.
- ★ Members of all sub-committees of the apex Chiefs of Staff Committee, the CDS as its permanent Chairman and the Chiefs of the three services reviewed the progress made in various areas.
- ★ They considered the reforms needed to achieve the desired end state of transformation through jointness and integration.

Special Commemorative Coin Released on MDL Shipyard 250th Anniversary

- ★ Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane released a commemorative ₹250 coin on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the foundation of Mazagaon Dock Limited (MDL).
- ★ The Defence Secretary was the Chief Guest of the function, which was organised by the MDL in New Delhi on 14 May 2024 to mark the 250th anniversary of the MDL.
- ★ The Mazagaon Dock Limited started its journey as a dry dock in 1774, constructed in Mazagaon, Mumbai. In 1934, the company was incorporated as a private limited company. It was nationalised and taken over by the Government of India in 1960.
- ★ It is a premier naval shipyard under the Union Ministry of Defence.
- ★ It was accorded Mini-Ratna 1 status by the Government of India in 2006.
- ★ The MDL has become the premier yard for building warships, submarines for the Indian Navy, and other vessels for the Coast Guard.
- ★ Defence Secretary Giridhar launched the platform design and hull of the midget submarine Arowana, constructed by MDL. Arowana is an indigenously designed technology demonstrator submarine.
- ★ If the design is successful, the MDL plans to design a conventional full-fledged submarine for the Indian Navy by 2028.

12th India-Mongolia Joint Working Group on Defence Held in Ulaanbaatar

- ★ To boost defence co-operation and strengthen defence ties, the 12th Joint Working Group (JWG) of the Defence Ministers of India and Mongolia was held at the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar on 16 and 17 May 2024.
- ★ The Indian side was led by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Amitabh Prasad, and the State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Mongolia, Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davagdorj.
- ★ The Indian Ambassador to Mongolia, Atul Malhari Gotsurve, was also present during the meeting.
- ★ They reviewed the progress on various bilateral defence co-operation initiatives and identified means to enhance co-operation in these areas further.
- ★ During the JWC meeting, India highlighted the capability and capacity of the Indian Armed Forces and asked the Mongolian side to utilise the potential of the Indian manufacturing capability in the defence sector.

India-U.S. Joint Urban Terrorism Counter-Terrorism Exercise

- ★ The National Security Guard (NSG) is conducting joint counter-terror mock drills with the US Special Operations Forces (SOF) at multiple locations in Kolkata, to enhance interoperability and co-ordination between the two Special Forces.
- ★ This marks the 7th edition of the annual Indo-US joint counter-terrorism exercise 'Tarkash'.
- ★ The exercise commenced on April 22 at the Kolkata hub of NSG and will conclude on May 15, 2024.
- ★ The 3-week exercise encompassed intense training and mock drills in urban counter-terrorism scenarios.
- ★ To enhance interoperability and co-ordination between the two special forces in conducting co-ordinated counter-terror operations in urban environments.
- ★ It aims to improve bilateral co-operation between India and the US in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- ★ It also involved sharing best practices, tactics, techniques and procedures, over a wide spectrum of counter terror operations, in an urban environment including close quarter battle, building intervention drills and hostage rescue operations etc.

Indian Army to Receive Igla-S Air Defence Systems Partially Assembled in India

- ★ The Indian Army is set to receive Russian Igla-S very short-range air defence systems (VSHORAD) under the fourth tranche of Emergency Procurements (EP).
- ★ These systems were contracted in 2023, with deliveries beginning by the end of May 2024.
- ★ The Army is also set to receive the first of two Israeli Hermes-900 Medium Altitude Long Endurance Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) assembled by Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited (ADSTL) in Hyderabad next month.
- ★ The Igla-S systems are being assembled by ADSTL in India under technology transfer from Rosoboron export, the Russian defense export agency.

- ★ The Army contracted 48 Igla-S launchers, 100 missiles, 48 night sights, and one missile testing station under a ₹260 crore contract.
- ★ Igla-S is a man-portable air defence system (MANPADS) developed by Russia.
- ★ It is a hand-held system designed to bring down low-flying aircraft and can also identify and neutralize air targets such as cruise missiles and drones.
- ★ It comprises the 9M342 missile, the 9P522 launching mechanism, the 9V866-2 mobile test station, and the 9F719-2 test set, providing a comprehensive air defence solution.
- ★ These components work together to provide a comprehensive air defence solution.
- ★ Igla-S has a range of 500 meters to 6 kilometers and can attack targets up to an altitude of 3.5 kilometers.

DRDO to Collaborate with IIT Bhubaneswar for AI-Driven Surveillance

- ★ Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will collaborate with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar for artificial intelligence (AI) driven surveillance and other projects.
- ★ A meeting was held between DRDO and IIT Bhubaneswar officials recently.
- ★ Binay Das, Director General (DG) of the Electronics and Communication Systems (ECS) cluster, DRDO, and many senior scientists and officials of both institutions were present in the meeting.
- ★ During the meeting, nine sanctioned projects of the ECS Cluster of DRDO were handed over to IIT Bhubaneswar while another 7 projects are in the process to be sanctioned with ₹18 crore funding.
- ★ IIT Bhubaneswar will work on the sanctioned projects, which would be beneficial in electronics warfare, AI-driven surveillance, power systems, radar systems etc, officials said.
- ★ S.R. Samantaray, head of the School of Electrical sciences of IIT, the collaboration of IIT Bhubaneswar and DRDO will contribute to the emerging research and development need of defence applications, creating a platform for 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.
- ★ This form of collaboration will enhance the sustainability of defence research programmes and will be part of the eco-system for nation building.

Indo-Russian Joint Venture Delivers 27,000 Ak-203 Assault Rifles

- ★ The Indian Army has received 27,000 Kalashnikov AK-203 assault rifles, produced at the Russian-Indian joint venture IRRPL (Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited) in the Indian central state of Uttar Pradesh (UP).
- ★ An additional 8,000 rifles will be handed over in the next two weeks.
- ★ Currently, the indigenisation level is around 25%.
- ★ The first 70,000 rifles will be produced in India with phased localisation increasing from 5% to 70%.
- ★ The remaining rifles will be produced with 100% localisation.
- ★ Full-scale production is expected to be reached within 2-3 years.

- ★ As many as 27,000 rifles have been handed over to the Army so far by the Indo-Russian joint venture established at Korwa in UP.

DRDO Successfully Tests the Anti-Radiation Missile Rudram-II

- ★ The Defence and Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully tested the indigenously developed anti-radiation missile RudraM-II.
- ★ The missile was successfully fired from the Indian Air Force Su-30 MK-I fighter aircraft of the coast of Odisha on 28 May 2024.
- ★ The RudraM-II is the latest and upgraded version of the RudraM-1 missile, which was test-fired from the Su-30 MKI in October 2020.
- ★ According to the DRDO, all the trial objectives were met during the missile test.
- ★ The RudraM-II missile is an air-to-surface missile which can be launched by a fighter aircraft to target ground-based targets.
- ★ The missile is the first home-grown anti-radiation missile which has been developed to target the enemy's ground-based radar and surveillance system as part of the Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD) missions.
- ★ It is designed to destroy the enemy's air defence system, including radars, radio frequency assets, and other communication equipment.
- ★ The missile is a solid-propelled supersonic missile. According to the DRDO, the Rudram-II missile can carry a payload of 200 kg and attain a maximum speed of 6,791 km/h (Mach 5.5).
- ★ The missile can be launched from an altitude of 3 to 15 km and has a strike range of 350 km.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

2024 World Press Freedom Index

- ★ The World Press Freedom Index was released by a French non-governmental organisation, Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) which is also known as Reporters Without Border.
- ★ India has improved its ranking on the World Press Freedom Index 2024 by two positions. India, which was ranked 161 out of 180 countries in the world in 2023, improved its position to 159 in 2024, a jump of two ranks.
- ★ The World Press Freedom Index uses five indicators to compile the Index.
- ★ These five indicators are political, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and safety of the Journalist.
- ★ Norway retained its top position as the country with the freest press in the world.

“Global Electricity Review” Report

- ★ Due to rapid growth in installed solar power capacity, India became the third-largest solar power generator in 2023.

- ★ The 5th “Global Electricity Review” report published by the United Kingdom-based global think tank Ember announced that India, which was ranked ninth in 2015, jumped to third position in 2023, overtaking Japan.
- ★ The Global Electricity Review report covers 80 countries, representing 92 per cent of the global electricity demand.
- ★ Out of the total electricity produced in India in 2023 the contribution of solar was 5.8 per cent.
- ★ The contribution of solar power to total national electricity production in India increased from 0.5 per cent in 2015 to 5.8 per cent in 2023.
- ★ The largest increase in solar generation in 2023 was in China.
- ★ According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), if the world is to achieve a “Net Zero Emissions” scenario, solar power’s contribution to total global electricity production must increase to 22 per cent by 2030.
- ★ At the United Nations COP28 climate change conference held in Dubai, UAE, in December 2023, an agreement was reached to triple the global renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- ★ India has committed to achieving 50 per cent of its cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

Wealthiest Cities Report 2024

- ★ Two Indian cities, Mumbai and Delhi, have been included for the first time in the top 50 world’s wealthiest cities of the world.
- ★ Mumbai was ranked 24th, and Delhi was 37th in the world in the Wealthiest Cities Report 2024 which was released recently.
- ★ The Wealthiest Cities Report 2024 has been compiled by Henley & Partners in collaboration with New World Wealth, a global data intelligence firm.
- ★ The wealthiest person has been defined as HNWIs (High worth individuals) who have a liquid investable wealth of USD 1 million or more. Centi millionaires are those individuals with a wealth of more than USD 100 million to invest, and billionaires have more than USD 1000 million to invest.
- ★ According to the report, New York City in the United States continues to be the world’s wealthiest city with 349,500 millionaires having a combined total wealth of more than \$3 trillion.
- ★ According to the Henly report, the Indian financial capital city Mumbai has 58,800 millionaires, 236 centi-millionaires and 29 billionaires. Mumbai was ranked as the 24th wealthiest city in the world.
- ★ The other city in the top 50 was Delhi, with 30,700 millionaires, 123 centi-millionaires, and 16 billionaires. Delhi was ranked 37th in the wealthiest cities list.

India Received \$111 Billion Remittance In 2022: World Migration Report

- ★ According to the World Migration Report 2024, India became the first country in the world to receive over \$100 billion in inward remittance.
- ★ India received \$111.22 billion in 2022 as remittance, while it received \$83.15 billion in 2020.

- ★ Inward remittance refers to the money sent by the Indians working abroad to their relatives in India.
- ★ The World Migration Report, 2024, prepared by the United Nations International Organisation for Migration, was released in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- ★ The International Organisation for Migration is a Geneva-based United Nations agency.
- ★ The International Migration Report is published by the International Organisation for Migration every two years. The first International Migration Report was published by the UN body in 2000.
- ★ India continues to be the top recipient of inward remittance in the world. India has an estimated 1.8 crore international migrants travelling abroad to work.

UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register'

- ★ Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra and Sahrdayaloka-Locana of India is among 20 items of the Asia Pacific region which has been included in the 2024 cycle of the 'UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register'.
- ★ The Memory of the World Asia Pacific Committee recognises and honours the Asia-Pacific achievements in genealogy, literature, and science, among other categories.
- ★ The decision to include Ramcharitmanas, Panchatantra and Sahrdayaloka-Locana was taken at the 10th General Meeting of the Memory of the World Committee for Asia and the Pacific (MOWCAP), held in Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia.
- ★ The 10th General Meeting of MOWCAP was hosted by the Mongolian Government's Ministry of Culture, the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO, and the Bangkok Regional Office of UNESCO.
- ★ The meeting was attended by 38 representatives from member states convened alongside 40 observers and nominees.
- ★ Ramcharitmanas was written by Tulsidas in the 16th century A.D in the Awadhi dialect. It is different from Ramanaya which was written by Sage Valmiki in Sanskrit language. The Ramcharitmanas is written in Chaupai form.
- ★ Panchatantra is one of the oldest collections of fables in the world, composed in Sanskrit. Vishnusharma, the court scholar of King Amar Shakti of Mahilaropya, is credited with compiling it.
- ★ 'Sahrdayaloka-Locana' has been composed by Acharya Anandvardhan in Sanskrit. He lived in Kashmir during the second half of the 10th century and the first half of the 11th century AD.

Center for World University Rankings (CWUR)

- ★ According to the Center for World University Rankings (CWUR), as many as 65 Indian universities and institutes from India, led by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, are among the top 2000 globally.
- ★ IIM-A, the country's top institute stood at 410th rank globally, as compared to 419 last year.
- ★ It was followed by the Indian Institute of Science (501) and the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (568).

- ★ The rankings are based on the analysis of 62 million outcome-based data points on four factors: Quality of education (25%), Employability (25%), Quality of faculty (10%), Research (40%).
- ★ In Asia, the University of Tokyo was the highest-ranked institution, at 13th spot.
- ★ Globally, Harvard emerged as the top university for the thirteenth year in a row.
- ★ It was followed by two other private US institutions, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Stanford.
- ★ The UK's Cambridge and Oxford ranked fourth and fifth.

China Remains Leading Import Partner for India in FY24

- ★ China retained its spot as top import partner for India in 2023-24 with goods inflows increasing 3.29 percent (year-on-year) to \$101.74 billion.
- ★ High-tech items such as telecom and smartphone parts, laptop and PCs, as well as industrial inputs such as plastic, iron and steel and chemicals contributed substantially to the imports.
- ★ Total goods imports by India in 2023-24 fell 5.66 per cent to \$675.44 billion.
- ★ Russia vaulted to the second spot amongst India's top import sources, surpassing the UAE and the US, in 2023-24.
- ★ India's import from Russia rose 34 per cent to \$61.44 billion during the fiscal comprising mostly oil.
- ★ The UAE slipped one spot to the third place with imports from the country declining 9.8 per cent to \$48.01 billion.
- ★ The US, too, slid a rank to the fourth spot with imports from the country falling 19.83 per cent to \$40.77 billion.

WEF Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024

- ★ India was ranked 36 out of 119 countries in the recently released Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- ★ The United States of America was ranked no.1, while India was the topmost-ranked country in South Asia.
- ★ The Travel and Tourism Development Index is a biennial report released by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The first Index was released in 2022.
- ★ The 2024 Travel and Tourism Development Index were prepared in collaboration with the University of Surrey, England.
- ★ This year, 119 countries have been ranked on the Index.
- ★ In the 2024 Index, India's overall score is 4.25. India has performed well in the high price competitiveness (18th rank in the world), competitive air transport (26th) as well as ground and port (25th) infrastructure.
- ★ India was ranked 6th in natural resources, 9th in cultural resources, and 9th in non-leisure resources. India is one of three countries to secure a top-10 ranking across all resource pillars.

Mumbai and Delhi Feature Among The World's Top 50 Wealthiest Cities

- ★ Henley and Partners, a leader in residence and citizenship planning, recently unveiled a list of the World's Wealthiest Top 10 cities and Rising Wealth Hubs, highlighting cities that attract high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) with liquid investable wealth of USD 1 million or more.
- ★ Mumbai and Delhi's inclusion in the top 50 wealthiest cities underscores India's economic progress and urban development.
- ★ These cities have become magnets for HNWIs, offering a blend of economic opportunities and cosmopolitan lifestyles.
- ★ Mumbai and Delhi join other global financial hubs, such as New York, London, and Tokyo, in the list of top 50 wealthiest cities.
- ★ These cities offer upscale living options and serve as centers for trade, commerce, and innovation.
- ★ New York leads the pack, boasting 349,500 millionaires and a wealth exceeding \$3 trillion.
- ★ The Bay Area tech hub, Tokyo, Singapore, London, Los Angeles, Paris, Sydney, Hong Kong, and Beijing complete the top 10. These cities offer diverse opportunities and amenities, attracting affluent individuals and businesses.

World Bank Report

- ★ The World Bank report, titled "Water for Shared Prosperity", was released at the 10th World Water Forum in Bali, Indonesia.
- ★ It underscores the widening gap in access to water resources and services, exacerbated by factors like population growth, urbanization, and climate change.
- ★ In 2022, 2.2 billion people lacked access to safely managed drinking water services, while 3.5 billion lacked access to safely managed sanitation.
- ★ Over 800 million people globally are at high risk of drought, with double that number living in flood-prone areas.
- ★ Low-income countries have seen a regression in access to safe drinking water, with an additional 197 million people lacking access since 2000.
- ★ The Democratic Republic of the Congo holds over half of Africa's total water resources.
- ★ World Water Forum is a large-scale international event that focuses on the discussion and development of solutions to global water-related challenges.
- ★ It is held every three years.
- ★ The first forum took place in Marrakesh, Morocco in March 1997.
- ★ It is organized by the World Water Council, an international organization.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Miss Universe Buenos Aires 2024

- ★ Alejandra Marisa Rodriguez, aged 60, made history by clinching the crown of Miss Universe Buenos Aires 2024.
- ★ Alejandra Rodriguez is a lawyer and journalist by profession. Alejandra is a resident of La Plata, Argentina.
- ★ Alejandra Rodriguez emerged victorious from a field of 34 contestants ranging in age from 18 to 73, defying conventional beauty norms.
- ★ Alejandra Rodriguez has become the first contestant in her age group to receive this prestigious crown.
- ★ With this win, Rodriguez is determined to compete for the Miss Universe Argentina 2024 crown.

‘Green Oscar’ Whitley Gold Award 2024

- ★ Dr Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist from Assam, has won her second Whitley Gold Award, also known as the Green Oscar.
- ★ She was honoured for her conservation effort of the endangered bird, Hargila or Greater Adjutant Stork and its wetland habitat.
- ★ This is the second time that Dr Barman has been honoured with the Whitley Gold Award. She was also awarded the prize in 2017.
- ★ Dr. Barman received the trophy from charity patron Princess Anne – the Princess Royal, the sister of King Charles III, at the Royal Geographical Society award ceremony in London, United Kingdom.
- ★ To protect the bird and its nesting place, Dr Purnima mobilised the local people and tried to change their view of the bird.
- ★ She founded the Hargila Army of Stork sisters, mainly consisting of local women, to protect the bird’s nesting area.
- ★ Dr Barman aims to double the global population of the Hargila bird to 5,000 by 2030.
- ★ She is actively working in India and Cambodia through a network of grassroots workers to achieve this target.

6th International Newspaper Design Competition

- ★ The Hindu’s explainer page on Neeraj Chopra’s craft and success, “The science behind Neeraj’s skills”, published on September 3, 2023, has won three awards at the 6th International Newspaper Design Competition organised by newspaperdesign.in.
- ★ The Hindu won the ‘Best of show’ award; ‘Gold’ in the ‘Best of Sports Page’ category; and an award of excellence in the ‘Best of Double Spread’ category.

- ★ The judges noted that the “standout sports page of the competition was layered with information organised on a simple grid around world-class illustrations” and every part of this page informs and engages readers.
- ★ They went on to add that the pages were a “great balance of strong visuals, detailed explainers and well-edited narrative text that combined to deliver a medal-winning experience”.

2024 Pulitzer Prize

- ★ Columbia University of the United States of America announced the 2024 Pulitzer Prize winners on 7 May 2024.
- ★ Columbia University announced the winners on the recommendation of the Pulitzer Prize Board.
- ★ The award will be conferred by the President of Columbia University in a ceremony later.
- ★ The Pulitzer Award is considered the most prestigious prize in the field of Journalism.
- ★ Public Service – Pro Publica. Pro Publica is a non-profit investigative journalist body in California. It was given the award for the investigative work of its reporters Joshua Kaplan, Justin Elliott, Brett Murphy, Alex Mierjeski and Kirsten Berg.
- ★ Investigative Reporting – Hannah Dreier of The New York Times
- ★ International Reporting – Staff of the New York Times. The award was given for its wide-ranging and revelatory coverage of Hamas’ lethal attack in southern Israel on October 7, Israel’s intelligence failures and the Israeli military’s response in Gaza.
- ★ Editorial Writing – David E. Hoffman of The Washington Post Newspaper.
- ★ Breaking News Photography – Photography Staff of Reuters news agency.
- ★ Feature Photography – Photography Staff of Associated Press news agency.
- ★ Audio Reporting – Staff of the Invisible Institute and USG Audio.
- ★ Fiction – Night Watch. The novel has been written by American novelist Jayne Anne Phillips.
- ★ Drama – Primary Trust. The Primary Trust has been written by American playwright Eboni Booth.

Meryl Streep to Receive Honorary Palme d’Or at Cannes

- ★ Veteran actor Meryl Streep will receive the honorary Palme d’Or at the opening ceremony of the 77th Cannes Film Festival on 14th May.
- ★ She will also be the guest of honour at the ceremony, which will take place on the stage of the Grand Theatre Lumiere on 14th May.
- ★ The Hollywood icon, who won the best actress prize at Cannes in 1989, will join the kickoff of the 77th edition at the Grand Theatre Lumiere.
- ★ Meryl is one of the most-feted actors in Hollywood history, with a record 21 Oscar nominations and three wins.

Oxford Bookstore Honors Bhavi Mehta with 9th Book Cover Prize

- ★ Oxford Bookstores announced Bhavi Mehta as the winner of the 9th edition of the Oxford Bookstore Book Cover Prize at a celebratory event hosted at the India Habitat Centre.
- ★ Mehta won the prize for the book jacket of “The Book Beautiful” published by Hachette India and authored by Pradeep Sebastian.
- ★ The winner was felicitated with a trophy, certificate and 1 Lakh Indian Rupees cash prize by Alka Pande, Museum Curator, Art Historian, Author and Jury Chair.
- ★ In addition to the winning cover, three more designers were acknowledged by the jurors in appreciation of their remarkable command of graphics and visual narratives.
- ★ These designers are Gunjan Ahlawat for the book, “The Penguin Book of Indian Poets” published by Hamish Hamilton- an imprint of Penguin Random House; Saurav Das for “Azad Nagar” published by HarperCollins India and Saurabh Garge for “The Adornment of Gods” published by Westland Books.

India to Host ‘Bharat Parv’ at 77th Cannes Film Festival

- ★ India is set to host a ‘Bharat Parv’ at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for eminent dignitaries and delegates from around the world to showcase the myriad creative opportunities in the country.
- ★ It will be for the first time that the country will host a “Bharat Parv” at the Cannes Film Festival to engage with film celebrities, filmmakers, directors, producers, buyers and sales agents from across the world.
- ★ The official poster and trailer of the 55th India International Film Festival , to be held in Goa on November 20 to 28, will also be unveiled at the Bharat Parv.
- ★ The Bharat Pavilion, which serves as a platform for the Indian film community to engage in various activities, at the 77th Cannes Film Festival at 108 villages International Riviera will be inaugurated on May 15 in the presence of eminent celebrities.
- ★ The Pavilion will be organized by the National Film Development Corporation in collaboration with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry as industry partner.
- ★ A ‘Bharat Stall’ will be put in the Marche du Cannes through the Confederation of Indian Industry.
- ★ The Bharat Pavilion has been designed by the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad.

Sahitya Akademi Fellowship

- ★ Eminent English author Ruskin Bond was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Fellowship at Mussoorie.
- ★ Bond was named a recipient of Akademi’s highest honour in September 2021.
- ★ However, due to his ill health, he could not be given the honour in person.
- ★ Born on 19 May 1934 in Himachal Pradesh, Bond has been actively writing for more than 50 years and has written in various genres of literature, including short stories, children’s books, novels, autobiographical works and non-fiction.

- ★ Bond, who has written over 300 short stories, essays and novels and more than 30 books for children besides several other works.
- ★ He is the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1992, Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar in 2012, Padma Shri in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2019 among other prestigious awards.
- ★ The Sahitya Akademi Fellowship is a literary honour in India bestowed by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters.

Global Excellence Award 2024

- ★ Chandrakant Satija, the renowned educationist and Founder/CEO of Chandra Admission Consultants, was honored with the Global Excellence Award 2024.
- ★ The award was presented by the famous Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra, recognized Satija as the Most Trusted Admissions Consultant in the Vidarbha Region.
- ★ With over 21 years of experience in the education sector, Chandrakant Satija has dedicated himself to providing quality education, career counseling, and admission guidance to students.
- ★ His firm's commitment to assisting students in making informed decisions about their careers and securing admissions in top universities and colleges has set a benchmark in the industry.

IN-SPACe Honoured with Geospatial World Forum Leadership Award

- ★ The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) has been honoured with the Geospatial World Forum (GWF) Leadership Award for "Public Policy: Enabling Industry Development".
- ★ The award was presented at the 2024 Geospatial World Forum in Rotterdam in a special ceremony.
- ★ The award recognizes IN-SPACe's contributions to the global geospatial industry through its ground-breaking work in fostering the growth and development of India's space sector and support to non-government entities working in the space economy.
- ★ Since 2007, the awards have celebrated the achievements of over 200 organizations, highlighting their dedication to advancing geospatial technologies and applications.

Pawan Sindhi Honoured With Global Pride of Sindhi Award 2024

- ★ Pawan Sindhi received the coveted Global Pride of Sindhi Award 2024 on an occasion attended by renowned saints, Mahatmas, and sadhus.
- ★ The event commemorated Mr. Sindhi's outstanding achievements in society and commitment to serve humanity.
- ★ The Global Pride of Sindhi Award 2024 is a well-deserved distinction for Pawan Sindhi, acknowledging his remarkable efforts to positively impact society.
- ★ His commitment to the advancement of humanity inspires others and encourages them to actively contribute to societal well-being.

Dr Soumya Swaminathan to Be Awarded Honourary Doctorate by Canada's McGill University

- ★ Dr Soumya Swaminathan, WHO's Chief Scientist, has been named among the 10 exceptional individuals who will receive honorary degrees from Canada's prestigious McGill University as part of the Spring 2024 Convocation ceremonies.
- ★ In 2017, Swaminathan joined the World Health Organisation (WHO) as Deputy Director General (Programmes), and, in March 2019, was named its first Chief Scientist, a role she filled through the Covid-19 pandemic until late 2022.

Global Excellence Award 2024 for Outstanding Contributions in Education

- ★ Chandrakant Satija, the Founder and CEO of Chandra Admission Consultants, wins the Global Excellence Award 2024 for being the "Most Trusted Admission Consultant in Vidarbha Region".
- ★ Chandrakant Satija, a renowned educationist and the Founder and CEO of Chandra Admission Consultants was honored with the Global Excellence Award 2024 at a grand event held at Sahara Star Hotel in Mumbai on May 12th.
- ★ The award was presented to him by the famous Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty Kundra.
- ★ He was adjudged as the Most Trusted Admissions Consultant in Vidarbha Region.

ATD BEST Awards 2024

- ★ The public sector company NTPC was awarded the third rank in the world at the ATD BEST Awards 2024.
- ★ The award ceremony was held in New Orleans, United States of America, on 21 May 2024.
- ★ Ms. Rachana Singh Bhal, NTPC's Chief General Manager strategic HR and talent management, accepted the award.
- ★ NTPC is the only public sector company to have won seven awards in the last eight years at the ATD BEST Awards.
- ★ The ATD BEST Award is a testament to NTPC's outstanding Learning and Development practices and relentless pursuit of excellence.
- ★ The Association of Talent Development (ATD), USA, gives the ATD BEST Awards in the field of Learning and Development.
- ★ The award was instituted in 2003.
- ★ The award recognises small and large private, public and not-for-profit organisations that use talent development as a strategic business tool and demonstrate enterprise-wide success through effective employee development practices.

International Booker Prize 2024

- ★ German author Jenny Erpenbeck and translator Michael Hofmann won the International Booker Prize for fiction for "Kairos", the story of a tangled love affair during the final years of East Germany's existence.

- ★ The International Booker Prize is awarded annually for the finest single work of fiction from around the world which has been translated into English.
- ★ It was started in 2005 as the Man Booker International Prize.
- ★ It was initially a biennial prize for a body of work and there was no stipulation that the work should be written in a language other than English.
- ★ Erpenbeck is the first German winner of the International Booker Prize, and Mr. Hofmann is the first male translator to win since the prize launched in its current form in 2016.
- ★ The book has also been depicted in “The Lives of Others”, the Academy Award-winning 2006 film about pervasive state surveillance in the 1980s.

All We Imagine as Light Gets Cannes Grand Prix Award

- ★ Payal Kapadia’s directed film All We Imagine as Light won the Grand Prix prize in the feature film segment.
- ★ Payal Kapadia became the first Indian to win the Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival.
- ★ Another Indian Cinematographer, Santosh Sivan, became the first Asian to win the prestigious Pierre Angénieux Tribute Award at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival.
- ★ For the first time after 30 years, an Indian film, All We Imagine as Light’ directed by Payal Kapadia, was nominated for the Palme d’Or or Golden Palm.
- ★ Golden Palm is the highest category of award in the Cannes Film Festival or feature films.
- ★ Payal Kapadia film won the Grand Prix award in the feature film section which is the second highest award in the section after Palme d’or or Golden Palm.
- ★ The Pierre Angénieux Tribute Award honours cinematographers for their careers and exceptional quality of work.
- ★ Chidanand Naik bagged the first prize for India. His short film “Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know” won a prize in the La Cinef section.
- ★ Actress Anasuya Sengupta created history at the Cannes Film Festival by winning the Best Actress award in the Un Certain Regard segment for her film Shameless.

2023 UN Military Gender Advocate of Year Award for Major Radhika Sen

- ★ The United Nations has selected the Indian Army Major Radhika Sen for the prestigious 2023 Military Gender Advocate of the Year award.
- ★ The award will be conferred to Major Radhika Sen by the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on the occasion of the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers.
- ★ The United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award was created by the Office of Military Affairs within the Department for Peace Operations of the United Nations in 2016.
- ★ The Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award honours the dedication and effort of an individual UN peacekeeper who has integrated a gender perspective into peacekeeping activities.
- ★ Major Radhika Sen becomes the second Indian to be awarded the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award.

- ★ Major Radhika, who is from Himachal Pradesh, was deployed with the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion in South Sudan in 2023.
- ★ She was working with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo MONUSCO.

Outlook Planet Sustainability Summit and Awards 2024

- ★ REC Limited won the “Sustainability Champion — Editor’s Choice Award” and the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) Limited won the Corporate Social Responsibility award in the Non-Fossil Fuel sub-category at the Outlook Planet Sustainability Summit and Awards 2024 for Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- ★ Central Public Sector Enterprises are those companies which are owned by the Government of India.
- ★ Goa hosted the first Outlook Planet Sustainability Summit and Awards 2024 for Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) on 27 May 2028.
- ★ It was organised by the Outlook Media Group, BDO India as the Awards Process Advisor and IIT Goa as the Knowledge Partner.
- ★ The event provided an opportunity for the top policymakers and the top management of the Central Public Sector Enterprises to discuss the initiatives taken by them in sustainability.
- ★ The Awards were given in four categories -Sustainable Governance Champion, Corporate Responsibility Champion, Circularity Champion and Climate Action Champion.
- ★ Within each category were sub-categories: fossil fuels, non-fossil fuels, and Jury Special Recognition.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Justice Dinesh Kumar Takes Charge as the SAT Presiding Officer

- ★ Justice (retired) Dinesh Kumar took charge as the Presiding Officer of the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) on 29 April 2024. The Government of India appointed Justice Dinesh Kumar for a four-year term.
- ★ Before taking over as the Presiding Officer of SAT, Justice Dinesh Kumar was the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court. He retired from the post in February 2024.
- ★ The SAT has been functioning without a Presiding Officer for the last four months, as the last Presiding Officer, Justice Tarun Aggarwal, retired in December 2023.
- ★ Dheeraj Bhatnagar also took charge as the technical member of the tribunal. He has been appointed for a term of four years or till he reaches the age of 67, whichever is earlier. Dheeraj Bhatnagar retired as principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax Delhi.
- ★ The other member of the three-member SAT is Meera Swarup.
- ★ The Securities Appellate Tribunal is a statutory body established in 1992 under the provisions of the Securities Exchange Board of India Act 1992.

Admiral Dinesh Tripathi Take Charge as 26th Naval Chief

- ★ Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi assumed office as the 26th Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) on 30 April 2024. Admiral Dinesh Tripathi took the place of Admiral R. Hari Kumar, who demitted his office on 29 April 2024.
- ★ Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi is an alumnus of Sainik School Rewa, Madhya Pradesh and the National Defence Academy. He was commissioned in the Indian Navy in 1985.
- ★ He rose through the ranks to become the Commander of the Western Naval Command before becoming the Vice-Admiral (Vice-Chief) of the Indian Navy in June 2019.
- ★ He was also made the commandant of the prestigious Indian Naval Academy at Ezhimala, Kerala.
- ★ He was the Director General of naval operations from July 2020 to May 2021.
- ★ Admiral Dinesh Tripathi is a specialist in electronics and communication warfare.
- ★ He has served on the Navy's guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai as an Executive Officer and Principal Warfare Officer.

President of Indian Vaccine Manufacturers Association

- ★ The Indian Vaccine Manufacturers Association (IVMA) announced Krishna M Ella, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of Bharat Biotech, as the association's new President for two years from April 2024-2026.
- ★ He takes over from Adar C. Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India (SII), who served as IVMA President from 2019 to 2024.
- ★ Under Dr Ella's leadership, the IVMA aims to fortify collaboration between vaccine manufacturers, researchers, and policymakers to accelerate the development of new vaccines and improve production processes.
- ★ IVMA is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry-led, and industry-managed organisation.
- ★ It aims to promote and articulate the views and concerns of the vaccine industry, fostering an environment conducive to vaccine development and immunisation in India.

Prime Minister of Solomon Island

- ★ Jeremiah Manele, a former Foreign Minister, was elected as the new Prime Minister of Solomon Islands by the nation's lawmakers.
- ★ He won with 31 votes, defeating his rival Mathew Cooper Wale, who secured 18 votes.
- ★ Manele is the first member of Parliament from Isabel Province to become Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.
- ★ Manele replaced Manasseh Sogavare, who served 4 terms as Prime Minister (2000-2001, 2006-2007, 2014-2017, and 2019-2024).
- ★ The general elections in Solomon Islands were held on April 17, 2024, to determine the composition of the 12th Parliament, leading to Manele's election.
- ★ Manele previously served as the Minister for Development Planning and Aid Coordination (2017-2018).

Paytm Money Appoints Rakesh Singh as Chief Executive Officer

- ★ Paytm Money, the wholly-owned subsidiary of One 97 Communications, has appointed Rakesh Singhas the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) after Varun Sridhar resigned from the role.
- ★ Sridhar served as CEO of Paytm Money since 2020 and has transitioned to a different role within the company.
- ★ Rakesh Singh joined Paytm Money a month before he was appointed CEO.
- ★ Previously, he held the same position at Fisdor, a discount brokerage firm.
- ★ Under Sridhar leadership, the company turned profitable in the financial year 2023 and reported a ₹42 crore net profit while its revenue almost doubled to ₹131 crore.

Jose Raul Mulino Wins Panama's Presidential Election

- ★ José Raúl Mulino has won Panama's presidential election after three of his nearest rivals conceded defeat.
- ★ The 64-year-old former Security Minister has secured nearly 35% of the counted votes, with more than 92% of the votes counted.
- ★ Jose Raul Mulino was initially chosen as a Vice-Presidential candidate by former President Ricardo Martinelli.
- ★ Jose Raul Mulino will inherit an economy that is expected to grow by 2.5 % in 2024.
- ★ The Panamanian parliament, the National Assembly, has 71 members. The members of the National Assembly are directly elected by the people for a term of five years. The members of the National Assembly are eligible for re-election.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Appoints Carol Furtado as Executive Director

- ★ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank has appointed Carol Furtado as Executive Director for a 3-year term, effective from May 1, 2024.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved this appointment.
- ★ Furtado has been with Ujjivan Small Finance Bank since its inception, holding significant roles such as Chief Human Resource Officer, Head of Operations and Service Quality, and Chief Business Officer (CBO).
- ★ Prior to joining Ujjivan, Furtado worked at the ANZ group, Bank Muscat, and Centurion Bank Ltd.
- ★ She received the Financial Women's Association award from Women's World Banking in 2009, recognizing her professional achievements.

Atanu Chakraborty Reappointed as HDFC Bank Chairman

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the re-appointment of Atanu Chakraborty as the Part-Time Chairman of HDFC Bank for a period of 3 years from May 05, 2024 to May 04, 2027.
- ★ Chakraborty served the Government of India for 35 years as a member of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in the Gujarat cadre.

- ★ He was the Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) during the financial year 2019-2020.
- ★ He has also served on the Board of World Bank as alternate Governor as well as on the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India.
- ★ He also headed a multidisciplinary task force that produced the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).
- ★ He has been the Part-Time Chairman and Independent Director of the Bank since May 2021.

President of GST Appellate Tribunal

- ★ Justice (retired) Sanjaya Kumar Mishra was sworn in as the first President of the GST Appellate Tribunal on 6 May 2024.
- ★ The Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman administered the oath of office in New Delhi.
- ★ Justice (retired) Sanjaya Kumar Mishra has been appointed for a term of four years.
- ★ The former Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court, Justice (retired) Sanjaya Kumar Mishra's name, was approved by the Appointment Committee of the Union Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister.
- ★ The selection of Justice (retired) Sanjaya Kumar Mishra was recommended by a Search cum Selection Committee.
- ★ The GST Appellate Tribunal is an Appellate Authority constituted under the Central Goods and Service Tax Act 2017.

Vladimir Putin Sworn in as Russian President For a New Six-Year Term

- ★ Vladimir Putin was sworn in as President of the Russian Federation for the fifth time on 7 May 2024 for a six-year term. He took the oath of office at a ceremony held at the Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow.
- ★ A presidential election was held in Russia between 15 and 17 March 2024. Vladimir Putin stood as an independent candidate.
- ★ The election was won by Putin, who secured 87.3% of the votes polled.
- ★ Vladimir Putin was an Intelligence Officer with the KGB. After leaving the KGB, he entered politics, and in 1999, after President Boris Yeltsin's resignation, he was appointed interim President of Russia.
- ★ He contested his first presidential election in the 2000 presidential election and won a four-year term.
- ★ He was again re-elected for a four-year term in 2004 and remained President till 2008.

Senior Diplomat Xu Feihong as New Ambassador to India

- ★ Chinese President Xi Jinping has appointed Xu Feihong as the new Ambassador to India after a delay of 18 months.
- ★ Xu's appointment coincides with the ongoing Lok Sabha elections in India.

- ★ The appointment was confirmed by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, despite not being formally announced in Beijing.
- ★ Xu, previously serving as Ambassador to Afghanistan and Romania, is slated to assume his responsibilities in New Delhi shortly.
- ★ He will succeed veteran Chinese diplomat Sun Weidong who completed his tenure in India in October 2022.
- ★ Sun Weidong is currently the Vice-Foreign Minister overseeing China's South Asia policy.
- ★ He was previously China's envoy to Pakistan before serving in India.

Chad Military Dictator Idriss Deby Win's Presidential Election

- ★ The Military dictator and interim President of the Central African Country of Chad, Mahamat Idris Deby Itno has won the presidential election held on 6 May 2024.
- ★ The provisional result was declared by the country's National Election Management Agency on 10 May 2024.
- ★ Mahamat Idris Deby seized power with the support of fellow army generals in 2021 and became the interim President of the country after the death of his father, President Idriss Deby.
- ★ According to the provisional election result, Mahamat Idris Deby Itno secured 61.03 per cent of the votes while his nearest rival, Prime Minister Succes Masra, got only 18.53 per cent votes.

Reserve Bank of India Names R Lakshmi Kanth Rao as Executive Director

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) appointed R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao as Executive Director (ED).
- ★ Rao has experience of over three decades in the Reserve Bank having worked in the areas of Regulation of Banks and NBFCs, Supervision of Banks and Consumer Protection.
- ★ He had served as Banking Ombudsman at RBI Chennai and as Regional Director of Uttar Pradesh at Lucknow.
- ★ He has also served as a member of several Committees and Working Groups and has been contributing to policy formulation.
- ★ Prior to being promoted as ED, Shri Rao was serving as Chief General Manager-in-Charge in the Department of Regulation.

Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla Assumes Role as Indian Navy's Chief of Personnel

- ★ Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla, assumes charge as the Chief of Personnel of the Indian Navy.
- ★ He was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 1989.
- ★ In a career spanning 35 years, he has held a number of specialist, staff and operational appointments, both afloat and ashore.
- ★ He specialised in Communication and Electronic Warfare.
- ★ Throughout his career, he held several challenging command appointments, both afloat and ashore.

- ★ Some notable commands include Indian Naval Ship (INS) Nishank, INS Taragiri, INS Beas, and the prestigious appointment of Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet (FOCEF).

First Woman IPS Officer Appointed as Meghalaya's Police Chief

- ★ Idashisha Nongrang, a 1992 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) Officer, has been appointed as the Director General of Police (DGP) of Meghalaya, making history as the first woman to hold the position.
- ★ Nongrang will assume office on May 20, 2024, following the retirement of the current DGP, R. Bishnoi, on May 19, 2024.
- ★ Nongrang, a member of the Khasi tribe — one of Meghalaya's three major tribal communities is currently serving as the Director General of Meghalaya Civil Defence and Home Guards.
- ★ She also reportedly served as the acting DGP of Meghalaya for a brief period in 2021.
- ★ Her tenure as head of police will extend until 19 May, 2026.

Chief Vigilance Officer of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Ajitkumar Vasantrao Sontakke (IOFS) as the Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) .
- ★ The appointment was made under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India.
- ★ The appointment is effective for a period up to May 20, 2027, with a maximum admissible tenure of 7 years away from the cadre at a stretch, from the date of assuming the charge of the post or until further orders.
- ★ He is currently serving as Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Additional Directors in CBI

- ★ Senior Indian Police Service (IPS) Officers A.Y.V. Krishna and N. Venu Gopal have been appointed as additional directors in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- ★ A.Y.V. Krishna, a distinguished 1995-batch IPS Officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been appointed as an Additional Director in the CBI.
- ★ Currently serving as Inspector General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Krishna brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role.
- ★ His tenure as Additional Director extends up to August 6, 2028, as per the order issued by the Personnel Ministry.
- ★ N. Venu Gopal, a seasoned IPS Officer from the Himachal Pradesh cadre, has also been appointed as an Additional Director in the CBI.
- ★ With his current position as Joint Director in the CBI, Venu Gopal has demonstrated commendable leadership and investigative skills.
- ★ His appointment as Additional Director is effective until May 24, 2027, according to another order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

- ★ They will play pivotal roles in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the CBI's operations in tackling corruption, financial crimes, and other serious offenses.

President of Supreme Court Bar Association

- ★ Senior advocate Kapil Sibal was elected as a President of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).
- ★ This is the 4th time Kapil Sibal will serve as the SCBA President.
- ★ His previous terms were during 1995-96, 1997-98, and 2001.
- ★ Other candidates for the SCBA President post included Priya Hingorani, Tripurari Ray, and Neeraj Srivastava.
- ★ Kapil Sibal will take over from the incumbent President, senior advocate Adish C. Aggarwala.
- ★ Advocate Vikrant Yadav was elected SCBA Secretary.

MD and CEO of IndiaFirst Life Insurance

- ★ IndiaFirst Life Insurance's board has approved the appointment of Rushabh Gandhi as the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for 5 years effective July 1, 2024, or the date of regulatory approvals, whichever is earlier.
- ★ The new appointment is subject to the approval of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).
- ★ R.M. Vishakha, the current MD and CEO of the life insurer, will retire on June 30, 2024.
- ★ Rushabh Gandhi has over 29 years of experience in the financial services industry and across national and international markets.
- ★ He has worked at Canara HSBC OBC Life Insurance, Aviva Life Insurance and Birla Sun Life Insurance.
- ★ He is currently the deputy Chief Executive Officer of the insurer.

Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer in NASA

- ★ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) appointed David Salvagnini as the agency's first Chief Artificial Intelligence (AI) Officer, in an extension of his current role as the Chief Data Officer.
- ★ Before Salvagnini's appointment, NASA's Chief Scientist Kate Calvin served as the acting responsible AI official.
- ★ Salvagnini will lead NASA's efforts in the responsible use of AI both in space and on Earth, aiming to benefit all humanity.
- ★ He will align the strategic vision and planning for AI usage across NASA.
- ★ His role includes championing AI innovation, supporting the development, and managing risks associated with AI tools, platforms, and training.
- ★ Salvagnini joined NASA in June 2023, after more than 20 years of working in technology leadership in the intelligence community.

- ★ He previously served as the Director of the Architecture and Integration Group and Chief Architect at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.
- ★ He has a military background, having served in the Air Force for 21 years as a communications and Computer Systems Officer, retiring in May 2005.

Sanjiv Puri, ITC MD Elected CII President for 2024-25

- ★ Chairman and Managing Director of ITC, Sanjiv Puri, has been elected as the President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for 2024-25.
- ★ Rajiv Memani has been appointed as the new President-Designate, and R. Mukundan has been elected as the new Vice President of the CII for 2024-25
- ★ Sanjiv Puri is currently the Chairman and Managing Director of ITC Ltd. Sanjiv Puri is an alumnus of IIT, Kanpur, and Wharton School of Business, United States of America.
- ★ He was appointed Chairman of the Expert Group on agri-exports set up by the 15th Finance Commission.
- ★ He has also been a member of the NITI Aayog Group on 'Farm to Table-driving India's agriculture sector digitally'.
- ★ Sanjiv Puri was given the 'Best CEO Award' by Business Today in 2024. He was also honoured with the 'Transformational Leader Award 2022-23' by the Asian Centre for Corporate Governance and Sustainability.

Whole Time Director of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted approval for Pradeep Natarajan to assume the position of Whole Time Director at IDFC FIRST Bank Limited.
- ★ As per the RBI's directive, Natarajan will serve as the bank's Executive Director for the 3-year tenure in this pivotal role.
- ★ IDFC FIRST Bank had reported a net profit of ₹724 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024.
- ★ The bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) reduced to 1.88% of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, from 2.51% by the end of March 2023.
- ★ Net NPAs also came down to 0.60% of the advances from 0.86% at the end of 2024.

President of Taiwan

- ★ William Lai Ching-te was sworn in as the new President of the Republic of China or Taiwan on 20 May 2024.
- ★ It marks the third consecutive term for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.
- ★ Lai Ching-te was the Vice President under the Tsai-Ing Wen administration.
- ★ Vice President Hsia Bi-khim also took the oath as the country's Vice President.
- ★ China, officially known as the People's Republic of China, views Taiwan as a breakaway province that must become part of It.

- ★ President William Lai Ching-te said that Beijing should stop its aggression against Taiwan and his administration will strive to “maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

President of Vietnam

- ★ General To Lam was elected as the new President of Vietnam by the Vietnamese parliament on 22 May 2024.
- ★ To Lam, who was the public Security Minister, was removed from his post as Minister by the Vietnamese parliament before being elected President.
- ★ The appointment comes after Vietnam’s former President Vo Van Thuong resigned two months back amid a corruption crackdown.
- ★ General To Lam who is a member of the Communist Party’s politburo, was the only candidate for the President post.
- ★ He was elected by Vietnam’s parliament, the National Assembly for tenure till 2026.

Dr Samir V Kamat’s Tenure as DRDO Chief Extended for One Year

- ★ The Appointment Committee of the Union Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister has approved an extension of one year for the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Research and Development and Chairman of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Dr Samir V. Kamat.
- ★ Dr Samir Kamat was due to retire on 31 May 2024. His term has been extended till 31 May 2025.
- ★ Dr Samir Kamat is a student of IIT Kharagpur and The Ohio State University, USA.
- ★ In 1989, he joined the DRDO, and he was appointed as the Chairman of DRDO on 25 August 2022. Whoever is the Chairman of the DRDO is also the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Research and Development.

PK Sinha as Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted its approval for the appointment of Pradeep Kumar Sinha as the Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank for a term of 3 years, starting from July 1, 2024.
- ★ Pradeep Kumar Sinha will step into the position vacated by C. Chaturvedi, who is due to retire as Non-Executive Part-time Chairman on June 30, 2024, at the close of business hours.
- ★ Pradeep Kumar Sinha joined the Indian Administrative Service in 1977.
- ★ He has been a Government Nominee Director in numerous major Public Sector Undertakings like ONGC, IOCL, HPCL, BPCL, GAIL, etc.
- ★ He served in Uttar Pradesh, whereafter he served mostly in the Government of India and rose to the highest position of Cabinet Secretary.
- ★ He served as the Cabinet Secretary for more than 4 years before moving to the Prime Minister’s Office.

SPORTS

12th French Football Ligue-1 Title

- ★ Paris Saint-Germain football club was confirmed as the champion of the 2023-24 Ligue-1 Season. It was the club's record 12th title. Paris Saint-Germain has won the last three consecutive titles and eight in the last ten years.
- ★ Paris Saint-Germain was crowned the champion after its closest rival, Monaco, lost 3-2 to Lyon.
- ★ Paris Saint-Germain now has an unassailable 12 points over its closest rival, Monaco.
- ★ The current French men's national football team captain, Kylian Mbappé, played a major role in Paris Saint-Germain's win.
- ★ He, with 26 goals, is the leading goal scorer in the 2023-24 Ligue-1 season. This is also Kylian Mbappé's last season with Paris Saint-Germain, as he has been transferred to the Spanish club Real Madrid.
- ★ Ligue-1 is the top domestic professional football championship in France. It was founded as a National or Division 1 in 1932.

India to Organize BWF World Junior Badminton Championships 2025

- ★ The Badminton World Federation (BWF) announced that India will host the 2025 BWF World Junior Championships at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati.
- ★ It will be the first time since 2008 that the prestigious Badminton World Federation (BWF) event will be held in India.
- ★ India last hosted the event in Pune.
- ★ The exact dates for the 2025 BWF World Junior Championships will be announced later.
- ★ The 2026 edition of the BWF Thomas and Uber Cup Finals will take place in Horsens, Denmark.
- ★ This will be the second time that Denmark hosts these BWF world men's and women's team championships; the first was in Aarhus in 2021.
- ★ The hosting rights for the events were confirmed at the BWF Council meeting.

Asian Carrom Championship

- ★ Rashmi Kumari outplayed Shainy Sebastian to clinch the women's title in the 6th Asian carrom championship which concluded in Maldives.
- ★ It was the fourth Asian crown for the three-time World Champion Rashmi, who had recently won her 12th National title in Gwalior.
- ★ In the men's final, Ghufran beat reigning National champion K. Srinivas.
- ★ India swept all the gold medals in singles, doubles, team championships apart from the Swiss league.

2024 Men's AFC U-23 Title

- ★ Japan defeated Uzbekistan in the final to win the Men's AFC U-23 Asian Cup for the second time. Japan had earlier won the tournament title in 2016.
- ★ In the final match played at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium in Doha, Qatar, Japan won by a solitary goal and also qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics.
- ★ The 6th edition of AFC U-23 was held in Qatar from 15 April -3 May 2024.
- ★ Japan won the gold medal with the solitary goal scored by substitute Yamada in injury time.
- ★ The Japanese goalkeeper saved a penalty in the dying moments of the match to ensure the win for his team.
- ★ The 2024 Men's AFC U23 Asian cup was also a qualification tournament for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.

NADA India organizes #PlayTrue Campaign

- ★ The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), India concluded the #PlayTrue Campaign, with a turnout of more than 12,133 participants.
- ★ The campaign commemorated WADA's Play True Day and aimed at fostering awareness about the importance of clean sports and anti-doping practices in India, received overwhelming participation and support from athletes, coaches, and sports enthusiasts nationwide.
- ★ The #PlayTrue Campaign highlights NADA India's commitment to equipping athletes, coaches, and the entire sporting community with a thorough understanding of anti-doping regulations, empowering them to champion clean play in India.
- ★ Aligned with the vision of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), the #PlayTrue Campaign strives to instill integrity in sports by advocating for fair play, rejecting doping, and promoting the spirit of fair competition.

Thomas and Uber Cup Badminton Titles

- ★ The Chinese badminton team confirmed its domination of the sport by winning both the men's Thomas Cup and the women's Uber Cup.
- ★ The final of the 2024 BWF Thomas and Uber Cup was played in the Chinese city of Chengdu on May 5, 2024.
- ★ Thomas and Uber Cup is held every two years and is organised by the world badminton governing body, the Badminton World Federation (BWF).
- ★ For the first time since 2012, Chinese badminton has won both the men's and women's titles at the world team championships.
- ★ China defeated Indonesia 4-1 to win the Thomas Cup for the 11th time.
- ★ The Chinese women's team defeated Indonesia 3-0 to win the Uber Cup for the 16th time.

Mumbai City FC Defeat Mohun Bagan Super Giant to Win the ISL 2023-24

- ★ The Mumbai City FC football club defeated Mohun Bagan Bagan Super Giant by 3-1 goals to win the 2023-24 Indian Super League (ISL) final, which was played at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan Stadium in Kolkata (West Bengal).
- ★ This was Mumbai City FC's second title.
- ★ Incidentally, Mumbai City FC won its first ISL title in 2020-21 by defeating the Mohun Bagan team
- ★ In the final match, Jorge Pereyra Diaz, Bipin Singh and Jakub Vojtus scored for Mumbai City FC, while the solitary goal for the Mohun Bagan Bagan Super Giant was scored by Jason Cumming.
- ★ The winner of the ISL 2023-24 Mumbai City FC took ₹6 crore as the prize money, and the runners-up, Mohun Bagan Super Giant, got ₹3 crore as prize money.

Madrid Open Tennis Singles Title

- ★ World no.1 women's tennis players Iga Swiatek and Andrey Rublev won the women's and men's singles titles at the 2024 Madrid Open, respectively.
- ★ This was the first Madrid Open title for Iga Swiatek of Poland, while it was the second Madrid Open title for Andrey Rublev.
- ★ The Madrid Open Tennis was held in the Spanish capital city of Madrid from 22 April to 5 May 2024.
- ★ The Madrid Open was a 1000-event, which means that the winners of the men's and women's titles will receive 1000 ranking points.
- ★ World no.1 Iga Swiatek of Poland won the WTA 1000 Madrid Open title. In the final, she defeated Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7) to win her first Madrid Open title.
- ★ Andrey Rublev of Russia won the singles title of the ATP Madrid Open Masters 1000, beating Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada 4-6, 7-5, 7-5, to win his second ATP Masters title.

Andrey Rublev Won the Madrid Open

- ★ Andrey Rublev won the Madrid Open with a hard-fought 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime to secure his second title of the year, despite battling with illness.
- ★ The Russian world number eight said he was "almost dead every day" and could barely sleep this week after securing a career second Masters 1000 victory.
- ★ Rublev had lost four consecutive matches before arriving in the Spanish capital but came from a set down to beat his Canadian opponent.
- ★ The 26-year-old triumphed at the Hong Kong Open in January but struggled since before turning around his form in Madrid, dropping just one set on the way to what proved a tense final.

Dharamshala Cricket Stadium Gets India's First 'Hybrid Pitch'

- ★ India's first-ever "hybrid pitch" was unveiled at the picturesque Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) stadium in Dharamshala, marking a significant milestone for the sport in the country.
- ★ The introduction of the SISGrass hybrid pitch is expected to lift the quality of the sport played on Indian pitches.
- ★ SISGrass designs, constructs and supplies hybrid and synthetic cricket match pitches and practise net areas for a wide variety of organisations, including international cricket venues, local cricket clubs, schools, and universities.
- ★ Already successful at Lord's and The Oval, SISGrass Hybrid Pitches is now set to revolutionise cricket in India.
- ★ The 'Universal Machine', used in Dharamshala to install the hybrid surface, was first developed by SISGrass in 2017.
- ★ With only 5% synthetic fibres, the pitch ensures that the natural characteristics essential for cricket are preserved.

Bajrang Punia Suspended till 2024 by Global Wrestling Body UWW

- ★ The world wrestling governing body United World Wrestling (UWW) has provisionally suspended Tokyo bronze medallist Bajrang Punia till 31st December 2024.
- ★ The UWW has cited the suspension of Bajrang Punia by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) of India as the reason for the provisional suspension. It puts into jeopardy his participation in the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.
- ★ NADA provisionally suspended Bajrang Punia on 23 April 2024 after Bajrang Punia refused to give his sample for an anti-dope test.
- ★ Dope refers to the use of prohibited performance-enhancing drugs taken by athletes.
- ★ Under the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) a sportsman has to give his location to the national anti-doping agencies and sample when demanded.

Grandmaster Title to Indian Chess Prodigy Vaishali Ramesh Babu

- ★ Indian Chess Prodigy, Vaishali Ramesh Babu has been awarded the title of Grandmaster by International Chess Federation, FIDE.
- ★ Vaishali is the third Indian female Grandmaster, joining Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli.
- ★ Vaishali completed the requisite 2500 ELO points at the Llobregat Open tournament in Spain.
- ★ However, the title was officially given to her only recently following the FIDE Council meeting during the Candidates Tournament in Toronto.
- ★ Vaishali's accomplishment, as the 84th Indian grandmaster and 42nd woman from any country to become a GM, has already been widely recognized.
- ★ In January 2024, she was presented with the Arjuna Award.

22nd Asian Squash Championship

- ★ The Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) has announced the Indian team, which will participate in the 22nd Asian Team Squash Championships, which will be held in Dalian, China, from 12 to 16 June 2024.
- ★ The Indian men's team is the current Asian Team Champion, having won the 2022 event in Cheongju, South Korea.
- ★ Velavan Senthilkumar will lead the Indian men's team, and Rathika Seelan will lead the women's team.
- ★ The Indian team is highly optimistic after its spectacular performance in the 19th Hangzhou Asian Games.
- ★ India won five medals — two gold, one silver, and two bronze at the Hangzhou Asian games.
- ★ The Asian Team Squash Championship is organised by the Asian Squash Federation in association with the Squash Federation of the host country.
- ★ The Asian Team Squash Championship is organised every two years.

New Zealander Colin Munro Retires from International Cricket

- ★ Veteran New Zealand cricket player Colin Munro has announced his retirement from international cricket, ending his 123-match career with the Black Caps. The New Zealand cricket team is also called the Black Caps.
- ★ Munro had not played international cricket for New Zealand since 2020 when he was not included in the New Zealand board's central contract.
- ★ Munro announced his retirement after he was not chosen in the New Zealand squad for the 9th ICC Men's T20 World Cup, which will be held in the West Indies and the United States of America from June 1 to 29, 2024.
- ★ However, Munro will continue to play in the franchise T20 cricket league. He captained the Brisbane Heat during last summer's Australian Big Bash League.
- ★ He made his international debut for the Black Caps team in all three formats during the 2012/13 tour of South Africa.
- ★ Munro played one Test, 57 One Day Internationals (ODI) and 65 T20s.
- ★ Colin Munro was mainly known for his exploits in the shortest version of the T20s.

30th Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy

- ★ Japan won its maiden Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey trophy by defeating Pakistan 4-1 in the penalty shoot-out in the final. The final was played at the Azlan Shah Stadium in Ipoh, Malaysia, on 11 May 2024.
- ★ The Japanese men's hockey team defeated Pakistan to claim its first Sultan Azlan Shah Trophy. In the final, the match ended at 2-2 after the end of the normal.
- ★ In the penalty shoot-out, Japan defeated Pakistan by 4-1.

- ★ Sultan Azlan Shah is considered a prestigious Hockey tournament in Asia that has attracted the world's top men's national hockey teams.
- ★ Malaysia was in third place, followed by New Zealand, South Korea, and Canada in last place.

85th Chess Grandmaster

- ★ Tamil Nadu's P Shyaamnikhil became India's 85th chess Grandmaster (GM).
- ★ The 31-year-old chess prodigy, who started his career at the age of eight, finally secured his third and final GM norms at the 2024 Dubai Police Masters Chess Tournament.
- ★ He became the International Masters (IM) in 2011 and earned his first GM norm in the Mumbai Mayors Cup 2011.
- ★ He earned his second GM norm in the Indian Championship. He completed the mandatory 2500 ELO rating in 2012.
- ★ Grandmaster or International Masters is one of the many chess titles which is awarded by the world chess governing body FIDE.

Doha Diamond League

- ★ Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra finished second at the Doha Diamond League meeting javelin throw event as his big final effort of 88.36m fell short by two centimetres of Jakub Vadlejch.
- ★ The 26-year-old Chopra trailed Czech Republic veteran Vadlejch, who won the title with his third round throw of 88.38m all through the competition.
- ★ Two-time world champion Anderson Peters took the third spot with a best throw of 86.62m.
- ★ Vadlejch had won silver in the Tokyo Olympics and a bronze in the 2023 World Championships, the two events in which Chopra had won gold.
- ★ Chopra had won the 2023 Doha Diamond League with a throw of 88.67m, ahead of Vadlejch (88.63) and Peters (85.88m).

Dominic Thiem, announces his retirement from Tennis

- ★ Austrian tennis player Dominic Thiem announced that he will retire at the end of this season.
- ★ The 30-year-old, who won the US Open men's singles title in 2020, said that recurring problems due to his wrist injury forced him to arrive at this decision.
- ★ Thiem has won 17 career titles, the most recent being the US Open wins in 2020.
- ★ The Austrian achieved a career-highest ranking of 3 in March 2020.
- ★ He is currently ranked 117th.
- ★ Thiem reached the final of the Australian Open in 2017 and the French Open final in 2018 and 2019.
- ★ He has also contested two ATP finals in London that brings together the season's eight best players.

Asian Trampoline Gymnastics Championship

- ★ In Trampoline, India's Srishti Khandagale scripted history by becoming the first-ever Indian to win a medal at the Asian Trampoline Gymnastics Championships.
- ★ She clinched the silver medal in the Women's Individual Age group category at the 6th Asian Trampoline Gymnastics Championship held in Hong Kong, China.
- ★ However, she did not qualify for the upcoming Paris Olympics, as she was competing in an age group event.
- ★ Kazakhstan's Dolgopolova secured the gold medal, while Hong Kong's S. Hung won the bronze.

Sunil Chhetri to Retire from International Football

- ★ Sunil Chhetri, has announced that he will retire from international football after India's match against Kuwait at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on 6 June 2024.
- ★ He wears Jersey No. 9 of the Indian men's football team.
- ★ He made his professional debut with Mohun Bagan club in 2002.
- ★ He also played for the USA's Major League Soccer team, Kansas City Wizards, in 2010 and for the reserve team of Sporting CP in the Portuguese football league in 2012.
- ★ Sunil Chhetri played his first international match for India in 2005 and scored his first goal for the senior India national football team against Pakistan.
- ★ He was made captain of the Blue Tigers in 2012 and will retire as the captain of the Indian team in his final match against Kuwait.
- ★ Sunil Chhetri has been named the All India Football Federation(AIFF) Male Player of the Year seven times.
- ★ He was honoured with India's second-highest sports award, the Arjuna Award, in 2013
- ★ He was honoured with India's highest sports award, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award in 2021.

Manika Batra 1st Indian Woman to Rank in World Top 25 TT Single Player

- ★ Manika Batra has become the first Indian women's table tennis player to be included in the top 25 ranked women singles players in the world.
- ★ In the world ranking released by the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), she achieved her career-best rank of 24 in singles events.
- ★ Her success in the Saudi Smash 2024 Table Tennis tournament helped her improve her world ranking from 39 to 24.
- ★ Manika Batra equalled Sathiyam Gnanasekaran's record for the highest rank achieved by an Indian in the table tennis singles event. In 2019, he achieved his career-best ranking of 24.
- ★ Sathiyam Gnanasekaran is a mixed doubles partner of Manika Batra and both have won many medals for India together.

Puma India signs up as Official Kit Partner for the Athletics Federation of India

- ★ Puma India has signed up as the official kit sponsor of the sports body, Athletics Federation of India (AFI).
- ★ Under this, the sports brand will exclusively supply performance kits, speed suits and travel gear to all athletes under AFI and who represent India in track and field, jumps, throws, cross country running and marathons at both domestic and international tournaments.
- ★ Puma will equip over 400 athletes with products comprising apparel, footwear and accessories, under this agreement.
- ★ However, this kitting partnership does not include Olympics, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.
- ★ Established in 1946, the AFI is the apex body for running and managing athletics in India and is affiliated with the World Athletics, Asian Athletics Association, and Indian Olympic Association.

Elorda Cup

- ★ Two-time world champions Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi won two gold medals for India in the 3rd Elorda Cup 2024.
- ★ The Indian contingent finished the Elorda Cup with 12 medals — 2 gold, 2 silver, and 8 bronze. The 3rd Elorda Cup was held in Kazakhstan's capital city of Astana.
- ★ A 21 member strong boxing contingent was sent by the Boxing Federation of India to participate in the 3rd Elorda Cup.
- ★ India's no.1 female boxer Nikhat Zareen defeated Kazakhstan's Zhazira Urakbayeva 5-0 in the final to win her gold medal at the Elorda Cup. Nizamabad, Telangana born Nikhat Zareen was competing in the 52 kg category.
- ★ In another final, Hisar, Haryana's Minakshi, eliminated Uzbekistan's 20-year-old Saidakhon Rakhmonova 4-1 in the 48 kg category to win the first gold medal in the competition for India.

Thailand Open

- ★ The world no 3 ranked Indian badminton pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the Thailand Open 2024 badminton men's doubles title by defeating the Chinese duo of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi in the final played on 19 May 2024.
- ★ The Indian pair defeated the world's 29th-ranked Chinese pair 21-15, 21-15, in 46 minutes in the final at the Nimibutr Stadium in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ★ The Thailand Open was held in Bangkok from 14 to 19 May 2024.
- ★ The 2024 Thailand Open final was the fifth BWF Super 500 final of the Indian pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and they have won all the finals.
- ★ The Indian pair earned 9200 ranking points after their win in the Thailand Open, and they are expected to become world no.1 doubles players.

Italian Open

- ★ Alexander Zverev won the single title of the Italian Open tennis tournament, while the women's singles title was won by the world no.1 player Iga Swiatek.
- ★ This was the second Italian open title for Alexander Zverev, while it was the third Italian title for Iga Swiatek.
- ★ German Alexander Zverev defeated the first-time Masters finalist Nicolas Jarry of Chile in straight sets 6-4, 7-5 to win the 2024 Italian Open Masters 1000 title. This was also Zverev's second Italian Open title.
- ★ World no.1 Iga Swiatek of Poland defeated Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in straight sets 6-2 6-3 to win her 21st career title.
- ★ The 81st Italian Open was held in Rome, the capital of Italy, from 6 -19 May, 2024. The Italian Open is for both men's and women's tennis players.

Deepthi Jeevanji Sets a World Record in Women's 400 m T20 Event

- ★ Deepthi Jeevanji of Telangana has set a new world record in the 400-meter T20 event at the World Para Athletics Championship 2024. She clocked a world record timing of 55.07 seconds.
- ★ India has won five medals so far in the championships: 2 gold, 3 silver, and 2 bronze.
- ★ Hangzhou Asian Games Paralympics champion Deepthi Jeevanji won the first gold for India at the World Para Athletics Championship.
- ★ With this win, Deepthi Jeevanji also qualified for the 2024 Paris Summer Paralympics.

Brazil Declared Host of 2027 Women's World Cup at FIFA Congress

- ★ Brazil was declared the host of the 2027 Women's World Cup at the FIFA Congress, beating the joint bid of Belgium, Netherlands and Germany to become the first South American country to hold the tournament.
- ★ Brazil won with 119 votes versus 78 for the joint European entry, boosted by a technical evaluation from the world governing body FIFA that gave a high score for its commercial plan and stadiums purpose-built for the 2014 Men's World Cup.
- ★ The 74th FIFA congress, making its debut in Premier League-mad Thailand, made its choice by open vote for the first time as the organisation seeks to move on from the corruption and shady dealing that dogged it in the past.
- ★ This will be the first Women's World Cup to be held in South America.
- ★ The FIFA Women's World Cup has seen five nations crowned champions, with the 2023 title going to Spain.

Martín Wins the 2024 French Grand Prix

- ★ Jorge Martin extended his lead in the championship with a thrilling victory in the French MotoGP at Le Mans.
- ★ The Spaniard, who won sprint, battled the entire race with rival Francesco Bagnaia before Marc Marquez arrived late to steal second place.

- ★ Pramac Ducati rider Martin heads the standings with 129 points, 38 ahead of Bagnaia who moved into second spot.
- ★ Martin, a winner already this season in Portugal, did not make the best of starts from pole position, losing first place to Bagnaia on the opening lap.

Asian Relay Championships

- ★ The Indian athletic contingent finished the first Asian Relay Championships with three medals – one gold and two silver.
- ★ The first Asian Relay Championships was held in Bangkok, Thailand, on 20 and 21 May 2024. It also offered a chance to Asian athletes to qualify for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics starting 26 July 2024.
- ★ 16 Asian countries, including powerhouse China and Japan participated in the Bangkok event.
- ★ The India mixed relay team won the gold medal in the 4x400-meter event. With a new national record of 3 minutes 14.1 seconds, the Indian team of Muhammed Ajmal, Jyothika Sri Dandi, Amoj Jacob and Subha Venkatesan won the gold medal.
- ★ The men's team of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, T Santosh Kumar, Mijo Chacko Kurian, and Arokia Rajiv finished behind the Sri Lankan team to win the silver medal. In heavy rain, the Indian team clocked 3 minutes 05.76 seconds.
- ★ The Indian women's 4x400 meters relay team comprising of Vithya Ramraj, MR Poovamma, Rupal and Prachi Choudhary won the silver medal, finishing behind the Vietnamese team. The Indian team clocked 3 minutes 33.55 seconds.

Men's T20 WC 2024 Brand Ambassador

- ★ The International Cricket Council (ICC), the world cricket governing body, has appointed Pakistan's Shahid Afridi as the brand ambassador of the 9th ICC Men's T20 World Cup.
- ★ The tournament will be co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States of America from 1 to 29 June 2024.
- ★ Shahid Afridi joins Indian Yuvraj Singh, Chris Gayle of West Indies, and Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt as brand ambassadors for the event.
- ★ As brand ambassadors, they will promote the World Cup event, attend T20 World Cup matches, and participate in fan engagement events to promote cricket within the United States.
- ★ Shahid Afridi, nicknamed 'Lala', was an explosive batsman and a skilful leg spinner. His explosive batting was best suited to the limited-overs one-day International (ODI), especially the T-20 format.
- ★ He was the player of the Tournament in the first Men's T-20 World Cup 2007, held in South Africa.

KKR Wins Their Third IPL Title

- ★ The Chandrakant Pandit-coached Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) cricket team won their third Indian Premier League (IPL) title by beating Sunriser Hyderabad (SRH) in the final of the 17th IPL.

- ★ The final was played at the M A Chidambaram stadium in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, on 26 May 2024. They defeated the Sunrisers by eight wickets to lift the trophy for the third time.
- ★ The KKR team was led by Shreyas Iyer and mentored by former Indian cricket player Gautam Gambhir.
- ★ This was KKR's third IPL trophy, having won it in 2012 and 2014.
- ★ Player of the Match was given to Mitchel Starc of KKR.
- ★ Orange Cap (₹ 10 Lakh) – Virat Kohli (RCB) for scoring the most runs in the season; he scored 741 runs in 15 matches.
- ★ Purple Cap (₹ 10 Lakh) – Harshal Patel (PBKS) for taking the most wickets in the season. In the 14 matches, he took 24 wickets.

Asian Championship

- ★ Dipa Karmakar of Tripura became the first ever Indian gymnast to win a gold medal in Asian Championships.
- ★ Dipa won the gold medal in the women's vault individual final at the Asian Women's Artistic Gymnastics Championships 2024 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on 26 May 2024.
- ★ Dipa Karmakar scored an average of 13.566 points to bag the gold medal. Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (North Korea) Kim Son-hyang won the silver medal with 13.466 points, and Jo Kyong-byol, also of North Korea, won the bronze with 12.966 points.

IOC Launches 'Let's Move India' Campaign

- ★ The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has teamed up with the Reliance Foundation and the Abhinav Bindra Foundation to introduce the "Let's Move India" campaign, encouraging everyone to rally behind the Olympians gearing up for the Paris Olympics.
- ★ This initiative aims to inspire the public to show their support for the athletes competing in the upcoming Olympic Games in Paris.
- ★ Through a digital challenge on various social media platforms, the campaign extends an invitation to individuals across the nation to join in the celebration.
- ★ Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medalist and a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission, has joined forces with the IOC for this endeavor.
- ★ As part of the Olympic Values Education Programme, they will collaborate to engage educational institutions nationwide in this movement.

India Bags Seven Medals at The Asian Armwrestling Championship 2024

- ★ India Bags Seven Medals, one gold and six bronze at the Asian Armwrestling Championship 2024
- ★ The Asian Armwrestling Championship was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- ★ Shrimat Jha was the leading performer for India. He won the sole gold medal for India in the left-hand para category. He later added another bronze medal to his tally in the right-hand para category.
- ★ Laxaman Singh Bhandari also won two bronze medals in the Master category.

- ★ Pro-Panja league, Baroda Badshah franchise star player Sachin Goyal won the bronze medal in the right-hand Senior category
- ★ In the women's section, Ibi Lollen from Arunachal Pradesh won two medals. She won the bronze medal in the women's right-hand category and another bronze medal in the left-hand category.
- ★ Preeti Jhangiani, President of the People's Armwrestling Federation India (PAFI), appreciated and expressed her support for the Indian Armwrestlers' success at the Asian Championship 2024.

Women's Tennis Association Agreed Multi-Year Partnership with Saudi Arabia's PIF

- ★ The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has agreed to a multi-year partnership with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF).
- ★ This landmark deal marks PIF as the first-ever naming partner of the WTA rankings.
- ★ The Saudi sovereign wealth fund has committed to collaborating with the WTA to expand existing programs and create new opportunities for young players.
- ★ With this agreement, PIF now becomes the naming partner for both the WTA and ATP rankings, having entered a strategic partnership with the ATP in February.
- ★ The partnership follows the announcement that Saudi Arabia will host the WTA Finals for the next three years.
- ★ This arrangement will also bring record prize money for the season-ending tournament, with US\$15.25 million up for grabs.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

First True Copy of 'Indulekha' Painting Unveiled at Kilimanoor Palace

- ★ On the occasion of the 176th birth anniversary of Ravi Varma, the first true copy of the 'Indulekha' painting was released at the Kilimanoor Palace.
- ★ Ravi Varma was born in 1848 at Kilimanoor Palace, near Trivandrum.
- ★ A copy of Raja Ravi Varma's pioneering artwork Indulekha, based on the novel by O. Chandu Menon has been placed in the art gallery of Kilimanoor Royal Palace.
- ★ This painting came into the public domain in 2022, which evoked a great sense of enthusiasm among the art fraternity.
- ★ It is believed that the famous painting 'Reclining Lady' by Ravi Varma was modelled on Indulekha.
- ★ Apart from this painting, the portrait of Pooyam Thirunal C.R. Kerala Varma and paintings of C. Rajaraja Varma and Mangala Bayi were also released.

IMPORTANT DAYS

International Labour Day

- ★ Every year, 1st May is observed as International Labour Day /Workers Day, or May Day, in many countries of the world, including India.
- ★ The day is observed to mark the contribution of the working people and the labour movement that fought for the rights of the working class.
- ★ The theme of International Labour Day 2024 is to ensure workplace safety and health amidst climate change.
- ★ The Government of India has taken a number of steps for the welfare of the working class in India.
- ★ In order to simplify labour laws, the Government has merged 29 separate labour-related regulations into four Codes: the Wage Code, the Social Security Code, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, and the Industrial Relations Code.

World Tuna Day

- ★ World Tuna Day, observed annually on May 2 is dedicated to raising awareness about the critical importance of tuna conservation.
- ★ Tuna is popular for its numerous health benefits, as it provides Omega-3 fatty acids, protein and vital vitamins.
- ★ But, tuna populations face significant threats due to overfishing and unsustainable fishing practices.
- ★ Recognising the urgent need for conservation efforts, the United Nations established World Tuna Day to promote sustainable fishing practices and safeguard tuna populations for future generations.
- ★ World Tuna Day was initially proposed by the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) during a meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in 2011.

World Press Freedom Day

- ★ World Press Freedom Day is observed on 3 May every year.
- ★ This day is dedicated to the fundamental principles of press freedom and to defend the media from attacks on their independence.
- ★ The Theme of World Press Freedom Day 2024 is “A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the Face of the environmental crisis”.
- ★ World Press Freedom Day was established in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly following the recommendation of UNESCO’s General Conference in 1991.
- ★ The day is intended to raise awareness of the importance of freedom of the press and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Coal Miners Day

- ★ Every year, Coal Miners Day is celebrated on May 4.
- ★ This day is celebrated for the miners who are working in the field.
- ★ The history of Coal Miner's Day dates back to 1952, when the Mines Act, was passed. This legislation provided for the provision of medical facilities, safety and health measures, and rescue stations for coal miners.
- ★ The first coal mine in India was opened in 1774 by John Summer and Suetonius Grant Heatly of the East India Company.
- ★ The Coal Mines (Conservation and Development) Act, 1974, was enacted with the goal of conserving coal resources while also ensuring the safety and health of workers.

World Laughter Day

- ★ Every year World Laughter Day is celebrated on the first Sunday of May and this year World Laughter Day falls on the 5th of May.
- ★ Every year on the first Sunday of May, World Laughter Day was observed to promote awareness about laughter and its health benefits.
- ★ World Laughter Day was celebrated in 1998 when Dr. Madan Kataria announced the first celebration of this day on May 10.
- ★ Dr Madan Kataria established World Laughter Day in 1998.
- ★ He is the founder of the Laughter Yoga Movement.
- ★ The main aim of this World Laughter Day is to make us aware of the countless benefits of laughter in leading a healthy and fulfilling life.
- ★ Initially, Laughter Day was celebrated only in India, but because of the unique and meaningful concept, World Laughter Day has spread to different countries.

World Asthma Day

- ★ Every year World Asthma Day is celebrated on the First Tuesday of May.
- ★ This year, World Asthma Day was celebrated on May 7.
- ★ In celebration of World Asthma Day 2024, the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) has selected the theme of "Asthma Education Empowers".
- ★ This day is celebrated to raise awareness among people about Asthma.
- ★ The Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) was established in 1993.
- ★ The first World Asthma Day was observed in the year 1998.
- ★ Organised by GINA, World Asthma Day is observed to spread awareness about the challenges faced by people suffering from Asthma.
- ★ The day aims to bring together doctors, patients and organisations to work together in empowering people with Asthma and providing them with a better life.

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day

- ★ Every year, 8 May is observed as World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.
- ★ This day acknowledges and appreciates the work done by the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).
- ★ IFRC has the distinction of being world's largest humanitarian organisation.
- ★ The first International Red Cross Day was observed on 8 May 1948. In 1984, the name was changed to 'World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day'.
- ★ The theme of the 2024 World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is Everything we do comes # from the heart.

World Thalassaemia Day

- ★ World Thalassaemia Day is celebrated every year on May 8.
- ★ This day is celebrated to raise awareness about the struggles of patients suffering from genetic disorders and raise awareness about Thalassaemia.
- ★ The Theme of World Thalassaemia Day 2024 is "Empowering Lives, Embracing Progress: Equitable and Accessible Thalassaemia Treatment for All".
- ★ The history of World Thalassaemia Day dates back to 1994 when the Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF) first established the day.
- ★ The day was first observed as a way to remember the son of Panos Englezos, a Thalassaemia patient who died from the disease.
- ★ The day of remembrance is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges faced by people living with thalassaemia and to highlight the progress made in treatment and care.

National Technological Day

- ★ National Technology Day is celebrated every year on May 11.
- ★ This day is observed to commemorate the importance of Scientists, Research, etc.
- ★ This day is celebrated to raise awareness about the Technology that is developed day by day.
- ★ The history of National Technology Day in India dates back to 1998, when the Indian Army conducted five nuclear bomb tests (Pokhran- II) in Rajasthan under the surveillance of the then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- ★ The Pokhran-II was lead by the Missile Man of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. India was entitled as the sixth nuclear country after the huge success of Pokhran Test.
- ★ To celebrate the accomplishment of India in the field of nuclear science, Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared 11 May as National Technology Day.
- ★ The first National Technology Day was observed on 11 May 1999.
- ★ Pokhran nuclear tests were a significant milestone in India's efforts to achieve technological advancement and pave the way for future developments in the field.

International Nurses Day

- ★ Every year, 12 May is observed as International Nurses Day as a tribute to Florence Nightingale.
- ★ In certain countries of the world like Australia, Canada, and the United States, International Nurses Day is part of a weeklong celebration which ends on 12 May. This celebration is often known as National Nurses Week.
- ★ The day is observed to highlight the importance of nurses and the vital role they play in the healthcare sector.
- ★ The International Council of Nurses celebrated the first International Nurses Day on 12 May 1974 to bring the attention of policymakers and the public to the important role nurses play in modern health care.
- ★ The theme for the 2024 International Nurses Day is: 'Our Nurses Our Future, The Economic Power of Care'.

25th May declared as World Football Day by the UN

- ★ The 193 member United Nations General Assembly has passed a resolution on 7 May 2024 to observe 25 May, every year as World Football Day.
- ★ The resolution was adopted by consensus by the members of the United Nations General Assembly.
- ★ The resolution to mark 25th May of every year as World Football Day was introduced by Libya's ambassador to the United Nations Taher El-Sonni. It was co-sponsored by more than 160 members of the United Nations.
- ★ In 2024, the Summer Olympics is being held in Paris and 25 May 2024 will mark the 100th anniversary of the 1924 football event.
- ★ To celebrate the momentous event, the United Nations unanimously accepted to celebrate 25 May as the World Football Day.

International Day of Family

- ★ 15 May is observed as the International Day of Family.
- ★ The day emphasises and underlines the importance of family, which is the basic unit of society.
- ★ The 2024 International Year of Family is the 30th edition of the International Day of Family.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 1993 on the recommendation of the United Nations Commission for Social Development to observe 15 May as the International Day of Family.
- ★ The first International Day of Family was observed on 15 May 1994.
- ★ The day is marked around the world to raise awareness about the issues relating to families and to increase knowledge of the economic, demographic and social processes affecting families.
- ★ The theme for the 2024 International Day of Family chosen by the United Nations is Families and Climate Change.

International Day of Living Together in Peace

- ★ 16 May is observed as the International Day of Living Together in Peace.
- ★ The Day is observed to highlight the importance of peace and living together in peace by the people of the world.
- ★ The Day aims to promote the desire to live and act together despite differences and diversity to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony.
- ★ In 2017, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring 16 May the International Day of Living Together in Peace.
- ★ The first International Day of Living Together in Peace was observed on 16 May 2018.

International Day of Light

- ★ 16 May is observed as the International Day of Light.
- ★ The day recognises the importance of light in the life of an ordinary human being and the role it plays in shaping innovation, creativity, and technology.
- ★ Light plays a crucial role in the understanding of science and the development of technology.
- ★ On 16 May 1960, Physicist and Engineer Theodore Maiman of the United States of America created the first working Laser at the Hughes Research Laboratories in California, the United States of America.
- ★ To mark the momentous discovery, the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) passed a resolution in 2017 to observe 16 May as the International Day of Light.
- ★ The first International Day of Light was observed worldwide on 16 May 2018.

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

- ★ Every year, the world observes May 17 as World Telecommunication and Information Society Day.
- ★ The day is observed to explore the possibilities of using information and communication technologies and the Internet in economies and societies. Another motive is to explore ways to reduce the digital divide in society.
- ★ International Telecommunication Union (ITU), first celebrated World Telecommunications Day on 17 May 1969.
- ★ In 2005, the World Summit on Information Society recommended that the United Nations declare 17 May as World Information Society Day.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in 2006 declaring 17 May as World Information Society Day.
- ★ The theme of the 2024 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day is Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development.

World Hypertension Day

- ★ The world observes 17 May as World Hypertension Day.

- ★ The day is observed to raise public awareness about hypertension as a silent but deadly public health issue.
- ★ Hypertension rarely causes any symptoms but can cause a high death rate as it increases the risk of heart attacks, stroke, renal failure, and other end-organ damage.
- ★ The World Hypertension League observed the first World Hypertension Day on 14 May 2005. From 2006, World Hypertension Day is observed on 17 May every year.
- ★ The theme for 2024 World Hypertension Day is “Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer!”

International Museum Day

- ★ International Museum Day is celebrated every year on May 18 to raise awareness about the museums in society.
- ★ The theme for International Museum Day 2024 is “Museums for Education and Research”.
- ★ The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has been prompted this day every year since
- ★ International Council of Museums (ICOM) conducted a general meeting in Moscow, Russia to adopt the day for museums.
- ★ After that, the first International Day of Museums was first established in 1977.
- ★ The theme for International Museum Day was first established in 1992.

World Refugee Day

- ★ 20 May is observed as World Refugee Day.
- ★ This day is observed to raise the world’s consciousness about the plight of the refugees who have left their homes due to war, persecution, violence or due economic factors, etc.
- ★ In 1975, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) passed a resolution to observe 20 May as African Refugee Day to pay tribute to the resilience of those who had been forcibly displaced in Africa due to conflict.
- ★ The first World Refugee Day was observed on 20 May 2001.
- ★ The theme for the 2024 World Refugee Day is Hope Away from Home.
- ★ The 1951 Refugee Convention contains a number of rights and also highlights the obligations of refugees towards their host country.

Anti-Terrorism Day

- ★ Anti-Terrorism Day is celebrated every year on May 21.
- ★ This day is to commemorate the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- ★ This day is observed on the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.
- ★ He was the sixth Prime Minister of India in 1984.
- ★ Later, he was killed by terrorists in a Campaign.

- ★ After the death of Rajiv Gandhi, the Government of V.P Singh has decided on May 21 as Anti-Terrorism Day is the 31st death anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
- ★ On this day, the Anti Terrorism Pledge is taken in all public places, Government Offices, Government institutions, etc.

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

- ★ World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was observed on May 21.
- ★ UNESCO has adopted this day since 2001.
- ★ UNESCO adopted the World Day for Cultural Diversity in 2001.
- ★ In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly declared May 21 as World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development.
- ★ In 2015, the second committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution on Cultural Diversity.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly has sanctioned holidays for diversity issues.
- ★ The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) have been achieved by creating the function of cultures.

International Day for Biological Diversity

- ★ 22 May is observed as the International Day for Biodiversity.
- ★ The day seeks to raise awareness about the natural world's importance as a major source of water, food, medicines, clothes, fuel, shelter, and energy for human beings.
- ★ It also seeks to raise awareness amongst people and policymakers to protect, respect, and repair our biological wealth.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in December 2000 to observe 22 May as International Day for Biodiversity.
- ★ The first International Day for Biodiversity was observed on 22 May 2001.
- ★ To protect the ecosystem and conserve the species of the world, a text of the Convention on Biological Diversity was adopted on the eve of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development or the Earth Summit held in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro in 1992 on 22 May 1992.

International Day of Action for Women's Health

- ★ Every year, International Day of Action for Women's Health is observed on May 28.
- ★ This year, International Day of Action for Women's Health falls on Tuesday.
- ★ In 1987, South Africa was first recognized this day as the International Day of Action for Women's Health.
- ★ This day creates an opportunity to get awareness about the sexual and reproductive health of women to illiterate people
- ★ Every year this day is celebrated by women and health groups.

- ★ It is a platform for the recognition of sexual rights, sexuality, reproductive rights, health, etc.
- ★ In 1984, the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) was created to organize the International Day of Action for Women's Health.

International Day of the UN Peacekeepers

- ★ 29 May is observed as the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers.
- ★ This day is observed to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of over 4000 peacekeepers who have lost their lives while trying to bring peace in strife-torn areas of the world.
- ★ The day also urges the global community to join and strengthen the global movement for peace.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution in December 2002 to observe 29 May as the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers.
- ★ The first International Day of the UN Peacekeepers was observed on 29 May 2003.
- ★ This year, the theme of the International Day of the UN Peacekeeping is "Fit for the future, building better together".
- ★ The main objective of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security in the world.

International Everest Day

- ★ International Everest Day 2024 is observed on May 29.
- ★ This day is in the memory of two persons who climbed Mt. Everest in 1953.
- ★ The first attempt to climb mountains was by the British people in the 1920s.
- ★ 68 years ago, Nepalese Tenzing Norgay and New Zealand's Edmund Hillary climbed mountains and that day history was created.
- ★ Since 1953, several people have climbed the mountain and more and more visitors have increased each year.
- ★ Everest is the highest mountain when measured at sea level.
- ★ Several International climbers and families actively participated in the events that were celebrated on International Everest Day.
- ★ International Mount Everest Day was celebrated in 2008, and it was the day Edmund Hillary passed away Nepal decided on May 29 as International Everest Day.

OBITUARY NEWS

Former Union Minister Sreenivasa Prasad

- ★ Srinivas Prasad, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member of Parliament (MP) and former Union Minister, passed away at the age of 76 in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- ★ He first contested Assembly elections as an independent in 1974.

- ★ He joined the Janata Party in 1976, then switched to the Congress in 1979.
- ★ He served as the Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government from 1999 to 2004.
- ★ He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Chamarajanagar six times in 1980, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1999, and 2019.
- ★ On March 18, 2024, Prasad announced his retirement from electoral politics, marking 50 years in public life.

Renowned U.S. Author of 'The New York Trilogy', Paul Auster

- ★ Paul Auster, the prolific American novelist behind the acclaimed "New York Trilogy", has passed away at the age of 77.
- ★ Paul Auster was born in Newark, New Jersey.
- ★ Auster wrote more than 30 books and was shortlisted for the Booker Prize and voted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- ★ He published his final novel "Baumgartner", in 2023.

'Titanic' and 'Lord of the Rings' Actor Bernard Hill

- ★ Bernard Hill, actor known for his roles in "The Lord of the Rings" and "Titanic", passed away at the age of 79.
- ★ Hill portrayed Théoden, King of Rohan, in "The Lord of the Rings" film trilogy.
- ★ He played Captain Edward Smith, the captain of the Titanic, in the 1997 film "Titanic".
- ★ He also played Luther Plunkitt, Warden of San Quentin Prison, in Clint Eastwood's film "True Crime".
- ★ Hill's performance as Yosser Hughes in "Boys from the Blackstuff" earned him a nomination for a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award in 1983.
- ★ The series won the BAFTA for Best Drama Series.
- ★ The film "Titanic", in which he played Captain Edward Smith, won 11 Academy Awards.

Padma Shri Awardee Writer Malti Joshi

- ★ Noted storyteller and Padma Shri awardee Malti Joshi passed away at the age of 90 years.
- ★ Malti Joshi was known for her work in Hindi and Marathi language. She was awarded Padma Shri in 2018.
- ★ She completed her graduation from the Holkar College of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Indore. He also did her Master's from the same university in Hindi literature in 1956.
- ★ She was a prolific writer who wrote in Hindi and Marathi. However, she is best known for her Hindi literature works.
- ★ In the early stages of her writing, Malti Joshi wrote poems, and in college she was famous as Meera of Malwa.

- ★ Malti Joshi's work has been translated into other Indian languages like Marathi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Malayalam, and Kannada. Her work has also been translated into foreign languages like Russian, Japanese and English.

Nobel Prize-Winning Author Alice Munro

- ★ Alice Munro, first Canadian author to win the Nobel Prize in literature, has passed away at the age of 92 in Ontario.
- ★ She devoted herself to writing by the end of the 1960s.
- ★ The Nobel committee called Munro a "master of contemporary short stories".
- ★ Throughout her career, Munro published thirteen collections of stories, one novel titled "Lives of Girls and Women", and two volumes of Selected Stories.
- ★ Her last collection of stories, "Dear Life", was published in 2012 and included partly-autobiographical stories.
- ★ She was one of Canada's most renowned writers and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013.
- ★ In 2009, Munro won the Man Booker Prize International Prize for lifetime achievement.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi

- ★ Iran's 8th President Ebrahim Raisi tragically died in a helicopter crash in the mountainous northwestern region of Iran.
- ★ Along with Raisi, his Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian was also killed.
- ★ In the aftermath of his death, Mohammad Mokhber, 68, was appointed as the Interim President of Iran for a period of 50 days
- ★ Raisi, who was seen as a prominent figure in Iran's political arena, was often considered a potential successor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
- ★ Ebrahim Raisi was born on 14 December 1960 in the Noghan district of Mashhad.
- ★ He was appointed Deputy prosecutor of Tehran in 1985 and moved to the capital.
- ★ He held various prominent positions, including Deputy Chief Justice (2004-2014), Attorney General (2014-2016), and Chief Justice (2019-2021).
- ★ He was Custodian and Chairman of Astan Quds Razavi, a bonyad, from 2016 until 2019.

Vicco Chairman Yashwant Pendharkar

- ★ Yashwant Pendharkar, Chairman of ayurvedic cosmetics giant Vicco Laboratories, passed away at the age of 85 in Nagpur.
- ★ He became the Chairman of the Vico Company in 2016.
- ★ Under his leadership, the company has changed with time and reached new stages of progress.
- ★ During his tenure, the company received many export-related awards including the prestigious 'Brand of the Year 2023' award.

- ★ Vicco Laboratories, initially known as Vishnu Industrial Chemical Company, is renowned for manufacturing Indian Ayurvedic herbal hygiene, healthcare, and other products such as herbal toothpaste and herbal tooth powder.

Two-Time PGA Tour Champion Grayson Murray

- ★ Two-time PGA Tour winner Grayson Murray passed away at the age of 30.
- ★ He had withdrawn from the Charles Schwab Challenge the day before, citing an illness.
- ★ Grayson Colby Murray was an American professional golfer from Raleigh, North Carolina.
- ★ Murray was regarded as one of the world's best junior players, winning three IMG Junior World titles in 2006, 2007, and 2008.
- ★ According to the PGA Tour, at age 16, he became the second youngest to make the cut on the Korn Ferry Tour, and at age 19, he played in the 2013 U.S. Open.
- ★ He won two PGA Tour events: the 2017 Barbasol Championship and the 2024 Sony Open in Hawaii.

MISCELLANEOUS

Legendary Nepal Mountaineer Climbs Mount Everest For Record 29th Time

- ★ Nepal's Kami Rita Sherpa also known as 'Everest Man' broke his record by climbing the world's highest peak, Mount Everest for the 29th time.
- ★ The 54-year-old Sherpa climber and guide in the last spring season had climbed the 8848.86 meters tall highest peak two times within a week setting a record for the 28th summit.
- ★ Before the summit, Mr Kami Rita had stated that he "has no plan of climbing Sagarmatha (Nepalese name for Mount Everest) for any specified number of times".
- ★ Legendary Nepal Mountaineer Climbs Mount Everest for Record 29th Time, the record-setting climber reached the summit of Everest at 7 : 25 AM (NST).

Oldest Person to Reach Space

- ★ Ed Dwight, a 90-year-old artist and former Air Force test pilot who was denied a chance to become the first African American astronaut six decades ago, finally rocketed into space, fulfilling a cherished dream in a brief up-and-down flight out of the lower atmosphere.
- ★ President John F. Kennedy initially chose Ed Dwight, an Air Force pilot, to be the candidate for NASA's inaugural Astronaut Corps.
- ★ However, he was not selected for the final flight in 1963.
- ★ NASA did not select black astronauts until 1978, when Guion Bluford became the first African American in space.
- ★ The Soviets launched the first black astronaut, Arnaldo Tamayo Mendez, a Cuban citizen of African descent, 3 years before NASA selected its first black astronaut.

- ★ Prior to Ed Dwight, “Star Trek” actor William Shatner held the record as the oldest person to go into space in 2021.
- ★ Ed Dwight became the new record holder for the oldest person in space after his quick trip from West Texas.

