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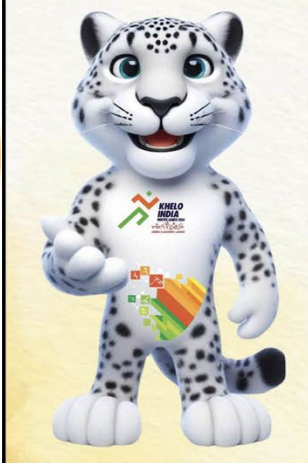
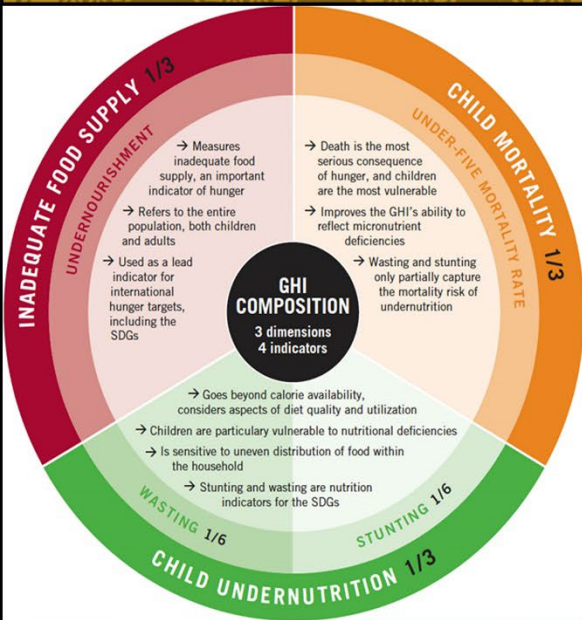
Odisha Government's Historic Decision To Uplift Tribals

In a big stride towards inclusive development, the Naveen Patnaik Government Cabinet has etched history with a groundbreaking decision, focusing on the prosperity and empowerment of about 1 crore tribals in Odisha.

What is LABHA Yojana?

- LABHA (Laghu Bana Jatya Drabya Kraya) is a 100% state-funded Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme for Minor Forest Produce (MFP), determined annually by the government.
- Under this scheme, tribal primary collectors can sell minor forest produce at the Minimum Support Price in procurement centres managed by TDCCOL.

ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department.



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FEBRUARY – 2024

NATIONAL NEWS

Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia Inaugurated the UDAN Flight Service

- ★ Union Minister of Civil Aviation and Steel, Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia virtually inaugurated a UDAN flight connecting Dehradun and Pithoragarh from New Delhi. Chief Minister of Uttarakhand Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami also joined the event from Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.
- ★ The flight connecting the two cities is to be operated by 'Fly Big' under the RCS UDAN Scheme.
- ★ Pithoragarh Airport has been developed under the UDAN-RCS scheme, with a cost of ₹6.68 Crore into a 2B VFR Airport.
- ★ The RCS flight between Dehradun and Pithoragarh was awarded under UDAN 4.2.
- ★ Fly Big will be operating a 19-seater Twin otter DHC6-400 aircraft for ferrying the passengers.

BHU is Creating North India's First Human DNA Bank

- ★ North India's first human DNA bank is being set up at Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
- ★ The Automated DNA Extractor Machine has been installed in the Gnyaneshwar Lab of the Zoology Department of BHU on January 30 2024.
- ★ These machines are completely indigenous to Make in India. It has been made in such a way that the minimum plastic is used in it, so that there is no harm to the environment.
- ★ With this machine, DNA can be extracted from any biological material, like blood, saliva, hair or tissue.
- ★ With its help, DNA can be separated from about 32 samples at one time in 30 minutes.
- ★ A three-day conference on Personalised Medicine was organised by the Department of Zoology of BHU and Adnet Society, Hyderabad, in March 2023.

Shri Nitin Gadkari has Inaugurated Nine Highways in Madhya Pradesh

- ★ Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 9 National Highway projects costing ₹2,367 crore and total length of 225 km in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ Among the projects inaugurated, a 1.5 km long bridge has been constructed on Jamni river on Tikamgarh-Jhansi road at a cost of ₹43 crore.
- ★ This will make it easier to reach Orchha, the tourist destination of Rajaram's temple.
- ★ Construction of a road with 2-lane paved shoulder from Chandia Ghat to Katni Bypass will bring a qualitative change in connectivity to the coal mines of Katni.
- ★ This will benefit the coal mining industry.

- ★ Widening of Bamitha-Khajuraho road will strengthen tourism in Khajuraho. Besides, the social and economic condition of this area will also improve.

Odisha Cabinet Approves New Scheme LABHA for Tribals

- ★ Odisha Cabinet approved a new scheme for the development of the tribals of Odisha-LABHA (Laghu Bana Jatya Drabya Kraya).
- ★ LABHA Yojana is a 100% state-funded MSP for MFP scheme (minimum support price for minor forest produce).
- ★ The minimum support price will be determined every year by the state government.
- ★ Under the scheme, a primary collector (tribal) will be able to sell the minor forest produce at Minimum Support Price collected at the procurement centres by TDCCOL.
- ★ Since 99% of primary collectors are tribals and majority of them are women, LABHA Yojana will integrate the efforts with the Mission Shakti's Women SHGs.
- ★ These procurement centres will be managed by SHGs/any other notified agencies.
- ★ Upon collection, the amount will be transferred as DBT to the beneficiary account and the SHG/any other agency will receive Commission (2%) as well.
- ★ The procurement automation system will capture the total collection of MFP and the details of the primary collector and the procurement point.
- ★ For further sale, TDCCOL will do e-tendering and explore value addition and processing units.

Punjab Government Launches 'Sadak Surakhya Force' (SSF)

- ★ Punjab government launches the 'Sadak Surakhya Force' (SSF) to reduce road fatalities.
- ★ Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann flags off 144 hi-tech vehicles from Jalandhar.
- ★ Citizens can seek help by dialing 112, with vehicles arriving within ten minutes of the call.
- ★ Former Indian Hockey team captain and AIG traffic Gaganjit Singh to lead the SSF.
- ★ The force comprises over 1,200 police jawans and 90 female drivers.
- ★ The vehicles will patrol 5,500 km of State and national highways.
- ★ Each vehicle will cover approximately 30 kilometers.
- ★ Specialized equipment installed to detect drunken driving and overspeeding.

Cabinet approves extension of Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund

- ★ The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the continuation of the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) to be implemented under the Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) with an outlay of ₹29,610.25 crore for another three years up to 2025-26.
- ★ The scheme will incentivize investments in Dairy processing and product diversification, Meat processing and product diversification, Animal Feed Plant, Breed multiplication farm, Animal Waste to Wealth Management (Agri-Waste Management) and Veterinary vaccine and drug production facilities.

- ★ The Government of India will provide 3% interest subvention for 8 years including two years of the moratorium for loans up to 90% from the scheduled bank and National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC), NABARD and NDDB.
- ★ The eligible entities are individuals, Private Companies, FPO, MSME, Section 8 companies. Now the Dairy Co-operatives will also avail benefits for modernization, strengthening of the dairy plants.
- ★ Government of India will also provide credit guarantee to the MSME and Dairy Co-operatives up to the 25% of the credit borrowed from the Credit Guarantee Fund of ₹750 crore.

Indian Navy Announces the Year 2024 as 'Year of Naval Civilians'

- ★ The Indian Navy has declared the year 2024 as the 'Year of Naval Civilians' in order to address all aspects of Civilian Human Resource Management.
- ★ This has been done by the Indian Navy with a view to improve the administration, efficiency and welfare of the Navy's civilian personnel in Civilian Human Resource Management.
- ★ The Indian Navy has identified these key focus areas in terms of maximizing certain specific activities for implementation in 2024.
- ★ Several initiatives have been envisioned and implemented in the past to enhance organizational efficiency and satisfaction levels among civilian personnel.
- ★ It is necessary that the civilian personnel of the Navy be promoted in their administration, training, welfare etc.

Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024

- ★ India's largest and first-of-its kind mobility exhibition, Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024, started at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ★ Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024 is hosted by industry associations and supported by the Government of India.
- ★ Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024 will represent India's capabilities across the entire mobility and automotive value chains.
- ★ Almost 800 exhibitors from 50+ countries will witness the Expo and also highlight cutting-edge technologies, sustainable solutions and breakthroughs in mobility.
- ★ The Expo will have participation from more than 28 vehicle manufacturers, in addition to over 600 auto component manufacturers.
- ★ More than 1000 brands from 13 global markets will showcase their complete range of products, technologies and services at the event.
- ★ Apart from the exhibition and conferences, the event will also feature state sessions where states can showcase their regional contributions and initiatives.
- ★ This will enable collaboration at both national and regional levels, promoting a holistic approach to mobility solutions.

Centre of Excellence will be Built in Roorkee and Pantnagar

- ★ Union Heavy Industries Minister Dr.Mahendra Nath Pandey on 02 February 2024 gave in-principle consent for the construction of Centre of Excellence in Roorkee and Pantnagar, Uttarakhand.
- ★ Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had met Union Heavy Industries Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey in New Delhi.
- ★ A Centre of Excellence is a body that provides leadership, best practices, research, support, training of trainers and skills training for a specific area. Centre of Excellence literally means – ‘a place where the highest standards are maintained’.
- ★ A centre of excellence is a group, a shared facility or a unit that provides leadership, best practices, research, support or training for a certain area.
- ★ Due to its broad usage and vague legal precedent, a “centre of excellence” may, in one context, have completely different characteristics than in another.
- ★ Its focus area can be a technology, a business concept, a skill, or a broader area of study.
- ★ A centre of excellence can also be created to revive stalled initiatives.
- ★ It can also refer to a network of institutions collaborating with each other to achieve excellence in a particular field.

Karnataka Launched Digital Detox

- ★ The Government of Karnataka launched a ‘Digital Detox’ initiative in partnership with All India Game Developers Forum (AIGDF) at Bengaluru GAFX with special focus on gaming and social media.
- ★ It aims to spread awareness about the side effects of spending too much time in the digital world and create an environment of responsible gaming instead.
- ★ The Digital Detox initiative is another step towards fulfilling the government’s commitment of building a digitally empowered Karnataka through responsible use of technology.
- ★ Digital detox centres will be set up across the state of Karnataka both online and offline.
- ★ Centres will provide personalized guidance, where trained professionals can turn to individuals wishing to further their relationship with technology.
- ★ They will provide consultation and assistance.
- ★ Bengaluru GAFX supported by the Government of Karnataka.
- ★ GAFX serves as a premier platform for India’s VFX and gaming communities, animation, drawing professionals, artists and students.

Country’s First Copper–Clad Bapu Tower

- ★ The country’s first largest Bapu Tower, dedicated to the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, has been completed in Patna, Bihar.
- ★ For this, the building construction department and construction agency are finalizing the preparations.

- ★ Bapu Tower is located in Gardanibagh, Patna.
- ★ The height of this tower is 120 feet. This is a 6 storey tower.
- ★ This is considered to be the dream project of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.
- ★ In Bapu Tower, tourists will get a parking facility for 50 four-wheelers and 150 two-wheelers inside the complex.
- ★ Where Bapu's biography will be shown to the tourists through a turntable theatre show on the ground floor.
- ★ After this, tourists will be able to see the history of Bapu while roaming in the circular and rectangular buildings.
- ★ An exhibition related to the history of Gandhiji and Bihar is being organized in this tower at a cost of about ₹45 crore.

Uttarakhand Police Introduce Self-Balancing E-Scooters

- ★ Abhinav Kumar, Director General of Police, Uttarakhand, launched four cutting-edge self-balancing electric scooters for patrol in Haridwar.
- ★ The initiative aims to enhance the safety of tourists and local citizens in Haridwar, with police utilizing self-balancing scooters for patrols.
- ★ The eco-friendly electric scooters were donated by Utkarsh Small Finance Bank for efficient and sustainable policing.
- ★ The scooters are equipped to navigate through narrow streets, enabling police personnel to monitor walking paths, Ganga ghats, and crowded areas effectively.
- ★ The self-balancing scooters are expected to aid in crowd management, particularly in areas with limited space.
- ★ Highlighting the eco-friendly aspect, the electric scooters contribute to environmental conservation.

Shri Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates Flyover Built for ₹300 Crore at Uttar Pradesh

- ★ Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the flyover built for 300 crore rupees in Lakhimpur Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh through video conferencing.
- ★ The construction of ROB and flyover will bring more ease in traffic between Lakhimpur and Sitapur districts.
- ★ These projects will prove to be a milestone in the industrial development of Lakhimpur district and the produce of local traders and farmers will be easily accessible to the markets.

Indian Institute of Mass Communication Designated as Deemed University

- ★ Ministry of Education, on the recommendation of the University Grants Commission (UGC), has declared the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), a leading institution for Journalism and Mass Communication, as a deemed university under a distinct category.

- ★ The declaration extends to IIMC New Delhi and its five regional campuses located in Jammu (Jammu & Kashmir), Amaravati (Maharashtra), Aizawl (Mizoram), Kottayam (Kerala), and Dhenkanal (Odisha).
- ★ With this new status, IIMC is now authorized to offer degrees, including doctoral degrees, enhancing its academic offerings.
- ★ IIMC is one of the leading institutions in the country for journalism and mass communication training.
- ★ IIMC is renowned for providing quality training in journalism and conducting significant research in media and mass communication fields.
- ★ IIMC serves as the training academy for Indian Information Service (IIS) Officers, further highlighting its importance in the domain of media and communication education.

Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme

- ★ Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan launched the EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme (VSP).
- ★ It aims to revolutionize opportunities for quality education and access to higher education institutions.
- ★ Under this initiative, there is a system to provide uninterrupted education facilities to meritorious students lacking resources from secondary till higher education.
- ★ This program guarantees access to high quality learning systems.
- ★ The event will strengthen the efforts of the government in promoting educational inclusivity and socio-economic upliftment in the country.
- ★ The program provides opportunities to connect communities and organizations and volunteers with schools located in urban and rural geographies.

PM to Inaugurate ONGC Institute's Integrated Sea Survival Training Centre

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the ONGC Institute of Integrated Maritime Survival Training Centre, Goa.
- ★ During this, Prime Minister Modi also observed the demonstration centre of a briefing and training centre on the practice of underwater rescue.
- ★ The event was organized during the inauguration of India Energy Week 2024 in Goa.
- ★ This state-of-the-art centre is a significant milestone for India towards a maritime survival training ecosystem.
- ★ Because before this, Indians had to depend on other countries to get training in this field. With this, India will now be able to train its personnel.
- ★ At present, India works day and night in the deep sea to meet its various energy needs in the maritime areas of other countries. In such a situation, it is necessary to protect the lives of our personnel, where such institutions will play an important role.
- ★ This will ensure the survival of many people in the sea in time.

- ★ This artificial and controlled exercise conducted in harsh weather conditions enhances the marine survival skills of the trainees.

India's First Digital National Museum of Epigraphy in Hyderabad

- ★ Union Culture Minister, G Kishan Reddy laid the foundation stone for the country's first digital National Museum of Epigraphy at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad.
- ★ The Archaeological Survey of India is establishing the museum and about one lakh ancient inscriptions of various languages and periods of time will be placed in it.
- ★ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman announced that the establishment of the Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions (Bharat SHRI) with the digitisation of one lakh ancient inscriptions.
- ★ Mr Reddy termed it a pivotal step in the Modi government's emphasis on "Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi" and commitment to leverage technology to make art and heritage accessible to everyone.
- ★ This will be a groundbreaking digital museum, opening a treasure of knowledge to scholars and researchers.

World Sustainable Development Summit 2024

- ★ The 23rd edition of the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), known as the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS), is scheduled to take place from 7th to 9th February 2024 in New Delhi.
- ★ The theme of the Summit is "Leadership for Sustainable Development and Climate Justice".
- ★ The Summit was based on the topics such as sustainable development, nature-based solutions, adaptation, resilience, sustainable consumption, lifestyles, energy trilemma, and climate action.
- ★ The main objective of the Summit is to strengthen commitment at all levels and enhance ambition and action.
- ★ The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the annual flagship multi-stakeholder event which is organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).
- ★ It was started in 2001, has a legacy of over two decades for making 'sustainable development' a globally shared goal.
- ★ With passing years the Summit platform has brought together leaders, heads of state and government, scholars, corporates, youth groups, and civil society representatives from across the world.
- ★ The Summit series is a responsible and effective platform for opinion makers to give proper action to deal with sustainable development and climate change.

Union Minister of Science and Technology Released the Theme

- ★ Union Minister of Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh today released the theme for the "National Science Day 2024", titled "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat" in New Delhi.

- ★ The theme reflects a strategic focus on promoting public appreciation for Science, Technology and Innovation and accomplishments of Indian scientists to address challenges through home-grown technologies for over-all well-beings.
- ★ The National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28 February to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect'.
- ★ The Government designated 28th February as National Science Day in 1986.
- ★ On this day, Sir C.V. Raman announced the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930.
- ★ On this occasion, theme-based science communication activities are carried out all over the country.
- ★ The theme launch will trigger celebrations of National Science Day specially in schools and colleges throughout the country.

Green Hydrogen Pilot Projects in Steel Sector

- ★ The government has allocated ₹455 crore of Central Financial Assistance till financial year 2029-30 (FY30) for the usage of green hydrogen in the steel industry sector.
- ★ The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy released scheme guidelines for implementations of pilot projects for use of green hydrogen in the sector under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- ★ The scheme aims to facilitate the use of 100 per cent hydrogen in Direct Reduced Ironmaking process, use of hydrogen in Blast Furnace, Substitution of fossil fuels with green hydrogen in a gradual manner in DRI process, and any other pilots facilitating decarbonisation in iron and steel production.
- ★ The expenditure on this scheme will be met from the budget provisions made under the National Green Hydrogen Mission Head.
- ★ The implementing agency will be nominated by the Steel Ministry.
- ★ The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched with an outlay of ₹19,744 crores up to FY 2029-30.
- ★ It will contribute to India's goal to become Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) through clean energy and serve as an inspiration for the global Clean Energy Transition.

Chhattisgarh BJP Government to Introduce Mahtari Vandan Yojana

- ★ The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Chhattisgarh will roll out the Mahtari Vandan Yojana – a monthly cash assistance scheme for married women – from March 1.
- ★ It is to eliminate discrimination against women and improve their health and nutrition levels, while also promoting women empowerment and economic self-reliance.
- ★ Eligible beneficiaries will receive ₹12,000 per year, transferred to their bank accounts in monthly instalments of ₹1,000 under the scheme.
- ★ Any female resident of Chhattisgarh who is married and above 21 years of age as of January 1, 2024, is eligible for the benefits.
- ★ Widowed, divorced, and abandoned women are also eligible.

- ★ Women receiving less than ₹1,000 per month from other pension schemes will be eligible for additional funds to reach a maximum of ₹1,000 per month.

Cabinet Approves Six Railway Projects

- ★ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved six projects of the Railway Ministry on 08 February 2024.
- ★ The estimated cost of these six projects is approximately ₹12,343 crores.
- ★ The projects approved by the committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be funded by the central government.
- ★ Six 'Multi Track' projects worth ₹12,343 crores will be set up mainly in six states namely Rajasthan, Assam, Telangana, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland.
- ★ Covering 18 districts in six states, these projects will expand the existing network of Indian Railways by 1,020 km.
- ★ These projects are in line with Prime Minister Modi's vision of 'New India'.
- ★ It will make the local people self-reliant through comprehensive development in the area.
- ★ This will increase their employment/self-employment opportunities.

Krishi Rakshak Portal and Helpline and SARTHI

- ★ Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Arjun Munda launched LMS, Krishi Rakshak Portal and helpline and SARTHI initiative under Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana, PMFBY in New Delhi.
- ★ Through these initiatives insured farmers will be benefitted and their risk will be also reduced.
- ★ The Krishi Rakshak Portal and Helpline is an integrated grievance redressal mechanism having a digital portal and a call centre that has been developed to enable farmers to lodge their grievances, concerns and queries.
- ★ The innovative SARTHI (Sandbox for Agricultural and Rural Security, Technology and Insurance) platform harnesses technology to provide a broad spectrum of insurance products, offering coverage for health, life, property, agriculture tools, motor assets and disaster risks.
- ★ Learning Management System (LMS) is designed to revolutionize the training and knowledge-sharing landscape for stakeholders in implementing key agricultural schemes across the country.

National Tribal Festival Aadi Mahotsav Inaugurated

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated National Tribal Festival Aadi Mahotsav 2024, at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi.
- ★ Every year TRIFED under the aegis of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs organizes the National Tribal Festival Aadi Mahotsav.
- ★ Aadi Mahotsav is an attempt to represent tribal culture on the national stage.
- ★ It celebrates the spirit of tribal culture, cuisine, commerce, crafts, and traditional art.
- ★ The festival features over 300 stalls, offering a varied display of Tribal art, natural product, handicrafts and delectable tribal cuisine.

- ★ Along with this, one thousand artisans from across the country will also participate and showcase their performances in Aadi Mahotsav 2024.
- ★ A separate Food Court representing Tribal cuisines from different parts of the country has also been set up.

Maharashtra Signed MoU with Google

- ★ Google, a Tech giant, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Maharashtra to provide artificial intelligence (AI)-led solutions.
- ★ AI based services will be provided in sectors like agriculture, sustainability, healthcare, education and startups.
- ★ Also Google will launch a state-of-the-art AI Centre of Excellence at the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Nagpur.
- ★ Maharashtra has pledged to develop its economy using artificial intelligence (AI) and has partnered with Google to achieve this goal.
- ★ This collaboration is a significant milestone in the journey of Maharashtra towards AI-driven development.
- ★ The partnership aims to provide citizens with future-ready skills, revolutionize critical sectors such as healthcare and agriculture and create a thriving environment for AI startups in Maharashtra through the AI Centre of Excellence at IIIT Nagpur.
- ★ The company will train 500 government IT professionals with conversational AI skills through Google Cloud.

Dharmendra Pradhan Inaugurates the New Delhi World Book Fair

- ★ Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated the New Delhi World Book Fair at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ★ Inaugurating the 52nd edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair Shri Pradhan highlighted that this year's theme of the fair 'Multilingual India: A Living Tradition' is celebrating India's linguistic diversity and global literary traditions.
- ★ Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launched the app of the National Digital Libraries for All, announced in the Budget 2023-34.
- ★ National e-library is a first-of-its-kind digital library for accessing a variety of non-academic books for Children and Adolescents.
- ★ It will focus on the history, culture, scientific and other achievements of India to develop a sense of pride amongst young Indians and shall contain books from all the 23 (twenty-three) languages under the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India, apart from English.

India- Hyperlocal Extreme Weather Forecasting Network

- ★ The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, has initiated the weather information network and data system (WINDS) to generate long-term, hyper-local weather data.

- ★ WINDS Portal is a promising step forward by the Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched in July 2023.
- ★ Under this programme, more than 200,000 ground stations (AWS and ARG) will be installed.
- ★ It will help tremendously in enhancing weather data utilisation by generating long-term, hyper-local weather data and thus in improving weather predictions and decision-making.
- ★ In India, the Indian Meteorology Department (IMD) is the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology.
- ★ IMD operates around 800 automatic weather stations (AWS), 1,500 automatic rain gauges (ARG) and 37 doppler weather radars (DWR).

Uttarakhand–India’s First State to Implement Uniform Civil Code

- ★ The Uttarakhand state Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, marking it as the first state in India post-independence to adopt a UCC.
- ★ The report on the UCC was submitted to the Chief Minister by Ranjana Desai, a retired judge of the Supreme Court and Chairperson of the Committee. The UCC is applicable to all persons irrespective of religion.
- ★ It offers a succession scheme similar to the Indian Succession Act (ISA), ensuring equal shares for the spouse, children, and parents of a deceased person without a will.
- ★ It recognises children from live-in relationships as legitimate with equal rights.

Tamil Nadu – ‘Smart Card’ Initiative for Startups

- ★ Tamil Nadu (TN) Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Minister TM Anbarasan launched the ‘Smart Card’ initiative for startups.
- ★ The Smart Card offers a wide selection of products and services at discounted rates, specifically tailored to meet the needs of startups in their early stages.
- ★ The products and services are broadly classified into 6 different categories: Legal and Compliance, Marketing/Business Consulting, Finance and Insurance, HR and Smart Workspace, Software, and IT/ITES.
- ★ During the event, four startups run by entrepreneurs from SC and ST communities were sanctioned ₹9.05 crore as equity investment under the Tamil Nadu SC/ST Startup Fund.
- ★ Products and services of 20 startups run by women entrepreneurs were also launched under the Women Launchpad initiative.
- ★ Launchpad is a platform designed to help startups gain initial offline and online market traction for their new brands and products on a public platform.

First Northeastern State to Revert to Old Pension System for Government Employees

- ★ Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has announced the restoration of the Old Pension System (OPS) for state government employees appointed on or after April 1, 2006.
- ★ Sikkim becomes the first state in the Northeast region to implement the restoration of the Old Pension System, marking a significant milestone.

- ★ The announcement was made during the State Level Temporary Employees' Convention held at Public Ground Rangpo, ahead of the state assembly elections.
- ★ A notification issued by the Department of Personnel highlights the criteria for the regularization of temporary employees, reflecting the government's commitment to address employment concerns.
- ★ The revival of the Old Pension System, as per the Sikkim Services (Pension) Rules, 1990, will benefit employees appointed on or before March 31, 1990.
- ★ The government has introduced amendments to policies regarding the regularization of temporary employees, particularly those with benchmark disabilities and serving continuously for two years or more in a particular post.

“SUFALAM”: Start-Up Conclave for Food Processing Inaugurated

- ★ Union Minister of Food Processing Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras inaugurated “SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024”.
- ★ He emphasized the importance of events like SUFALAM, highlighting their potential to improve networking, facilitate knowledge sharing, and help startups take advantage of various government schemes.
- ★ He stated that this initiative demonstrates the government's unwavering dedication to fostering entrepreneurship and building a supportive ecosystem for startups, which in turn empowers aspiring entrepreneurs in the food processing industry.
- ★ The Startup Conclave for Food Processing Entrepreneurs has the potential to be a game-changing event, driving the sector towards a future marked by innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth.
- ★ As startups come together to exhibit their creativity and foresight, the conclave acts as a source of inspiration, encouraging the upcoming generation of food processing leaders to push the limits of what's possible.

Telangana State Wildlife Board Approves Tadoba–Kawal Conservation Reserve

- ★ The Telangana State Board for Wildlife has approved the establishment of the Tadoba-Kawal conservation reserve.
- ★ The Forest Department's proposal to declare the corridor area between Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve and Kawal Tiger Reserve as a conservation reserve has been approved by the Telangana State Board for Wildlife.
- ★ Proposal will be sent to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- ★ Upon central government approval, the conservation reserve will span across a 1,492-square-kilometre area within Kagaznagar and Asifabad divisions.
- ★ During the Telangana State Board for Wildlife meeting, discussions also revolved around a proposal for establishing a bison sanctuary in Sathupally and Kinnerasani forests.
- ★ Tadoba National Park, situated in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, is the largest tiger reserve in the region, known for its rich biodiversity.

Shri Nitin Gadkari Inaugurated and Laid Foundation Stones in Haridwar

- ★ Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid foundation stones of 30 National Highway projects worth ₹4,755 crore in Haridwar, Uttarakhand.
- ★ The projects inaugurated include the widening of a 2-lane paved shoulder from Lameri to Karnaprayag in Rudraprayag and Chamoli and Dudhdhari elevated flyover in Haridwar.
- ★ These projects will not only ease transportation but will also provide better connectivity from Rishikesh to the India-China
- ★ The flyover will provide relief from traffic jams in religious city Haridwar and it will be easier to reach other religious places.
- ★ Uttarakhand will achieve a faster pace of development with the construction of 28 projects whose foundation stones were laid.
- ★ The journey of devotees on Char dham routes will be facilitated.
- ★ Connectivity of Uttarakhand with other states will increase accelerating economic and social development.

Uttar Pradesh to Achieve Milestone as First Indian State with 21 Airports

- ★ Uttar Pradesh is on the verge of becoming the first state in India to boast 21 airports, highlighting the rapid development of the aviation sector within the state.
- ★ Over the past 9 years, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed significant expansion in its aviation infrastructure.
- ★ From having only 6 airports in 2014, Uttar Pradesh's airport count has now reached 10, with the recent inauguration of the Ayodhya airport.
- ★ Additionally, Uttar Pradesh is gearing up for an international airport in Jewar, expected to be operational by the end of 2024.
- ★ The Uttar Pradesh government allocated ₹1,150 crore for the upcoming Noida International Airport under Budget 2024-25.
- ★ Under phase one of the project, a total of 230 acres will be developed, which will include 75 acres (33%) of commercial and 155 acres (67 percent) of industrial area.

Union Minister Rupala Launches Updated AHIDF Scheme

- ★ Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Shri Parshottam Rupala launched a renewed portal of the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF) and also released its Radio Jingle at a function in New Delhi.
- ★ The AHIDF is a Credit Guarantee Scheme to support the livestock sector's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises without the need of collateral.
- ★ The government has approved the continuation of AHIDF with an outlay of around 30 thousand crore rupees for another three years up to 2025-26.
- ★ Several measures have been taken to boost the production in the animal husbandry sector and due to this India's animal husbandry sector is performing well.

- ★ The initiatives including vaccination drive against foot and mouth disease for cattle and buffaloes across the country.

Foundation Stone of Barsingsar Solar Power Plant

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for the 300 MW Barsingsar Solar Power Plant in Rajasthan's Bikaner district, as part of the government's efforts to promote renewable energy and achieve the net-zero vision.
- ★ NLC India Limited, which is a Navratna CPSE under the Ministry of Coal, is currently in the process of setting up a 300 MW Solar Power Project in Barsingsar, Bikaner District, Rajasthan, as part of the CPSE Scheme of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- ★ The aim of this project is to provide affordable power supply to various Government entities.
- ★ The solar project, equipped with cutting-edge technology, including high-efficiency bifacial modules manufactured in India, aligns with the AtmaNirbhar Bharat initiative led by Prime Minister Modi.
- ★ The electricity produced will be transmitted through the existing transmission lines of Barsingsar Thermal Power Station.
- ★ The project aims to produce around 750 million units of green power annually and offset carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 18,000 tons over its lifetime.
- ★ The Power Usage Agreement for the project has been signed with Rajasthan Urja Vikas Nigam Limited at a competitive tariff of ₹2.52/unit for the next 25 years.

World Bank Assisted Programme INSPIRES Launched in Sikkim

- ★ The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang, recently launched Sikkim INSPIRES, a collaborative effort between the State Government and the World Bank.
- ★ The main objective of this initiative is to promote economic growth and inclusion in the state.
- ★ Sikkim INSPIRES programme marks the first direct partnership between the State government and the World Bank.
- ★ The programme would engage nine government departments over the next five years to create an ecosystem for economic prosperity.
- ★ The emphasis would be on collaboration and capacity-building across various sectors.
- ★ At the launch event, the announcement of a slogan competition winner and the unveiling of a mobile app focused on mental health awareness were also made. \$100 million allocated by WB for this project.
- ★ The Sikkim INSPIRES programme aims to strengthen the state system to deliver inclusive growth, improve employment linkages for women and youth in priority sectors and enhance the delivery of enabling services for the economic inclusion of women and youth.

The PM-SVANidhi Increased Street Vendors' Yearly Income

- ★ According to a study, the first tranche of 10,000 provided under the PM-SVANidhi has increased the annual income of ₹23,460 street vendors.

- ★ This study was carried out by the Centre for Analytical Finance of the Indian School of Business (ISB).
- ★ PM SVANidhi was launched in 2020 to help street vendors resume their livelihoods impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown.
- ★ PM-SVANidhi portal shows that 60.65 lakh first-term loans, 16.95 lakh second-term loans and 2.43 lakh third-term loans have been disbursed.
- ★ This study covered 5,141 vendors across 100 urban local bodies in 22 states.
- ★ PM SVANidhi was launched in 2020 to help street vendors resume their livelihood impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown, by offering them affordable working capital loans.
- ★ To begin with, a beneficiary can avail 10,000 loan and, upon its repayment, can avail loan of 20,000.
- ★ After repaying the second loan, a beneficiary is entitled to apply for a third loan of 50,000.

Assam Designates 'Kaji Nemu' Lemon as Official 'State Fruit'

- ★ The Assam government declared 'Kaji Nemu' (Citrus Lemon) as the state fruit.
- ★ "The 'Kaji Nemu' has been approved as the state fruit of Assam during the Cabinet meeting underscoring the fruit's cultural, traditional, and nutritional significance to the state and its people.
- ★ It has a strong and sour flavor, making it a preferred ingredient in a variety of dishes.
- ★ Additionally, it is known for its digestive and anti-inflammatory properties.
- ★ Kaji Nemu is a highly prized fruit for its culinary and medicinal properties.
- ★ 'Kaji Nemu' holds a significant place in traditional Assamese cuisine, being used in various dishes to enhance flavor and impart its unique taste.

Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan Program

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over ₹17,000 crore in Rajasthan under the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' programme via video conferencing.
- ★ These projects cater to a number of important sectors including Roads, Railways, Solar Energy, Power Transmission, Drinking water, and Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- ★ The double-engine government of Rajasthan has started working rapidly.
- ★ The projects whose foundation stone was laid and inaugurated will employ thousands of youth in the state.
- ★ The rail and road network will not only facilitate connectivity with many districts of Rajasthan but will also strengthen the connectivity of Rajasthan with its neighbouring states.

Assam Cabinet Passes Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024

- ★ The Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024, has been passed by the Assam cabinet.

- ★ It has banned magical healing practices in the name of treatment.
- ★ The bill prohibits the use of magical healing practices under the guise of medical treatment.
- ★ This includes treatments for conditions such as deafness, dumbness, blindness, physical deformities, and autism.
- ★ Individuals found guilty of engaging in illegal magical healing practices can face imprisonment and fines as per the provisions of the bill.
- ★ The Wildlife Safari and Rescue Centre is set to be established in the Namdang Reserved Forest in the Dibrugarh district.
- ★ The centre aims to provide international-standard safaris for herbivores, carnivores, and bird aviaries, enhancing wildlife tourism in the region.

NITI Aayog and the Government of Andhra Pradesh

- ★ NITI Aayog in partnership with the Government of Andhra Pradesh, successfully organised a two-day National Workshop on “Harnessing Potential of Fisheries in Inland States” in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- ★ It is a collaborative effort aimed at maximising the potential of fisheries in India’s inland states.
- ★ The workshop, held, drew participation from key stakeholders including central and state government officials, researchers, industry representatives, practitioners and the Fish Farmer Producer Organisation (FFPO).
- ★ The workshop in its various technical sessions focused on critical aspects such as sustainability practices, export competitiveness, infrastructure gaps, and livelihood challenges facing India’s inland fisheries industry.
- ★ Hon’ble Minister Shri Parshotam Rupala emphasised the need for active handholding and skill development of traditional fishermen to enhance their competitiveness.

National Conference on JJM and SBM-G concluded in Lucknow

- ★ The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation organized a National Conference on Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The conference brought together stakeholders from States/UTs to ensure ‘an integrated approach towards sustainable solutions in the rural WASH sector’.
- ★ The conference focused on key themes such as innovation, collaboration, sustainability and O&M.
- ★ The conference served as a crucial platform for in-depth discussions on rural drinking water and sanitation issues.
- ★ Participants shared best practices, strategized collaborative planning and discussed new approaches to rural sanitation.
- ★ The highlight of the second day of the conference on 17 February was on the activities of the SBM-G program and achievements of the States/UTs.
- ★ The agenda was carefully drafted to allow for interactive discussions, meaningful ideas and learning.

- ★ JJM was started in the year 2019. JJM comes under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- ★ JJM envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through functional household tap connections by the year 2024.

Mahindra Finance Partners with IBM

- ★ Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services Limited and IBM announced their partnership to create a “Super App” aiming to provide customers with a single digital financial services platform.
- ★ The “super app” will enable the customers to access the different services of Mahindra Group’s NBFC arm and have 24/7 digital access to them.
- ★ IBM Consulting will support “human-centred design methodology” to elevate the super app experience for its consumers, tracking actions of their lending journey.

RAISINA Dialogue will be launched in Delhi

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 9th edition of Raisina Dialogue in Delhi.
- ★ Prime Minister of Greece, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, will join the inaugural session as the Chief Guest, and deliver the keynote address.
- ★ The three-day Raisina Dialogue will witness participation of representatives from over 100 countries including Ministers, former Heads of State and Heads of Government, Military Commanders, Captains of Industry, Technology Leaders, Academics, Journalists, and Scholars on Strategic Affairs.
- ★ The Raisina Dialogue is India’s flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics.
- ★ It is committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the international community.
- ★ The theme of this edition is “Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Co-operate, Create”.

Odisha Government Introduces ‘Swayam’ Scheme

- ★ Odisha Agriculture Minister Shri Ranendra Pratap Swain announced the implementation of the ‘Swayam’ scheme during a recent cabinet meeting.
- ★ Aim of the Scheme is to promote self-employment among youth in Odisha by offering interest-free loans of up to ₹1 lakh to eligible individuals in both rural and urban areas.
- ★ The scheme targets 1 lakh eligible rural and urban youth aged between 18-35 years.
- ★ Eligible individuals can utilise the interest-free loans for initiating new businesses or expanding existing ones.
- ★ The state government has allocated approximately ₹448 crore to support the ‘Swayam’ scheme for a duration of two years.
- ★ This allocation will facilitate the disbursement of interest-free loans to the eligible youth for entrepreneurial endeavours.
- ★ Rural unemployed youth aged 18-35 years, without outstanding loans for the same purpose from any central or state government-supported schemes, are eligible for interest-free bank loans of up to ₹1 lakh.

- ★ A special category of individuals aged 18-40 years also qualifies for the scheme.

Government Expands National Livelihood Mission

- ★ The government has now decided to include more activities in the National Livelihood Mission (NLM). Union Cabinet has decided to modify this scheme on 21 February 2024.
- ★ With this amendment, its scope is being expanded with new subsidy provisions.
- ★ Their objective is to simplify the livestock insurance programme and also to promote entrepreneurship in the livestock sector and improve fodder cultivation.
- ★ Under this, state governments will assist in breed conservation efforts of horses, donkeys, mules and camels.
- ★ The central government will earmark ₹10 crore to establish semen stations and nucleus breeding farms for horses, donkeys, mules and camels.
- ★ Under this, private companies, startups and various groups can avail 50% capital subsidy up to ₹50 lakh for setting up fodder seed processing infrastructure.
- ★ Premium sharing between the Centre and the states has been kept at 60:40 for all the states while in some cases it has been revised to 90:10.
- ★ Farmers' premium contribution has been reduced to 15%.

Central India's 'Banana City', to Celebrate Annual Banana Festival

- ★ The banana city of central India, Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh (MP), is all set to organise its annual Banana Festival.
- ★ The two-day Banana festival is being organised in collaboration with district administration and its various departments under the one-district one-product programme (ODOP).
- ★ The festival is serving as a platform to showcase Burhanpur's agricultural prowess, inviting companies, experts, and scientists from across the nation to explore investment opportunities in the region.
- ★ Burhanpur boasts 23,650 hectares of banana cultivation involving 18,325 farmers, yielding a staggering 16 lakh metric tonnes of bananas. The sales turnover from bananas alone is a formidable 1,700 crore rupees.

Karnataka to Integrate Multiple Agricultural Schemes

- ★ Karnataka plans to consolidate various agri schemes to launch a new one to help farmers make agriculture sustainable and lucrative.
- ★ Various schemes related to the agricultural sector will be consolidated and a new scheme called Karnataka Raitha Samruddhi Yojana will be started in 2024.
- ★ The new scheme will provide the farmers with guidance and support in securing a stable income by taking up comprehensive agriculture inclusive of agriculture, animal husbandry horticulture and dairy farming.
- ★ An Agriculture Development Authority will be created under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister to facilitate effective implementation of policies related to agriculture and allied activities.

- ★ The Authority will also work towards achieving better coordination between the Department of Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Fisheries, Co-operation, and Animal Husbandry.
- ★ Due to the prevailing drought in the State, the agriculture sector has been impacted and has shown a negative growth of 1.8 per cent in the current year.

Foundation Stone of Projects Worth Over 13,000 Crore at Tarabh, Mesana

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects worth over 13 thousand crore at Tarabh in Mesana.
- ★ These include the launch of Bharat Net Phase-II - Gujarat Fibre Grid Network Limited, which will provide high-speed internet to more than 8000 gram panchayats.
- ★ Besides, multiple projects for rail line doubling, gauge conversion, new broad-gauge line in districts of Mahesana and Banaskantha; multiple road projects in Kheda, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, and Mahesana were also launched on the occasion.
- ★ During the program, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of several important projects including multiple road projects in Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad, Banaskantha, and Mahesana; the Runway of Air Force Station, Deesa, Gujarat Biotechnology Research (GBRC)'s new building at GIFT city among others.

Women's Safety Scheme Should be extended until 2025–2026

- ★ The Union Government has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the continuation of the implementation of the Umbrella Scheme on 'Safety of Women' at a total cost of around one thousand 180 crore rupees during the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- ★ The decision was taken at a Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur said 24-hour emergency helpline service 112 will be scaled up under it.
- ★ He also informed that for scientific and timely investigation, six cyber forensic science laboratories are being set up at Pune, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Delhi, and Kamrup.
- ★ Besides, every year 5000 police personnel will be imparted training for effective investigation and prosecution to curb the crime against women and children.

The Global Textile Expo–Bharat Tex 2024

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Global Textile Expo–Bharat Tex 2024 on 26 February in New Delhi.
- ★ Ministry of Textiles, Secretary, Rachna Shah said that the four long day long Bharat Tex will be spread over a 22 lakh square feet exhibition area across Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi.
- ★ The participation of buyers from 100 countries and over 100 international speakers is expected during the event.
- ★ The expo will be a unique opportunity to showcase the strength of India's textile value chain on a global stage.
- ★ Being organised by a consortium of 11 Textile Export Promotion Councils and supported by the Ministry of Textiles.

- ★ Bharat Tex is built on the twin pillars of trade and investment and with an overarching focus on sustainability and resilient supply chains.
- ★ 46 Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) will be signed during the event including international partnerships.
- ★ The Expo will also witness the launch of Textiles Grand Innovation Challenge aimed to identify futuristic circular solutions.

Puri-Konark New Railway line in Odisha

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sanctioned a new railway line project to connect the holy city of Puri with Konark.
- ★ The Union Minister said that ₹492 crore has been sanctioned for the construction of this 32-km-long railway line to connect Puri Jagannath temple and the Sun Temple of Konark.
- ★ Shri Vaishnaw also released five Commemorative Postage Stamps on Legendary Poets of Odisha and the Cultural Heritage of Western Odisha through video conferencing from Bhubaneswar.
- ★ He also inaugurated 42 branch post offices in seven districts of western Odisha.

Madhya Pradesh Launches 'Bagless School' Initiative

- ★ The Madhya Pradesh (MP) government has announced 'bag less school' day once a week for students in classes 1 to 12, starting from the upcoming academic session in 2024-25.
- ★ This decision applies to all government and private schools operating in the state.
- ★ The state government, aiming to alleviate the burden on students, has issued a notice outlining the maximum permissible weight of school bags for different classes.
- ★ According to the notice, students in classes 1 and 2 should carry bags weighing between 1.6-2.2 kg, while those in classes 3 to 5 should limit their bags to 1.7 - 2.5 kg.
- ★ For classes 6 and 7, the recommended weight is 2-3 kg, and for classes 8, 2.5 - 4 kg.
- ★ Students in classes 9 and 10 are advised to carry bags weighing between 2.5 - 4.5 kg.
- ★ Additionally, the weight of school bags for students in classes 11 and 12 will be determined by the school management committee based on the students' respective streams.

World's Largest Grain Storage Scheme

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the pilot project of the world's largest co-operative grain storage scheme.
- ★ This scheme has been launched under the 'Sahakar Se Samridhi Programme'. The event was organized at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi.
- ★ The objective of this project is to operationalize PACS by linking them with NABARD.
- ★ In this way, crores of small and marginal farmers will benefit.
- ★ NABARD has developed national level common software for this project. It has been designed to meet the multiple needs of PACS across the country.

- ★ The world's largest storage scheme of 700 lakh metric tonnes will be completed in the next five years at a cost of ₹1.25 lakh crore.
- ★ This will help farmers to store their produce and sell it at the right time as per their need, and will also help them in taking loans from banks.
- ★ PACS aims to seamlessly integrate warehouses with the food grain supply chain and strengthen food security.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi also inaugurated the project for computerization of 18 thousand PACS across the country.
- ★ The Central Government has approved a budget of ₹2,500 crore for this important project.

Gujarat's "Sudarshan Setu", The Nation's Longest Cable-Stayed Bridge

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's longest cable-stayed bridge, Sudarshan Setu, in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district.
- ★ On the second day of his Gujarat visit, PM Modi cut the ceremonial ribbon and dedicated the 4.77-km-long Sudarshan Setu, also known as Signature Bridge, to the nation.
- ★ Constructed at ₹978 crore, it connects Okha town in the Devbhumi Dwarka district with Bet Dwarka Island in the Gulf of Kutch.
- ★ After performing pooja at the Dwarkadhishji Mukhya Mandir, PM Modi took a stroll on the sea link and waved to fishermen and ferry-boat operators on board their boats.
- ★ The PM also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects worth more than 4150.
- ★ Sudarshan Setu has a unique design, with footpaths decorated with verses from Srimad Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on either side.
- ★ It also has solar panels installed on the upper parts of the footpath, which generate one megawatt of electricity.
- ★ The bridge will ease transportation and significantly reduce the time spent by devotees traveling between Dwarka and Bet-Dwarka.

Global Pulses Conference

- ★ The Global Pulses Conference, an annual meeting of pulses producers, processors and traders, suggested that India augment the production of pulses to meet the nutritional requirements.
- ★ The two-day conference is jointly organised by the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) and the Global Pulse Confederation (GPC) in New Delhi.
- ★ Last decade pulses production had grown by 60% from 171 lakh tonnes in 2014 to 270 lakh tonnes in 2024.
- ★ India had become self-reliant in chickpeas (chana) and many other pulses crops, with only a slight deficiency remaining in pigeon peas (tur) and black gram.
- ★ India is aiming to achieve self-sufficiency in pulses by 2027, focusing on expanding cultivation and supplying new varieties of seeds.
- ★ Global Pulse Confederation (GPC) membership includes 24 national associations and over 500 private sector members.

- ★ It is based in Dubai and licensed by the Dubai Multi Commodity Centre (DMCC).
- ★ India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar Initiates 'Savera' Initiative

- ★ Haryana Chief Minister Shri Manohar Lal, inaugurated the 'Savera' program initiated by the Medanta Foundation in collaboration with the Health Department in Gurugram, aimed at early detection and prevention of breast cancer, a growing concern among women.
- ★ This groundbreaking initiative marks the first of its kind in the country, focusing on detecting breast cancer in its early stages among women.
- ★ In its initial phase, the program will be launched at the Civil Hospital in Sector-10 of Gurugram, the Polyclinic in Sector-31, and the Primary Health Centre in Wazirabad.
- ★ The program capitalizes on the naturally heightened tactile sensitivity possessed by visually impaired individuals.
- ★ The launch of Savera coincides with the establishment of the National Cancer Institute at AIIMS Jhajjar, equipped with 1,000 beds.
- ★ This comprehensive approach signifies Haryana's commitment to providing accessible and advanced cancer care to its citizens.
- ★ Khattar stated that cancer often goes undiagnosed until its later stages, ranging from stage 2 to stage 4, impacting various parts of the body.
- ★ Similarly, breast cancer is also one of those cancers.
- ★ About 90,000 women across the country lose their lives every year due to breast cancer.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Qatar and US Sign Deal to Supply LNG to Bangladesh

- ★ Qatar Energy and US-based Excelerate Energy signed an agreement on Monday to supply 1 million metric tonnes per year (mtpa) of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Bangladesh for 15 years from January 2026.
- ★ The deal is the latest in a series state-owned Qatar Energy has with European and Asian partners tied to its massive North Field expansion project, which is expected to lift Qatar's LNG production to 126 mtpa by 2027 from 77 mtpa now.
- ★ Qatar, among the world's top LNG exporters, is already the largest supplier of LNG to Bangladesh.

India Signed MoU with Singapore

- ★ India signed MoU with Singapore to strengthen co-operation in the field of Personnel Management and Public Administration.
- ★ The bilateral meeting discussed the contours of collaboration for 2024.

- ★ The areas of collaboration envisage sharing of good governance practices, exchange of information in the field of Personnel Management and Public Administration, co-operation between the two countries on using technology in governance and timely convening of the Joint Working Group meetings.
- ★ The meeting was attended by Senior Officers of PSD, Singapore and DARPG.
- ★ The broad areas of collaboration included improving e-services delivery, e-governance practices, and adoption of unified service delivery portals and use of AI/ML in grievance redressal.

India and Portugal Foreign Office Consultations Held in New Delhi

- ★ The fourth Foreign Office Consultations between India and Portugal was held in New Delhi, with a focus on political relations, deepening of trade and investment, co-operation in defence, science and technology, and energy.
- ★ External Affairs Ministry said both sides stressed on early implementation of the pilot project on the Recruitment of Indian Citizens to work in the Portuguese Republic, as well as the holding of the first India - Portugal Consular Dialogue.
- ★ Discussions were also held on the joint commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2025.
- ★ Both sides reviewed the ongoing co-operation between India and Portugal on the development of the Maritime Heritage Complex in Gujarat's Lothal.
- ★ They also called for the early scheduling of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture and Renewable Energy.
- ★ The two sides also exchanged views on global and regional issues including Gaza and Ukraine and agreed to continue the existing close co-operation in multilateral fora, including at the UN.

Joint Military Co-operation Committee Meeting in Muscat

- ★ Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane co-chaired the 12th Joint Military Co-operation Committee meeting with the Secretary-General, Ministry of Defence, Oman Mohammed Bin Naseer Bin Ali Al Zaabi in Muscat.
- ★ During the meeting, both sides reviewed and appreciated the robust defence co-operation between India and Oman.
- ★ The meeting delved into many new areas of co-operation in the fields of training, Joint exercise, Information sharing, Oceanography, and Ship Building that would build mutual trust and interoperability between militaries of both nations.
- ★ They also exchanged views on regional and global issues of shared interest.
- ★ Both sides discussed effective and practical initiatives to further boost bilateral defence engagements with a focus on defence industry collaboration.

France has Launched India's Digital Payment System UPI

- ★ Unified Payment Interface (UPI) has been formally launched at the Eiffel Tower in Paris.
- ★ UPI was formally launched at the Republic Day celebrations held in France.

- ★ According to the India-France joint statement, in 2023, India and France are committed to nurturing a thriving ecosystem and building collaboration that empowers its citizens and ensures their full participation in the digital century.
- ★ NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and France's Lyra Collect entered into an agreement to implement Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France and Europe.
- ★ During his visit to France in July 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that India and France have agreed to use the UPI payment mechanism and it will start with the iconic Eiffel Tower.
- ★ Recently, French President Emmanuel Macron visited India to participate in the Republic Day parade as the Chief Guest.
- ★ French President Macron used UPI to make payment at a tea shop in Jaipur.
- ★ Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a system that powers multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application (of any participating bank), merging multiple banking features, seamless fund routing and merchant payments under one hood.

EU Leaders Agree to \$54 Billion Ukraine Aid Package as Hungary's Orban Backs Down

- ★ All 27 EU leaders have agreed on a \$54bn aid package for Ukraine after Hungary stopped blocking the deal.
- ★ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the new funding, saying it would strengthen the country's economic and financial stability.
- ★ Ukraine's economic ministry stated it expects the first tranche in March.
- ★ There had been fears Hungary's PM would again block the package as he did at a European summit in December.
- ★ Viktor Orban, Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest ally in the EU, had stated he wanted to force a rethink of the bloc's policy towards Ukraine and questioned the idea of committing funds for Kyiv for the next four years.
- ★ The new funding promise comes as aid from the US - the largest provider of military support for Kyiv - is being held up by Congress.

France Issued First-Time Schengen Digital Visa

- ★ France has started issuing Digital Schengen visas.
- ★ The country plans to distribute around 70,000 digital visas for the upcoming 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games in Paris.
- ★ France became the first country in the European Union to hand out these visas starting from January 1, 2024.
- ★ Those who are a part of the Olympic and Paralympic Family and are seeking accreditation should apply through their respective committees.
- ★ Additionally, other official guests who have been invited by the Olympic or Paralympic Committee (OCOG) can also apply for accreditation.

- ★ However, visitors who wish to attend the Olympics will need to apply for a regular Schengen Visa.
- ★ The Schengen area includes all EU member states, except for Ireland and Cyprus. Currently, Bulgaria and Romania only apply some of the Schengen provisions.
- ★ The Schengen area allows for free and safe travel without internal borders for EU citizens, non-EU residents, and visitors.

India Decided to Fence its Border with Myanmar

- ★ The Indian government has decided to build a fence or close border along the 1,643-kilometer border with Myanmar, according to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.
- ★ The India-Myanmar border spans 1,643 km and passes through four states – Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- ★ A 10 km stretch in Moreh, Manipur, has already been fenced and two pilot projects using a Hybrid Surveillance System (HSS) are underway.
- ★ These projects will fence one km each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.
- ★ Furthermore, fence works covering approximately 20 km in Manipur have also been approved and the work will commence soon.
- ★ The Free Movement Regime (FMR) is an agreement between India and Myanmar that allows local tribes living along the border to travel up to 16 kilometres inside the other country without requiring a visa.
- ★ The Indian government has decided to begin the process for implementing an advanced smart fencing system along the entire India-Myanmar border.
- ★ The new system will end the Free Movement Regime (FMR) policy along the Indo-Myanmar border, ensuring that anyone entering the country through this route would require a valid visa.

Minister Ajay Bhatt Attends 'World Defence Show 2024'

- ★ Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt is on a visit to Riyadh as the head of the Indian delegation for the World Defence Show (WDS) 2024.
- ★ This five-day WDS is being organized in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 04 to 08 February 2024.
- ★ Show highlights defence tech advancements, fosters global collaboration among companies.
- ★ Minister Ajay Bhatt held meetings with Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.
- ★ During this, various aspects of bilateral defence co-operation were discussed.

7th Indian Ocean Conference

- ★ India will participate in the 'Indian Ocean Conference' to be held in Australia on 9-10 February 2024.
- ★ This is the 7th edition of this conference to be held in Perth, Australia.
- ★ India will be represented by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the 7th Indian Ocean Conference.

- ★ The theme of this edition is “Towards a stable and sustainable Indian Ocean”.
- ★ It is expected to bring together key stakeholders to prepare a roadmap to strengthen regional co-operation.
- ★ The conference will also include delegations led by ministers from more than 22 countries and senior officials from 16 countries and 6 multilateral organizations.

2024 World Governments Summit

- ★ India, Turkey, and Qatar have been declared the guests of honour at the 2024 World Governments Summit which is set to take place in Dubai from February 12-14.
- ★ The summit, themed ‘Shaping Future Governments’, will see the participation of over 25 government and state heads worldwide.
- ★ The delegations from Turkey, India, and Qatar will be led by their respective leaders: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.
- ★ The guest countries will showcase their successful government experiences and best developmental practices during the summit, bringing together thought leaders, experts, and representatives of over 85 international and regional organisations with 120 governmental delegations, and 4,000 attendees.
- ★ The event is expected to draw over 4,000 attendees, including representatives from 85 international and regional organizations.

UPI Services Started in Sri Lanka and Mauritius

- ★ India’s Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services started in Sri Lanka and Mauritius at a virtual ceremony witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top leadership of the two island nations.
- ★ According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) India’s RuPay card services also launched in Mauritius at the event Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth and Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe joined Modi at the virtual ceremony,
- ★ Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a system that enables users to access multiple bank accounts through a single mobile application offered by any participating bank.
- ★ It merges multiple banking features, facilitates seamless fund routing and merchant payments under one roof.
- ★ It also allows P2P collection requests, which can be scheduled and paid according to convenience and requirement.

Dubai will have World’s First Air Taxi

- ★ Dubai has signed agreements at the World Government Summit 2024 held in Dubai, to launch the world’s first air taxi service.
- ★ The agreements enable Dubai to lead the way in deploying a city-wide network of electric aerial taxis and vertiports.

- ★ The air-taxi initiative is centred around the Joby Aviation S4, an innovative aircraft that can comfortably transport four passengers and a pilot.
- ★ It has six propellers and is powered by four battery packs, enabling it to travel up to 161 km and reach a maximum speed of 321 km per hour.
- ★ The aircraft's vertical take-off and landing capabilities make it ideal for urban areas, reducing space requirements and noise pollution compared to helicopters.
- ★ The project aims to provide efficient, safe and sustainable transportation solutions, with benefits such as reduced noise levels, zero operating emissions and enhanced passenger convenience.
- ★ Using cutting-edge technology, these aerial vehicles will integrate seamlessly into Dubai's urban landscape.
- ★ They are electric-powered and can be quickly recharged between flights, making them a significant step towards a more sustainable and accessible transportation future.
- ★ The air-taxi network is set to launch in 2026, marking a milestone in Dubai's efforts to redefine urban mobility.

16th Conference of World Social Forum 2024

- ★ The 16th conference of the World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 commenced in Kathmandu.
- ★ The five-day WSF 2024 under the "Another World is Possible" aims to open horizontal exchange among civil society organisations, social movements, trade unions and individuals opposing neoliberal globalisation.
- ★ Some forty thousand people from 92 countries are expected to participate in the WSF.
- ★ The opening ceremony was followed by a panel discussion featuring international speakers on various themes and subjects.
- ★ This edition of the WSF will focus on a myriad of pressing issues including economic inequality, climate justice, labour, migration, caste discrimination, gender equality, peace, sustainable development.

India and Colombia Signed a Memorandum of Understanding

- ★ India and Colombia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Co-operation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions Implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation.
- ★ It was signed between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Information Technologies and Communications of Colombia.
- ★ The MoU intends to promote digital transformation (viz INDIA STACK) through capacity-building programs, the exchange of best practices, the exchange of public officials and experts, the development of pilot or demo solutions and the facilitation of private sector contacts to mutually benefit the digital ecosystems of both countries.
- ★ Both sides discussed the importance of Digital Public Infrastructures.
- ★ These infrastructures constitute a set of shared digital systems that are secure and interoperable.

- ★ They can be built on open standards to deliver and provide equitable access to public and private services.
- ★ India Stack Solutions are DPIs developed and implemented by India at a population scale to provide access and delivery of public services.
- ★ India is keen on partnering with Colombia by building upon a development partnership on digital transformation leading to a smooth adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure in Colombia.

Goa Collaborated with World Bank for Blended Finance Facility

- ★ The Government of Goa announced that it will set up a blended finance facility in collaboration with the World Bank.
- ★ This will be the first of its kind, climate-focused, multi-regional facility at the subnational level.
- ★ This will help Goa to access and mobilize concessional finance to implement low-carbon and climate-resilient investments.
- ★ At the 2024 edition of the World Bank's India Climate and Development Partners Meeting the blended finance facility was announced.
- ★ This facility will support projects with existing funding and provide financing to projects/sectors without existing funding.
- ★ It will serve as an important bridge between the green financing mechanism and domestic capital markets, attracting private capital investment for climate action.
- ★ By integrating carbon markets and using green credits, the programme will ensure its sustainable operation and continuous recapitalization.
- ★ The conference is being held in Panaji from 19 to 21 February and is jointly hosted by the Government of Goa and the World Bank.

India Donates to Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund

- ★ India has contributed 1 million US Dollars to the Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund established by India, Brazil, and South Africa, IBSA.
- ★ The fund is aimed at alleviating poverty and hunger. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj handed over the cheque to the Director of the UN Office for South-South Co-operation (UNOSSC) Dima Al-Khatib.
- ★ India is committed to supporting the IBSA Fund as it has made a positive impact on the lives of millions across the Global South and has strengthened the spirit of South-South co-operation.
- ★ The focus of India's G20 Presidency was the development of the people, by the people, and for the people.
- ★ The IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund) was established jointly by grouping in March 2004 and it became operational in 2006.
- ★ The purpose of the fund is to identify replicable and scalable projects that can be disseminated to developing countries on a demand-driven basis.
- ★ IBSA Fund-supported projects help partner countries in the Global South to achieve their national priorities, as well as all other internationally agreed development goals.

India Signed MoU with Greece

- ★ India and Greece will sign a mobility and migration partnership agreement to ease skilled migration between the two countries and aim to double bilateral trade by 2030, stated Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The Indian PM and his Greek counterpart, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, in their bilateral meeting in New Delhi, discussed strengthening of co-operation in multiple areas, including defence, security, education, start-ups, shipping, trade, investment, agriculture and tourism.
- ★ India-Greece bilateral trade in 2022-23 was about \$2 billion, with India's exports at \$785.72 million and imports at \$1.16 billion, per government data.
- ★ At the inaugural session of the Raisina Dialogue 2024, Mitsotakis highlighted the "great promise" of the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- ★ He stated that it would supercharge connectivity between India, the growth economies of Middle East and Europe and Greece could play an important part.

India and Bangladesh Collaborate for Transboundary Tiger Conservation

- ★ A cross-border initiative, focused on harmonious coexistence with tigers in the Sunderbans, seeks to preserve biodiversity in both India and Bangladesh.
- ★ The people-centric engagement took place at Joymoni, Bagerhat District, Bangladesh on February 4 to 8, under the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Program supported by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and Germany's KfW Development Bank.
- ★ The WTI partnered with the Lokamata Rani Rashmoni Mission, Joynagar (West Bengal), and Wild Team, Bangladesh, on the initiative.
- ★ The project has been on since 2018-19, and looks at mitigation – attending to tiger incidents, giving the tiger a safe passage back to the forest to prevent attacks on humans and retaliatory action on the tiger.

Malta Joins International Solar Alliance as 119th Member Country

- ★ Malta has become the 119th country to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- ★ Christopher Cutajar, Permanent Secretary of the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signed the ISA Framework Agreement.
- ★ In December 2023, Romania became the 118th signatory country to join ISA.
- ★ The platform seeks to develop and deploy cost-effective and transformative energy solutions powered by the sun to help member countries develop low-carbon development trajectories.
- ★ It has a special focus on making an impact in countries classified as Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Dubai Launches 5-Year Multiple Entry Visa for Indian Tourists

- ★ In a bid to promote economic collaborations and encourage tourism and business ties, Dubai has introduced a five-year multiple-entry visa for Indian tourists.

- ★ The introduction of the multiple-entry visa aims to strengthen the relationship between Dubai and India, making Dubai a more accessible and appealing destination for Indian nationals.
- ★ According to the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism (DET), the visa issued within 2 to 5 working days, allows a 90-day stay, extendable once for a similar period, with a total stay not exceeding 180 days in a year.
- ★ Through this initiative, tourists can leverage multiple entries and exits, providing operational flexibility for business engagements, leisure travel, and seamless connectivity.
- ★ According to DET, Dubai experienced a surge in tourism from India, welcoming 2.46 million overnight visitors in 2023.
- ★ This signifies a substantial increase from the 1.84 million tourists in 2022, surpassing the pre-pandemic figure of 1.97 million visitors in 2019.
- ★ Bader Ali Habib, Regional Head of Proximity Markets, DET, highlighted the long-standing relationship with India and the significant contribution of Indian tourists to Dubai's record-breaking tourism sector in 2023.
- ★ India, with a remarkable 34% year-on-year growth, maintains its position as the leading source market for Dubai.

BANKING, FINANCE & ECONOMICS

RBI to Make Available an Additional ₹5,000 Cr to Standalone Primary Dealers

- ★ Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to make available an additional aggregate amount of ₹5,000 crore to Standalone Primary Dealers (SPDs) under the Standing Liquidity Facility at the prevailing repo rate starting from January 31, 2024.
- ★ The incremental limit for individual SPDs is being conveyed to them separately.
- ★ The repo rate (the interest rate at which banks draw liquidity from the RBI to overcome short-term liquidity mismatches) is at 6.50 per cent.
- ★ The banking system has been facing a liquidity deficit since September 2024, with the deficit standing at about ₹2.68 lakh crore as of January 29, 2024.
- ★ The central bank allotted ₹25,008 crore to the bidders at a weighted average rate of 6.74 per cent.
- ★ PDs' role in the government securities market includes functioning as a link between the RBI and the investors, providing liquidity in the secondary market, and offering market-making services.

IMF Upgrades India's GDP Growth Rate To 6.7 Percent

- ★ IMF has upgraded India's GDP growth rate to 6.7 percent for the current financial year, which is 40 basis points higher than its previous forecast of 6.3 percent.
- ★ In its latest World Economic Outlook report, IMF also raised India's upward medium-term GDP growth to 6.5 percent for the years 2025 and 2026, marking a 20 basis point upgrade from its October 2023 forecast.

- ★ The upgraded growth estimates are attributed to strong public investment and positive labor market outcomes in India.
- ★ IMF projects a narrowing of India's current account deficit projection for the financial year 2024 from 1.8 percent of GDP to 1.6 percent.
- ★ India continues to be recognized as the fastest-growing economy among the major economies of the world, maintaining its growth momentum from the previous financial year, where GDP expanded by 7.2 percent.

Fiscal Deficit in 2024-25 is Estimated to be 5.1 Percent of GDP

- ★ Fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 percent of GDP.
- ★ This is in adherence to the path of fiscal consolidation to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5 percent by 2025-26.
- ★ States will be encouraged to take up comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres, branding and marketing them at a global scale.
- ★ A framework for a rating of the centres based on the quality of facilities and services will be established.
- ★ Long-term interest-free loans will be provided to States for financing such development on a matching basis.
- ★ 'Direct Benefit Transfer' of 34 lakh crore rupees into PM-Jan Dhan accounts has led to the savings of 2.7 lakh crore rupees for the Government.
- ★ The PM-SVANidhi scheme has provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors.
- ★ Narendra Modi government started PM-JANMAN Yojana which reaches out to particularly vulnerable tribal groups, who have remained outside the realm of development so far.
- ★ PM-Vishwakarma Yojana initiated by the Centre provides end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople engaged in 18 trades.

RBI 'ban' on Paytm Payments Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India has instructed Paytm Payments Bank Ltd. (PPBL or the bank) to cease onboarding new clients immediately, in accordance with its authority under section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- ★ After February 29, 2024, no more deposits, credit transactions, top-ups, or withdrawals will be permitted in any customer accounts, prepaid cards, wallets, FASTags, NCMC cards, etc., as per the RBI circular post from August 2023.
- ★ The RBI has ordered the payments bank subsidiary of Paytm to halt the acceptance of fresh deposits in its accounts and popular wallets from March onwards.
- ★ Paytm Payments Bank is 49% owned by Paytm (One 97 Communications), with the remaining 51% held by Paytm's Chief Executive and founder, Vijay Shekhar Sharma. The payments bank is permitted to accept small deposits up to ₹200,000 (\$2,400) but is prohibited from lending. Deposits must be parked in government securities or other bank deposits.
- ★ If you have linked your Paytm Payments Bank account to your Paytm, UPI transactions will not be possible.

- ★ However, linking another bank account allows users to continue making UPI payments.

Torchbearer for Paris 2024 Olympics

- ★ India's first individual gold medallist at the Olympic Games, Abhinav Bindra, has been selected as a torchbearer for the upcoming 2024 Paris Olympic Games.
- ★ The games will be held in the French capital from July 26 to August 11.
- ★ Abhinav Bindra, the gold medalist in the men's 10m air rifle event at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, will participate in the Olympic Torch Relay from April 16 to July 26.
- ★ Abhinav Bindra is a renowned Indian athlete who holds the distinction of being the first Indian to have held concurrently the world and Olympic titles for the men's 10-meter air rifle event.
- ★ He earned these honors at the 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2006 ISSF World Shooting Championships.
- ★ Bindra has also won seven medals at the Commonwealth Games and three medals at the Asian Games, making him one of the most successful shooters in India.
- ★ Over his 22-year career, Bindra has won more than 150 medals. He is the recipient of the Padma Bhushan, which was awarded by the Government of India and is considered one of the top influencers of sport policy in the country.
- ★ The Paris 2024 Olympic Torch Relay will begin in France on May 8th, 2024. The flame will travel to Marseille before embarking on a 68-day journey across French territories, covering a total of 65 territories, including five overseas territories.

ADB Raises ₹1,250 Crore in Largest-Ever Local Currency Green Bond Issue

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has raised ₹1,250 crore (approximately USD 150 million) through its largest local currency green bond issuance to date.
- ★ The issue is structured as a 4-year currency linked bond, with a one-time repayment at maturity and carrying a fixed interest rate of 6.72% per year.
- ★ While the bond is denominated in Indian rupees, it is settled in United States dollars.
- ★ Investors' returns are tied to the performance of the Indian currency.
- ★ The bond follows the popular masala bond structure in the Indian financial community.
- ★ The bond is listed on the Luxembourg Stock Exchange and was arranged by Standard Chartered Bank.
- ★ It was subscribed by a group of investors from the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US).
- ★ ADB has been an active participant in the Indian rupee bond market, with its debut in 2004.
- ★ Since 2014, it has conducted multiple masala bond issuances, cumulatively rising over USD 1 billion equivalent.

ESAF Small Finance Bank Collaborates with Edelweiss Tokio

- ★ ESAF Small Finance Bank announced a significant bancassurance partnership with Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance to enhance financial solutions for customers.

- ★ The collaboration underscores the commitment of both organizations to prioritize customer needs and foster growth and innovation in the financial sector.
- ★ The partnership reflects ESAF Small Finance Bank's strategic move to diversify its offerings and extend financial security to a broader section of the unbanked and underbanked population.
- ★ The aim of the partnership is to increase the accessibility of innovative life insurance products, leveraging ESAF Small Finance Bank's strong presence in rural markets across India.

RBI Imposes ₹5 Lakh Penalty on Bajaj Housing Finance

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of ₹5 lakh on Bajaj Housing Finance for non-compliance with certain regulatory provisions.
- ★ The penalty was levied due to the company's contravention of specific provisions outlined in the 'Non-Banking Financial Company - Housing Finance Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2021'.
- ★ The National Housing Bank conducted a statutory inspection of Bajaj Housing Finance concerning its financial position as of March 31, 2022.
- ★ RBI highlighted that the Pune-based company failed to obtain prior written permission from the RBI for a change in management, resulting in a change in more than 30% of the directors, excluding independent directors.
- ★ RBI clarified that the imposed penalty is based on identified deficiencies in regulatory compliance and does not aim to pass judgement on the validity of any transactions or agreements between the company and its customers.

IRDAI Approves Bandhan Financial's Acquisition of Aegon Life

- ★ Bandhan Financial Holdings, the holding company of Bandhan Bank, is set to take control of Aegon Life Insurance.
- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) have granted final approval for the acquisition, which was received earlier.
- ★ With IRDAI's approval, all regulatory requirements for the proposed acquisition are now fulfilled.
- ★ Bandhan Bank had previously obtained approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) four weeks ago.
- ★ Aegon Life Insurance Company is an Indian life insurance company, founded in 2008 with headquarters in Mumbai, India, offering individual and group insurance online and offline.
- ★ Aegon Life is a joint venture between Aegon NV and BCCL, which is the owner and publisher of The Economic Times.

Life Insurance Corporation Unveils New Insurance and Savings Plan

- ★ Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) announced the launch of its new unit linked life insurance product, LIC Index Plus.
- ★ LIC's Index fund is a unit linked, non-participating, individual life insurance plan.
- ★ Minimum age at entry: 90 days (completed).
- ★ Maximum age at entry: 50 or 60 years (nearer birthday) depending on the basic Sum Assured.

- ★ Basic sum assured: 7 to 10 times of Annualized premium for age at entry 90 days (completed) to 50 years (nearer birthday) and 7 times of Annualized premium for age at entry 51 years to 60 years (nearer birthday)
- ★ Minimum age at maturity: 18 years (completed)
- ★ Maximum age at maturity: 75 or 85 years (nearer birthday) depending on the basic sum assured
- ★ Minimum policy term: 10 or 15 years depending on Annualized premium and Maximum Term is 25 years. The premium paying term is the same as the policy term.

Government Allocates ₹9,000 Crore to Exim Bank

- ★ Loans extended through Exim Bank of India to certain countries, particularly African nations, have been classified as “doubtful debt” in the financial year 2023-24.
- ★ The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has provided ₹9,013.72 crore to Exim Bank after invoking Government of India (GoI) guarantees on these loans.
- ★ This indicates the involvement of the Indian government in backing these loans.
- ★ Some decade-plus old loans extended to African countries have turned into NPAs, leading to the invocation of government guarantees by Exim Bank.
- ★ These are extended to other countries, including African nations, as part of India’s foreign aid and economic co-operation efforts.
- ★ They have been classified as doubtful, but not written off.
- ★ The MEA has provided a further ₹4,383.40 crore in 2024-25 towards payment to Exim Bank towards guarantees that may be invoked against doubtful debts, indicating more such loans to countries might get classified as NPAs in the coming years.

HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank

- ★ Two of India’s biggest lenders HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank have invested in a company called RMBS Development Company Limited to promote the residential mortgage-backed securities market.
- ★ RMBS Development Company (RDCL) will have 10 banks and financial institutions as its shareholders, the lenders informed exchanges. However, they have not named other shareholders of the proposed company.
- ★ Both HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank have invested ₹35 crore each in RDCL, which is expected to be operational by the end of March.
- ★ The primary objective of RDCL is to promote and develop the RMBS market by investing in them, facilitating investment, issuance, and trade of RMBS and extending credit enhancement for RMBS transactions.

HDFC Bank Introduces Four SME Credit Cards

- ★ HDFC Bank, launched 4 new small and medium enterprises (SME)-focused credit cards to cater to the specific needs of entrepreneurs and freelancers.

- ★ The main highlight of the cards is that they will provide 55 days of interest-free credit, the highest number of days offered by any bank.
- ★ The four variants include BizFirst, BizGrow, BizPower, and BizBlack, each designed to cater to different business requirements.
- ★ These SME-focused credit cards also offer savings on essential business expenses such as utility bills, GST, income tax, vendor payments, business travel, and business productivity tools.
- ★ This feature enables SMEs to streamline their expenditure while maximising cost-efficiency.
- ★ HDFC Bank achieved the milestone of having 2 crore credit cards in force on January 24, 2024 making it the first lender to do so.

State Bank of India Releases Electoral Bonds

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI) has issued Electoral Bonds totalling ₹16,518 crore in 30 tranches since the inception of the scheme in 2018.
- ★ Objective of Electoral Bond Scheme is to ensure clean tax-paid money is coming into the system of political funding through proper banking channels.
- ★ The Electoral Bond Scheme was introduced by the Union government in 2018.
- ★ It functions as a bearer instrument, similar to a promissory note, purchasable by Indian citizens or companies incorporated in India.
- ★ Citizens or corporations can purchase electoral bonds and donate them to any eligible political party of their choice.
- ★ Electoral bonds are available in denominations of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1,00,000, ₹10,00,000, and ₹1,00,00,000.
- ★ Electoral bonds are open for purchase for 10 days at the beginning of each quarter.

GOI and ADB Signed \$200 Million Loan

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Government of India have agreed to provide a \$200 million loan to bolster flood and riverbank erosion risk management measures along the 650 km long main stem of the Brahmaputra river situated in the state of Assam.
- ★ The project is built upon the success and lessons learned from the Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme, which was financed by ADB and implemented during 2010–2020 in Assam, India and similar investments made in Bangladesh.
- ★ The objective of the project is to address recurrent flooding and riverbank erosion of the Brahmaputra river using ADB's cost-effective, adaptive and systematic river stabilization approach.
- ★ The project will also improve the capacity of state agencies and affected communities to manage flood and riverbank erosion risks.
- ★ The project interventions include stabilizing 60 km of riverbanks, installing 32 km of pro-siltation measures, and building 4 km of climate-resilient flood embankments in five high-priority districts: Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Kamrup Rural, Morigaon, and Tinsukia.

- ★ The project will secure living spaces, support livelihoods, create employment opportunities, and ultimately enhance the navigability of the river.

Federal Bank Introduces RuPay–Backed NCMC Wallet Debit Cards

- ★ Federal Bank launched National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) integrated debit cards.
- ★ NCMC is a feature introduced on RuPay Contactless Debit Card which allows cardholders to make payments across NCMC-enabled terminals at metro stations, buses, etc., in an offline mode, just by tapping the card on the card reader.
- ★ The initiative aims to streamline travel experiences by digitizing payments, offering convenience to cardholders.
- ★ Cardholders need to activate the NCMC functionality by enabling the “contactless feature” through mobile banking, internet banking, or IVR.
- ★ Users can visit customer care desks at metro stations to activate and load money onto the card, either through cash or their existing savings account, with a maximum top-up limit of ₹2,000.
- ★ The upper limit for offline payment transactions is ₹200, subject to potential changes based on guidelines.

Juspay, Zoho, and Decentro Receive RBI Approval for Payment Aggregator

- ★ Fintech startups Juspay and Decentro have secured the final license to operate as payment aggregators, joining the ranks of established players like Razorpay, Cashfree, etc.
- ★ Juspay previously functioned as a payment gateway specializing in ecommerce transactions, while Decentro focuses on enabling ecommerce and consumer-facing businesses to provide financial services like lending and KYC verification.
- ★ Zoho, a software-as-a-service (SaaS) startup, also obtained the payment aggregator license on February 2, marking its entry into the payment services sector and becoming the first enterprise SaaS player to receive such approval from the RBI.
- ★ RBI issued guidelines for payment aggregator licenses in March 2020, with Razor pay, Cash free, and Open being among the initial recipients of regulatory approval in December of the same year.
- ★ A payment aggregator is a third-party service provider that enables customers to make and businesses to accept payments online.

RBI Raises Annual Remuneration Limit for Non-Executive Directors

- ★ To enable banks to sufficiently attract qualified competent individuals on their Boards, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised upwards the ceiling in respect of remuneration of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), to ₹30 lakhs per annum from ₹20 lakhs.
- ★ The ceiling has been raised only in respect of remuneration of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), other than the Chair of the Board.
- ★ The revised ceiling applies to NEDs of private sector banks.
- ★ It also applies to NEDs of Small Finance Banks (SFBs) and Payment Banks (PBs).
- ★ Additionally, it is applicable to the wholly owned subsidiaries of Foreign Banks.

- ★ RBI's instructions about the revised ceiling have become effective with immediate effect.
- ★ The instructions have been issued in exercise of powers conferred by Section 35B of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Russian Banks Designated as Foreign Portfolio Investors

- ★ Two Russian banks, Tinkoff Bank and Centro Credit Bank, have registered as foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), bringing the total number of FPI registrations from Russia to 10.
- ★ Tinkoff Bank: Second largest credit card provider in Russia and the world's largest digital bank in terms of customer base.
- ★ Tinkoff Bank has acquired both category I and category II licences for FPI.
- ★ Centro Credit Bank has registered as a category II FPI.
- ★ 20 Russian banks have established rupee vostro accounts with authorized dealer banks in India to facilitate rupee trade between the two countries.

Paytm Establishes Advisory Committee

- ★ The owner of fintech firm Paytm, One 97 Communications Limited, announced the formation of an advisory committee chaired by former Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairman M Damodaran.
- ★ The committee will work closely with the Board of Directors to further strengthen compliance and regulatory matters.
- ★ The committee includes M. Chitale, Former President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and a former governing Council Member of the Banking Codes and Standards Board of India nominated by RBI.
- ★ Ramachandran is also part of the Group Advisory Committee.
- ★ He is the former Chairman and Managing Director of Andhra Bank.
- ★ This initiative follows regulatory action taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) against Paytm Payments Bank for repeated violations of norms, indicating a proactive approach towards addressing compliance issues.
- ★ Since the announcement, Paytm stock has lost around 40% of its value in the last one month.
- ★ Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) is an associate of One97 Communications Ltd.
- ★ One97 Communications holds 49% of the paid-up share capital (directly and through its subsidiary) of PPBL.

RBI Allows Indian Banks in GIFT-IFSC to Trade on Bullion Exchange

- ★ Indian banks operating in the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City International Financial Services Centre (GIFT-IFSC) have been granted permission by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for bullion exchange trading and special category customer status.
- ★ The permission, granted on 09 February 2024, enables branches of Indian banks in GIFT-IFSC to function as Trading Members (TM) or Trading and Clearing Members (TCM) of the International Bullion Exchange IFSC Ltd.

- ★ Additionally, Indian banks are authorized by RBI to import gold or silver and operate as Special Category Clients (SCCs) on the International Bullion Exchange.
- ★ This permission applies to all scheduled commercial banks, excluding Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
- ★ According to the circular, RBI stated that trading members or trading and clearing members will execute trades only on behalf of clients without proprietary trading.
- ★ SCCs will execute only buy trades on behalf of clients.
- ★ The SCC will appoint one of the IFSC Banking Units (IBUs) to act as the clearing member on its behalf.

RBI Accelerates Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Development

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is intensifying its efforts to launch its Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and is introducing new features to enhance its functionality.
- ★ As part of the CBDC pilot program, the RBI is introducing programmability and offline functionality to the digital currency, aiming to improve its usability and versatility.
- ★ The CBDC Retail (CBDC-R) pilot currently facilitates Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M) transactions using Digital Rupee wallets provided by selected banks.
- ★ Now, the RBI plans to expand its use cases by introducing programmability, which will allow government agencies to ensure payments are made for specific benefits, while letting companies allocate funds for expenses such as business travel.
- ★ The RBI is introducing features such as validity periods and geographical usage restrictions that can be programmed into the CBDC, enhancing its functionality and security.

RBI to Strengthen Oversight of Aadhaar Enabled Payment System

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das emphasized the central bank is vigilant to enhance the security of Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS) transactions.
- ★ The RBI proposes to streamline the onboarding process for AePS touchpoint operators, including mandatory due diligence, to be followed by banks.
- ★ Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS), operated by NPCI, enables customers to perform digital payment transactions in assisted mode.
- ★ In 2023, more than 37 crore users undertook AePS transactions, which points to the important role played by AePS in financial inclusion.
- ★ To enhance the security of AePS transactions, it is proposed to streamline the onboarding process, including mandatory due diligence, for AePS touchpoint operators, to be followed by banks. Additional fraud risk management requirements will also be considered. Instructions in this regard shall be issued shortly.
- ★ Aadhaar-enabled payment system (AePS) transactions can be conducted with just an Aadhaar number, fingerprint/IRIS (for authentication), and the name of the bank where the account is opened.
- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) on November 02, 2023, issued a circular regarding the AePS transaction limits.

- ★ It is recommended that they permit their clients to make AePS Cash Withdrawals and BHIM Aadhaar Pay transactions, with a monthly cumulative cap of 50,000.

Karnataka Bank Unveils 'Bharat Ka Karnataka Bank' Campaign

- ★ Karnataka Bank has launched its centenary campaign, 'Bharat Ka Karnataka Bank', to mark its 100 years of service in banking.
- ★ The campaign is jointly executed by Havas Media India and Havas Worldwide India and underscores Karnataka Bank's ability to adapt to the changing times while staying true to its core values.
- ★ To strengthen Karnataka Bank's brand awareness, fostering a deeper connection with customers while also inviting new patrons to be a part of its storied legacy.

Reserve Bank of India Released Sovereign Gold Bond

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced that the issue price of the next tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond has been fixed at ₹6,263 per gram.
- ★ The Government of India in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India has decided to allow a discount of ₹50 per gram from the issue price to those investors who apply online and the payment is made through digital mode.
- ★ For such investors the issue price of Gold Bond will be ₹6,213 per gram of gold.
- ★ SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.
- ★ The SGB Scheme was first launched by the Government of India (GOI) on October 30, 2015.
- ★ They are substitutes for holding physical gold.
- ★ Investors have to pay the issue price, and the bonds will be redeemed upon maturity.
- ★ The bond is issued by the Reserve Bank on behalf of the Government of India (GOI).
- ★ The bonds are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in multiples thereof.
- ★ The minimum investment in the bond shall be one gram, with a maximum subscription limit of 4 kg for individuals, 4 kg for HUFs, and 20 kg for trusts and similar entities notified by the government from time to time per fiscal year.

PSB Partners with Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority

- ★ In a move to support farmers and traders with low-interest rate loans, the Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority (WDRA) and Punjab and Sind Bank (PSB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- ★ Primary objective of the MoU is to raise awareness about funding against electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs).
- ★ eNWR is a digital warehousing receipt issued by registered warehouses regulated and governed by a statutory body - the Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) of India.
- ★ The eNWR can be used by farmers to finance and trade in settlements without physically exchanging goods.
- ★ eNWR can be used as a three-in-one instrument (finance, trading, and settlement).

- ★ The NWR system enables farmers to store the produce safely and scientifically at warehouses near their farms.
- ★ It also allows farmers to receive loans from banks using the issued NW₹ against their deposited stock.

RBI Directs Visa and Mastercard to Cease Business Payments

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has instructed major international payment players Visa and Mastercard to halt card-based commercial transactions conducted by both small and large businesses.
- ★ The directive from RBI arises from concerns related to compliance with Know Your Customer (KYC) regulations.
- ★ This action comes in the wake of recent regulatory measures taken by RBI against Paytm Payments Bank.
- ★ The RBI is motivated by worries about Visa and Mastercard's non-compliance with KYC norms, leading to the temporary halt of transactions at unauthorized business outlets.
- ★ Some fintech companies have also received directives from RBI to pause business payments made by commercial cards until further notice.

Indian Overseas Bank Marks 88th Foundation Day

- ★ The Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has launched new products on the occasion of the Bank's 88th Foundation Day, celebrated in Chennai, Tamil Nadu (TN).
- ★ Indian Overseas Bank Marks 88th Foundation Day with Opening of 88 New Branches and Introduction of New Rupay and CASA Variants.
- ★ IOB launched three new credit card variants: RuPay Classic, RuPay Platinum, and RuPay Select, offering various reward points and benefits.
- ★ The premium variant, RuPay Select, includes personal accident coverage of up to ₹10 lakhs.
- ★ The bank introduced Freedom Savings and Current Account variants, offering customers freedom from charges and the obligation to maintain a minimum balance in exchange for a modest annual fee.
- ★ These accounts also provide personal accident insurance coverage of ₹10 lakhs.
- ★ IOB announced the introduction of Digital Document Execution (DDE) to facilitate seamless online locker agreements.

Reserve Bank of India and Nepal Rastra Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) signed and exchanged Terms of Reference (ToR).
- ★ It is to integrate fast payment systems of India and Nepal through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal, respectively.
- ★ Aim of the integration is to facilitate cross-border remittances between India and Nepal by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers.

- ★ The collaboration between India and Nepal in linking their fast payment systems through the UPI-NPI linkage will further deepen financial connectivity and reinforce the enduring historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries.
- ★ Based on the Terms of Reference exchanged between RBI and NRB, the necessary systems will be put in place for interlinking of UPI and NPI.
- ★ The formal introduction of the linkage, that is, commencement of operations would take place at a later date.
- ★ The development comes after India's Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services launched in Sri Lanka and Mauritius at a virtual ceremony, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth, and Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

IREDA and PNB Signed an MoU

- ★ Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an aim to promote renewable energy initiatives across the country.
- ★ The two organizations will work together to finance a variety of renewable energy projects by co-lending and loan syndication.
- ★ The MoU includes various provisions to enhance support for renewable energy projects.
- ★ These provisions include joint lending, loan syndication and underwriting, management of Trust and Retention Account (TRA) for IREDA borrowers, and working towards competitive terms of sanction, including pricing on IREDA borrowings.
- ★ IREDA and PNB can invest in each other's bonds through this collaboration.
- ★ India has made significant progress in renewable energy, ranking 4th globally in Renewable Energy Installed Capacity, Wind Power capacity, and Solar Power capacity, according to the REN21 Renewables 2022 Global Status Report.

Indian Highways Management Company Limited Excludes Paytm Payments Bank

- ★ Indian Highways Management Company Ltd (IHMCL), toll collecting arm of state-owned NHAI, has advised highway users to buy FASTags from 32 authorised banks excluding Paytm Payments Bank for hassle-free travel.
- ★ The 32 authorised banks include Airtel Payments Bank, Allahabad Bank, Bank of Baroda, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, IDBI Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, and Yes Bank, among others.
- ★ India has over 8 crore FASTag users and Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL) has around 30 per cent market share.
- ★ Earlier, IHMCL had barred Paytm Payments Bank from issuing fresh FASTags.
- ★ On January 31, 2024 the Reserve Bank directed PPBL to stop accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, FASTags and other instruments after February 29.
- ★ However, any interest, cashbacks, or refunds may be credited back to customers anytime.
- ★ IHMCL is encouraging FASTag users to complete the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag as per RBI guidelines.

Federal Bank Introduces Stellar Savings Account for Customer Base

- ★ Federal Bank has launched its latest banking product, the Stellar Savings Account, to revolutionize the banking sector by offering exceptional benefits and innovative features.
- ★ The introduction of the Stellar Savings Account aims to enhance customer experience, promote financial wellness, and encourage eco-friendly banking practices.
- ★ Federal Bank includes a complimentary one-year wellness plan with the Stellar Savings Account, emphasizing the importance of overall well-being for its customers.
- ★ The account provides robust insurance coverage, offering financial security and peace of mind to customers and their families in case of unforeseen events.
- ★ Milestone benefits are introduced, allowing customers to celebrate each banking achievement with exclusive perks and privileges.
- ★ Customers can earn reward points on every transaction with the account, with accelerated points for debit card expenditures in specific segments such as travel, electronics, and apparel, maximizing their rewards.
- ★ Federal Bank offers an eco-friendly debit card with the Stellar Savings Account, aligning with its commitment to sustainability and enabling customers to make environmentally conscious choices while managing their finances.

IEPFA Collaborates with DBS Bank

- ★ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), and DBS Bank, a prominent financial institution with a strong presence in Asia and Southeast Asia in New Delhi.
- ★ According to the MoU, DBS Bank aims to support IEPFA's investor awareness activities by disseminating safety messages through its various digital platforms.
- ★ DBS Bank will utilise multiple digital platforms to ensure increased visibility and engagement to impart investor awareness activities of IEPFA, such as:
 - Display of safety messages on ATM screens to reach customers during banking transactions
 - Featuring safety messages prominently on the bank's website
 - Ensuring visibility to online visitors
 - Sending safety messages through WhatsApp and other messaging platforms to engage with a broader audience
- ★ IEPFA has conducted several Investor Awareness Programmes aimed at increasing financial literacy and empowering investors to protect themselves from financial fraud.

IREDA Partners with Punjab National Bank

- ★ Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited. (IREDA) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing renewable energy initiatives across the nation.
- ★ The MoU was signed at IREDA's registered office in New Delhi.

- ★ It is to facilitate joint efforts in co-lending and loan syndication for a diverse range of renewable energy projects across the nation.
- ★ The MoU includes provisions for joint lending, loan syndication, underwriting, Management of Trust and Retention Account (TRA) for IREDA borrowers, and working towards competitive terms of sanction, including pricing on IREDA borrowings.
- ★ IREDA and PNB can also invest in bonds issued by either organization through this collaboration.

Unauthorised Business Payment Solution Providers Operations Limited to a Single Card Network

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has disclosed that only one card network has unauthorized Business Payment Solution Providers (BPSP) operations.
- ★ The RBI has refrained from explicitly naming the card network involved in these unauthorized operations.
- ★ According to the RBI, the identified card network has arrangements enabling unauthorized payments through business cards through intermediaries.
- ★ This card network has facilitated a system allowing businesses to make payments with cards to entities that typically do not accept credit cards, using specific intermediaries.
- ★ India currently has five card networks: Diner's Club, American Express, Visa, Mastercard, and RuPay.
- ★ Under the BPSP arrangement, an intermediary receives payments from corporates through commercial cards and subsequently transfers the funds to receivers who do not accept cards, utilizing IMPS, RTGS, or NEFT.
- ★ Such payment systems are required to obtain authorization under Section 4 of the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007, which the identified card network has not secured.

India's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Surges by 25.7%

- ★ India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments rose by 25.7% on a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) basis to \$2.09 billion in January 2024, compared to over \$1.66 billion in January 2023.
- ★ However, there was a sequential decline from \$2.5 billion in December 2023, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ Outbound FDI commitments include equity, loans, and guarantees.
- ★ Equity commitments rose to \$760.9 million in January 2024 from \$597.4 million in January 2023, but were lower than the \$834.7 million recorded in December 2023.
- ★ Debt commitments increased to \$306.2 million in January 2024 from \$215.6 million a year ago, but decreased significantly from \$687.9 million in December 2023.
- ★ Guarantees for overseas units increased to \$1.02 billion in January 2024 from \$854.1 million in January 2023.

IRDAI Grants Policy bazaar In-Principle Approval to Upgrade License

- ★ Policy bazaar Fintech announced that insurance regulator Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) has granted in-principle approval to its wholly owned subsidiary Policy bazaar Insurance Brokers (Policy bazaar) to upgrade its license from a direct insurance broker (Life and General) to a composite insurance broker.
- ★ This approval is expected to pave the way for Policy bazaar to sell reinsurance products besides being a pure play platform focused on insurance buying.
- ★ PB Fintech reported its first-ever net profit of ₹37.2 crore for the quarter ending December 31, 2023.
- ★ For the nine months ending December 31, 2023, PB Fintech's net profit stood at ₹4.2 crore.
- ★ PB Fintech's revenue from operations grew 43 per cent to ₹871 crore in the third quarter ended December 31, 2023.

Bandhan Bank Granted Official Authority to Collect State Revenues

- ★ Private lender Bandhan Bank has been authorised by the West Bengal government to collect tax and non-tax receipts on its behalf.
- ★ The mandate will enable the bank to collect revenues through the Government Receipt Portal System (GRIPS).
- ★ By virtue of this mandate, people will be able to pay various taxes like property tax, motor vehicle tax and professional tax using this portal.
- ★ The bank will soon be integrating itself with the West Bengal government to operationalise the payment collection process.
- ★ GRIPS are an online internet-based platform for making various tax and non-tax payments to the West Bengal government.

PayPal Registers With India's Financial Intelligence Unit

- ★ US-based online payment gateway PayPal has officially registered its operations with the Financial Intelligence Unit of India.
- ★ PTI reported that the company has completed the formal procedure of being designated as a reporting entity under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) recently and has submitted the requisite documents to the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).
- ★ PayPal has also appointed a Principal Officer to communicate with the FIU, as required by the anti-money laundering law.
- ★ The FIU serves as a national agency responsible for receiving, processing, analysing and disseminating information concerning suspicious financial transactions within Indian economic channels to various enforcement agencies and foreign FIUs.

RBI Levies Monetary Penalty on Hanamasagar Urban Co-operative Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of ₹50,000 on Hanamasagar Urban Co-operative Bank Limited., Karnataka.

- ★ Penalty imposed for non-compliance with RBI directions regarding monitoring and reporting mechanisms for frauds, as well as reporting of frauds on XBRL-FMR submission.
- ★ The penalty is imposed due to deficiencies in regulatory compliance and does not imply any judgement on the validity of transactions or agreements with the bank's customers.
- ★ RBI's action is based on the powers conferred under the provisions of section 47A(1)(c) read with sections 46(4)(i) and 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Paytm Partners with Axis Bank

- ★ Paytm has partnered with Axis Bank for the settlement of merchant payments.
- ★ The company issued a release stating that One97 Communications has shifted its nodal account to Axis Bank via an escrow account that it has opened with it.
- ★ The shift of nodal accounts to Axis Bank will ensure seamless merchant settlements as before.
- ★ According to One97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, Paytm QR, Soundbox and card machines will continue to operate seamlessly for all their merchant partners.
- ★ Additionally, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has confirmed the continued seamless functionality of Paytm QR, Soundbox, and card machines beyond March 15.
- ★ According to Paytm, merchants with fund transactions connected to any bank account other than Paytm Payments Bank need not worry about disruptions.
- ★ The RBI extended the deadline for Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) to stop accepting fresh deposits and do credit transactions to March 15 from February 29.
- ★ Nodal accounts or nodal bank accounts are special internal bank accounts that are mandated by the RBI for businesses that are intermediaries, connecting customers to sellers.
- ★ An escrow account is a temporary pass through account held by a third party during the process of a transaction between two parties.

Japan Pledges ¥232.209 Billion Official Development Assistance Loan

- ★ The Japanese government has committed an Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan of 232.209 billion yen (about ₹12,800 crore) for 9 projects across various sectors in India.
- ★ The road network connectivity projects aim to improve infrastructure development in India's North East region, while the Chennai peripheral ring road project aims to alleviate traffic congestion and strengthen connections to the southern part of the state.
- ★ The project in Nagaland will help develop tertiary level medical service delivery by developing a Medical College Hospital contributing towards universal health coverage.
- ★ A unique project in Telangana will help discover entrepreneurial skills with focus on women and rural population and support business expansion of MSMEs.
- ★ In Haryana, the project will promote sustainable horticulture and improve farmer's income by promoting crop diversification and infrastructure development.
- ★ The forestry project in Rajasthan will enhance ecosystem services through afforestation, forest and biodiversity conservation.

- ★ In the mountainous state of Uttarakhand, the project aims to provide a stable water supply to urban towns.
- ★ The fifth tranche of the Dedicated Freight Corridor project will help in construction of a new dedicated freight railway system and bring about modernisation of the intermodal logistics system enabling handling of increased freight traffic.

PhonePe Introduces Indus Appstore

- ★ Walmart-backed Indian fintech PhonePe launched its app store for Android called Indus Appstore, becoming the first Indian rival to Google's Play Store.
- ★ PhonePe has informed us that no app listing fees will be charged for one year, until 1 April 2025, for developers.
- ★ In first, the release mentioned, that developers can use any third-party payment gateway of their choice.
- ★ Indus App Store allows Indian consumers to download over 2 lakh mobile apps and games, across 45 categories.
- ★ Users will be able to discover these apps conveniently in 12 Indian languages, thereby catering to 95% of Indians' language preferences.
- ★ The app store also offers a brand new short-video based discovery feature, to make new app discovery more engaging for consumers.
- ★ It provides a self-publishing platform, localization services, multiple tools to monitor and grow their apps along with a dedicated 24 × 7 customer support.

ESIC Extends Medical Benefits to Superannuated Insured Persons

- ★ The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) decided to extend medical benefits to superannuated insured persons with relaxed norms.
- ★ The decision was taken at the 193rd meeting of ESIC under the Chairmanship of Union Minister Bhupender Yadav.
- ★ The ESIC approved a proposal to provide medical benefits to the insured superannuating workers who went out of the ESI Scheme coverage due to exceeding the wage ceiling, if the worker was under insurable employment for at least 5 years before superannuation/voluntary retirement.
- ★ The persons who were in insurable employment for at least 5 years after April 1, 2012 and superannuated/voluntarily retired on or after April 1, 2017 with wages up to ₹30,000 per month will be benefitted under the new scheme.
- ★ To promote holistic wellbeing of the ESI beneficiaries, a new Policy on AYUSH 2023 in ESIC institutions was adopted during the meeting.
- ★ The policy details the establishing of Panchkarma, Kshara Sutra and AYUSH Units in ESIC Hospitals.

HDFC Bank Raises \$300 Million through Inaugural Sustainable Finance Bond Issue

- ★ Largest private sector lender HDFC Bank has raised \$300 million in its maiden sustainable finance bond issue.

- ★ The country's biggest private lender by market capitalisation priced its three-year sustainability bond at a yield of 5.196%.
- ★ This is 95 basis points (bps) over the 3-year U.S. Treasury yield, sharply lower than the initial guidance of a 125-bps spread.
- ★ The money raised is part of the \$750 million bond-raise that will be listed on the GIFT City.
- ★ The \$300 million sustainable finance bonds have been raised for a tenure of three years at a spread of 0.95 per cent over the US treasury, while the remaining \$450 million will be repaid in 5 years at 1.08 per cent over the US Treasury.
- ★ The bank stated that proceeds of the sustainable finance bond will be utilised for funding green and social loans in accordance with the sustainable finance, while the rest will be deployed for financing general banking activities.

BUSINESS NEWS

EPFO Fixes Interest Rate on Employees' Provident Fund

- ★ The interest rate on Employees Provident Fund (EPF) deposits has been increased to 8.25% for 2023-24 by the retirement fund body EPFO, which is the highest level in three years.
- ★ On 10 February, the decision was taken during a meeting of the EPFO's apex decision-making body, the Central Board of Trustees (CBT).
- ★ EPFO in March 2023 marginally increased the interest rate on EPF to 8.15% for the financial year 2022-23 from 8.10% in 2021-22.
- ★ EPFO is a statutory body that was established under the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
- ★ The organization works under the aegis of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Banking Business in Uttar Pradesh Increased to ₹27 Lakh Crore

- ★ During a recent meeting of the State Level Bankers Committee, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath urged banks to not hesitate in providing loans to those in need.
- ★ The government will offer training to beneficiaries of its schemes and ensure that banks receive all necessary security and assistance.
- ★ Adityanath expressed satisfaction with the credit deposit ratio (CD ratio) of banks in the state, which currently stands at 58.59%.
- ★ However, he set a target of increasing it to 65% in the next financial year.
- ★ The Chief Minister highlighted the growth of the banking sector in the state, with banking business worth ₹12.80 lakh crore in 2016-17, which has now risen to ₹26.80 lakh crore.
- ★ The Chief Minister highlighted the growth and strength of the banking sector in Uttar Pradesh, citing that in 2016-17, banks provided loans amounting to ₹1.37 lakh crore in the state.
- ★ This figure increased to over ₹3 lakh crore in 2022-23, and by December 2023, banks had already given loans amounting to ₹2.98 lakh crore.

Indraprastha Gas to set up 19 CBG Plants in Multi-States

- ★ Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) plans to set up 19 plants to produce compressed biogas (CBG) that would feed into its city gas distribution network.
- ★ IGL signed preliminary agreements with two technology partners for setting up compressed biogas plants in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ This partnership aims to produce 0.45 million metric standard cubic meters per day of biogas from waste, equivalent to approximately 5% of IGL's daily gas requirements.
- ★ The biogas projects will help municipal authorities get rid of municipal waste while helping farmers dispose of agricultural waste.

SPORTS

Mascot of Khelo India Winter Games Launched

- ★ Snow Leopard 'Sheen-e She' the mascot and logo of Khelo India Winter Games 2024 were launched.
- ★ The Khelo India Winter Games 2024 will be organised in two parts.
- ★ The first part of the Winter Games will be held in the Union Territory of Ladakh from 02 February to 06 February.
- ★ Ladakh will be hosting the event for the first time.
- ★ The second portion is scheduled to take place in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir from 21 February to 25 February.
- ★ Games will be conducted in Ladakh are ice Hockey and speed skating, in Jammu and Kashmir are ski mountaineering, Alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic skiing and gondola.
- ★ The Games' logo is prominently featured with the Indian tricolor, which reflects the uniqueness of the picturesque land and many sports events that are on the cards.
- ★ The logo incorporates a Dharmachakra, which is a turning wheel of Dharma, on a hilltop in Chanspa in Leh, the venue of the games.

R Ashwin is Top Bowler in ICC Test Rankings, Bumrah is at Fourth Place

- ★ India's famous off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has been placed at the top position in the latest ICC bowling rankings released on 31 January 2024.
- ★ While compatriots Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja have been placed fourth and sixth respectively.
- ★ Ashwin, who took six wickets in the match for India in the first Test against England, is at the top with 853 rating points.
- ★ While fast bowler Bumrah, who took half a dozen wickets, moved up one place to fourth position.
- ★ Only one Indian player, Virat Kohli, is included in the ICC Test batsmen rankings. Kohli has been placed at sixth position.

- ★ Whereas Kane Williamson of New Zealand has been placed at the top.
- ★ Ravindra Jadeja remains at the top in the rankings of Test all-rounders.
- ★ This time India has been placed second in the ICC Men's Test Team list.
- ★ Whereas Australia has been placed at the top position among the top-10 teams in the ICC Men's Test Team list.

Short Track Ice Skating

- ★ Karnataka has topped in the medal tally in the Short track Ice Skating with 4 gold medals in the ongoing Fourth edition of the Khelo India Winter Games 2024 at Leh.
- ★ Telangana is in second place with 2 golds and 3 silver medals and Maharashtra is in third in the medal tally with one Gold, 7 Silver, and 5 Bronze.
- ★ The Short Track Ice Skating under 17 and Above 17 in 300 metres and 500 metres in the Khelo India Winter Games concluded.
- ★ Out of six disciplines of the Khelo India Winter Games, two disciplines namely Ice Hockey and Speed Track Skating are being held at Leh as the fourth edition of Khelo India Winter Games is being jointly hosted by Ladakh Union Territory and Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory.
- ★ The Ice Skating long track competition will begin.
- ★ The semi-final match of Ice Hockey is going to be held between ITBP and UT Ladakh and Indian Army and Himachal Pradesh

First BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships

- ★ Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur launched the BIMSTEC Aquatics Championship 2024 in New Delhi on.
- ★ The BIMSTEC Aquatics Championship is being organized for the first time.
- ★ In this, competitions are being organised for the age group below 20 years.
- ★ A total of three sports events, swimming, water polo and diving events are being organised.
- ★ A total of 39 medals will be awarded in these three sports events and a total of 9 trophies will also be awarded.
- ★ 268 athletes from different BIMSTEC member countries are participating in the BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships 2024. Also, more than 500 personnel are participating in this event.

International Kayaking Championship – 2024

- ★ The three-day Tawangchu Tides International Kayaking Championship-2024 kick started in Tawang District, Arunachal Pradesh.
- ★ District Deputy Commissioner inaugurated the championship at Dongshengmang in Bongleng village near Indo Bhutan border.
- ★ A total of 51 Kayakers from different countries including Britain, Russia and Australia and different states of the country are participating in it.
- ★ The event is being organized by an organization called "SWYTCH".

- ★ The Race Director Charanjeev Kala, the goal of this initiative is to position Arunachal Pradesh as a global hub for kayaking, with the aspirations to host future World Championships.
- ★ The race will continue for three days, from 7 to 9 Feb, and culminate with the declaration of the Champion Kayakers, the one who has done best in all the races.

India clinched the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship by Befeating Bangladesh

- ★ India has won the South Asian Football Federation's (SAFF) U-19 Women's Championship beating defending champion Bangladesh in the final of the four-nation tournament in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- ★ The winner of the match was decided by a toss after a lengthy penalty shootout.
- ★ All eleven players from each side converted their penalties in the shootout after the contest ended 1-1 at full time.
- ★ Sibani Devi gave India the lead in the eighth minute but Bangladesh striker Sagorika scored the equalizer in the last minutes of the game to take it to penalties.
- ★ In the group stage, India won comfortably against Bhutan and Nepal but lost to Bangladesh.
- ★ India entered the final as the second-place finishers in the group.
- ★ Bangladesh reached the final as top finisher by winning all the league matches.

Under-19 ICC World Cup One-Day

- ★ Australia has won the title by defeating India in the final of the 15th ICC Under-19 ODI World Cup 2024.
- ★ The match of the Under-19 World Cup was played on 11 February 2024 at Willowmoore Park, Benoni, South Africa.
- ★ Australia defeated India by 79 runs.
- ★ In this match, the captain of the Indian team was Uday Saharan, while the Australian team was captained by Hugh Wiebgen.

Nagaland to Co-Host Wrestling as Part of Khelo India University Games

- ★ Nagaland will be co-hosting wrestling as part of the Khelo India University Games scheduled to be held from 22nd to 26th February in Kohima.
- ★ Assam is the main host of the fourth edition of the Khelo India University Games.
- ★ Other North Eastern states are also co-hosting various disciplines.
- ★ About 240 athletes from universities across the country will participate in the wrestling.
- ★ About 74 officials from the Sports Authority of India, All India University, and the National Sports Federation will officiate and provide technical support.
- ★ The Khelo India University Games is a national-level multi-disciplinary sports event aimed at promoting sports and fitness among university students in India.

ATP Singles Rankings

- ★ In Tennis, India's Sumit Nagal jumped 23 ranks to enter the top 100 in the ATP singles rankings for the first time in his career.
- ★ The title win at the Chennai Open challenger event pushed Nagal to the 98th spot in the latest singles rankings.
- ★ He defeated Luca Nardi of Italy by 6-1, 6-4 in the final to win his fifth Challenger-level singles title.
- ★ Nagal is the first Indian to make the top 100 since P Gunneswaran made the cut in 2019.
- ★ Last month in the Australian Open, Nagal defeated then world no.27 Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan, becoming the first Indian to beat a seeded player at a Grand Slam in 35 years.

5th Chess Olympiad

- ★ Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur along with International Chess Federation FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich handed off Torch Relay for the 45th Chess Olympiad at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi.
- ★ The 44th Chess Olympiad was hosted in Chennai, India and the 45th edition will be hosted by Hungary in Budapest.
- ★ India hosted Chess Olympiad with a great passion and all States participated in the Torch Relay in the country.
- ★ With exceptional emerging talents and the mentorship of legends like Viswanathan Anand, India's ascent in the world of chess shows no signs of slowing down.

Second Indian Player to reach the 500th Test Wicket Milestone

- ★ Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed his 500th Test wicket in the first innings of the third Test match against England at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot. The 37-year-old achieved this monumental feat in his 98th Test Match.
- ★ Ashwin dismissed Zak Crawley in the final session of the second day to join Anil Kumble as the second Indian, and fifth overall, to take 500 wickets in Test history.
- ★ Meanwhile, England were 207 for two at stumps in their first innings.
- ★ Opener Ben Duckett was batting on 133, and his teammate Joe Root was not out at nine.
- ★ Earlier, India posted a total of 445 runs in their first innings helped by centuries from skipper Rohit Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja.

Badminton Asia Team Championship 2024

- ★ Indian women's badminton team has won the title of Badminton Asia Team Championship 2024.
- ★ In the final of this championship played in Malaysia, the Indian Women's team defeated Thailand 3-2.
- ★ This was the 5th edition of the championship being played since 2016.

- ★ PV Sindhu led the Indian team in this championship. The young and dynamic group of the Indian women's team won against two-time bronze medalists Thailand.

MI Emirates Wins ILT20 Title

- ★ MI Emirates has won the title of the second edition of UAE International League T20 (ILT20) in February 2024.
- ★ MI Emirates secured the title by defeating Dubai Capitals by 45 runs in the final match at Dubai International Stadium.
- ★ Dubai Capitals reached the finals with a streak of four consecutive victories.
- ★ MI team posted a total of 208 runs for the loss of 3 wickets in their 20 overs, batting first.
- ★ In response, Dubai Capitals team could score only 163 runs at the loss of 7 wickets in 20 overs.
- ★ Best Batsman of the Tournament (Green Belt Winner): This award was won by Desert Vipers opening batsman Alex Hales. He was given a prize money of 15,000 US dollars (₹12.47 lakh).

Australia Clinch U19 Men's Cricket World Cup

- ★ Australia beat India by 79 runs to win their fourth ICC U19 World Cup.
- ★ The Australian team posted a target of 253 runs in 50 overs.
- ★ However, India fell short, managing to score only 174 runs in their innings.
- ★ The 2024 ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup was an international limited-overs cricket tournament organized by the International Cricket Council (ICC), that was held in South Africa from 19 January to 11 February 2024.
- ★ It was the fifteenth edition of the Under-19 Cricket World Cup.
- ★ The tournament was originally scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka, but its hosting was pulled in November 2023 after Sri Lanka Cricket was suspended by the ICC.
- ★ The Man of the match was awarded to Mahli Beardman who took 3 wickets for 15 runs in the final match.
- ★ The performers of the tournament were, Uday Saharan from India (397 runs) and Kwena Maphaka from South Africa (21 wickets).
- ★ South Africa pace sensation Kwena Maphaka has been named the Player of the Tournament at the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2024.

Asian Indoor Athletics Championships

- ★ India has concluded the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran with three gold, one silver and two national records.
- ★ Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur congratulated the team for showcasing their outstanding performance at the Championships.
- ★ Tajinder Singh Toor clinched gold with a throw of 19.7 metres in men's shotput.
- ★ Harmilan Bains secured gold in the women's 1500 metres and Ankita Dhyani on clinching silver in the women's 3000 metres event.

- ★ A total of 13 Indian athletes six women and seven men competed at the eleventh edition of the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships 2024 held in Irani's Tehran from February 17 to 19.

Frozen Lake Marathon

- ★ Pangong Frozen Lake Marathon 2024 was held in Leh-Ladakh, India on 20 February 2024.
- ★ Bhagwan Singh and Mahesh Khurana, two men from Bhopal, have joined the select group of athletes after completing the Pangong Frozen Lake Marathon.
- ★ The marathon was inaugurated by Sports Secretary Ravinder Kumar and Chushul Constituency councilor Konchok Stanzin.
- ★ Ladakh's Pangong Frozen Lake is the second edition of the marathon. It is known as the 'world's highest frozen lake marathon'.
- ★ The race was held amidst heavy snowfall at an altitude of 14,273 feet.
- ★ The temperature dropped to -15 degrees Celsius, making it one of the toughest marathons in the world.
- ★ The Frozen Lake Marathon aims to spread awareness about the rapidly melting Himalayan glaciers. During this, it is explained how the environment can be saved by controlling human activities.

Archery Asia Cup 2024

- ★ India finished the Archery Asia Cup 2024 with 14 medals, including nine golds, four silvers and one bronze in Baghdad, Iraq.
- ★ In the women's individual recurve category, three-time Olympian Deepika Kumari won the gold medal by defeating compatriot Simranjeet Kaur 6-2.
- ★ Dhiraj Bommadevara beat Tarundeep Rai 7-3 to win the men's recurve archery title.
- ★ India swept the top podiums in all the individual events, clinching top positions in both the men's and women's compound events.
- ★ Parneet Kaur beat Iran's Fatemeh Hemmati 138-135 for the women's gold medal match while Prathamesh Jawkar beat team-mate Kushal Dalal 146-144 for the men's title.
- ★ Indian women's recurve team comprising Simranjeet Kaur, Deepika Kumari and Bhajan Kaur defeated Uzbekistan 5-4 via shootout in a closely-fought final to clinch gold.
- ★ Meanwhile, the trio of Dhiraj Bommadevara, Pravin Ramesh Jadhav and Tarundeep Rai ousted Bangladesh 6-2 to claim the gold.
- ★ Dhiraj and Simranjeet also teamed up to win the mixed team recurve gold, blanking Bangladesh 6-0 in the final.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

TI Corruption Perception Index 2023

- ★ Transparency International (TI) released the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2023 on January 30, 2024.
- ★ India slipped 8 places to 93rd in CPI, as India's rank in 2022 was 85th.
- ★ This index has been prepared on the basis of the perceptions of experts and business people.
- ★ According to this, 180 countries and territories are ranked, taking into account the perceived levels of public sector corruption.
- ★ A scale of 0 to 100 is used for this ranking. Where 0 indicates extremely corrupt and 100 indicates very honest.
- ★ According to this report, Denmark is the first place where corruption is most prevalent, whereas countries like New Zealand (3) and Singapore (5) have higher scores and less corruption.

World's Top Vehicle Exporter in 2023

- ★ The Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) has released its annual vehicle figures for January 31, 2024.
- ★ This shows that China overtook Japan to become the world's largest vehicle exporter in 2023.
- ★ JAMA data shows Japan will export 4.42 million vehicles in 2023, while the number of vehicles exported by China was 4.91 million in January 2024, as reported by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM).
- ★ Whereas China's Customs Bureau has put its number at more than 5.22 million. This is a massive increase of 57 percent year-on-year.
- ★ China had already exceeded Japan in monthly vehicle exports before becoming the world's top vehicle exporter in 2023.
- ★ But data for January 31 confirmed that China remained the top exporter of vehicles for the year as well.

Brand Guardianship Index 2024

- ★ Indian industrialist Mukesh Ambani has been ranked the top Indian and second in the world in the Brand Guardianship Index 2024 compiled by Brand Finance.
- ★ Ma Huateng, CEO of Chinese company Tencent, has secured the top position.
- ★ The Brand Guardianship Index acknowledges CEOs who skillfully generate business value while prioritizing the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, investors, and society.
- ★ In Brand Finance's survey, Ambani got a BGI score of 80.3, which is less than the 81.6 of China-based Tencent's Ma Huateng.
- ★ Brand finance creates a balanced scorecard of measures that best capture a CEO's potential.

Logistics Performance Index Report 2023- World Bank

- ★ According to the World Bank's 'Logistics Performance Index Report (2023): Connecting to Compete 2023', India ranks 38 out of 139 countries.
- ★ India's rank has improved by six places from 44 in 2018 and sixteen places from 54 in 2014.
- ★ An Inter-Ministerial dedicated team comprising of Stakeholder Ministries/Departments has been formed.
- ★ These stakeholder Ministries/Departments focus on targeted action plans with interventions needed to improve logistics performance across all six LPI parameters. Customs, Infrastructure, Ease of arranging shipments, Quality of logistics services, Tracking and Tracing, and Timeliness.
- ★ Concerning NTFAP 2020-23, 27 action points have been identified under the working group on infrastructure up gradation.

GROW Report and Portal Launched by NITI Aayog

- ★ Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW) report and "Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW)-Suitability Mapping" portal was launched by NITI Aayog.
- ★ A collaborative project led by NITI Aayog has employed remote sensing and GIS technologies to evaluate the potential of agroforestry in all districts of India.
- ★ By utilizing thematic datasets, an Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI) was developed to prioritize the national-level initiatives.
- ★ This report offers a detailed analysis of each state and district, providing valuable support to government departments and industries to promote greening and restoration projects.
- ★ The Portal provides a platform for accessing state and district-level data. As per the current report, agroforestry covers 8.65% of India's total geographical area, which is approximately 28.42 million hectares.
- ★ The report highlights the potential benefits of using underutilized areas, particularly wastelands, for agroforestry.
- ★ The GROW initiative aligns with national commitments to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

SIDBI to Introduce 'Prabhaav'

- ★ The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has unveiled the report of the impact assessment of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), a key component of the startups namely Prabhaav.
- ★ The third-party assessment of the scheme was undertaken by CRISIL, India's premier analytics company and pioneer of AIF benchmarking in the country.
- ★ As of November 30, 129 Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) have been sanctioned out of FFS across different segments.
- ★ The scheme has already catalysed investments to the tune of ~4x of the amount drawn with ₹17,534 crore invested in 938 unique startups.

- ★ While FFS largely focuses on early-stage funding in young companies, as many as 18 of its startups have already become unicorns.
- ★ The scheme has also channelised investments in startups in emerging sectors such as deep tech, agri solutions, health tech, financial services, and sustainability.
- ★ Implemented with emphasis on diversity & inclusiveness, after the launch of FFS, 129 startups beyond Tier 1 cities have received investments aggregating ₹1,590 crore.
- ★ Another heartening outcome was the increasing support to women led startups as well as women led fund managers.

Bharatvanshi MP Krishnamoorthi Included Among 50 Top Influential People

- ★ Indian-American MP Raja Krishnamoorthy has been included in the list of 50 most powerful people in Chicago Magazine, a top American magazine. Krishnamoorthy plans to run for US Senate in 2026.
- ★ The New Delhi-born and Illinois-raised Democrat is ranked 24th on Chicago Magazine's Heavy Hitters list. In which Illinois Governor JB Pritzker is at the top.
- ★ Elected to Congress in 2016, Krishnamoorthy is now in his fourth term representing Illinois's 8th district.
- ★ According to Chicago Magazine, "Krishnamoorthy has \$14.4 million in his campaign fund".
- ★ According to the magazine, this amount is three times more than that of any other congressional representative from Illinois, and the third largest in the entire Congress.

Henley Passport Index

- ★ India has slipped to the 85th spot on the Henley Passport Index.
- ★ India had gone up to 80th position in January when the rankings for 2024 were unveiled.
- ★ The Henley Passport Index is updated monthly.
- ★ Six countries still jointly hold the top position in the 2024 Henley Passport Index, offering their citizens visa-free access to a record-breaking number of destinations.
- ★ The most powerful passports in the world now allow citizens of France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, and Singapore to travel 194 out of 227 destinations worldwide without requiring a visa.
- ★ Four EU members have joined them at the top: Germany, Italy, Spain, and France.
- ★ Pakistan remains at 106th position like 2023, while Bangladesh has slipped from 101st to 102nd.
- ★ It is based on the data collected from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

AWARDS & PRIZES

Republic Day Parade of 2024

- ★ The tableau of the Ministry of Culture has secured the first prize at the Republic Day Parade 2024.
- ★ The tableau, a stunning blend of tradition and innovation, captivated audiences with its masterful use of the anamorphic technique alongside a rich display of Bharat's cultural heritage - often hailed as the mother of democracy.
- ★ The Ministry added that this victory is not just recognition of the creativity but a testament to the richness of Bharat's cultural legacy.
- ★ Odisha was awarded the Best Tableau Award during the 75th Republic Day Parade 2024.
- ★ On this occasion, Odisha had showcased women's empowerment as well as the rich handicrafts and handloom sector of the state in its tableau.
- ★ Gujarat's tableau showcasing Dhordo tourist village, has won the first position in the popular choice category.

Two British-Indian Musicians Selected for RPS Awards

- ★ Two British Indian musicians have been selected for the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society (RPS) Awards for the year 2024.
- ★ The two Indians selected are Alpesh Chauhan OBE and Jasdeep Singh Degun.
- ★ The RPS awards will be presented at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester on 5 March 2024.
- ★ In Britain, this prestigious award is given for classical music.
- ★ A total of 19 artists and composers have been selected for the RPS Awards for 2024.
- ★ The 19 shortlisted artists and composers represent a global majority of 42 percent. These include cellist Ayanna Witter-Johnson, Birmingham Opera Company Music Director Alpesh Chauhan and sitar player Jasdeep Singh Degun.
- ★ Alpesh Chauhan OBE, Music Director of Birmingham Opera Company, has been nominated in the conductor category.
- ★ While sitarist and composer Jasdeep Singh Degun has been nominated in the Instrumentalist Award and Large-Scale Composition Award categories.

The Bharat Ratna Award

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that veteran BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani will be honored with Bharat Ratna.
- ★ He served as the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party for the longest period since its foundation in 1980.
- ★ He was first Home Minister and later Deputy Prime Minister in the cabinet of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1999–2004).

- ★ Lal Krishna Advani was the 7th Deputy Prime Minister of India from 2002 to 2004.
- ★ He was one of the co-founders of the BJP and a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).
- ★ Advani holds the record for being the longest-serving Home Minister and the longest-serving Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.
- ★ He was the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate during the 2009 general elections.
- ★ Advani is widely regarded as a man of great intellectual ability, strong principles and unwavering support for the idea of a strong and prosperous India.

Lifetime Achievement Award by SJFI and DSJA

- ★ PT Usha was honored with the Life Time Achievement Award by the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) and Delhi Sports Journalists Association (DSJA) on 04 February 2024.
- ★ PT Usha has been a great Indian sprinter in the past.
- ★ PT Usha is currently the President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).
- ★ PT Usha has been given this award after Vijay Amritraj, Prakash Padukone, Sunil Gavaskar and Milkha Singh (posthumously).
- ★ A program was organized at the National Sports Club of India to honor PT Usha.
- ★ Rajya Sabha MP and BCCI Vice President Rajiv Shukla honored PT Usha for her brilliant sports career by giving her a citation and a memento.

Grammy Award 2024

- ★ Five Indian musicians, including famous tabla player Zakir Hussain and flute player Rakesh Chaurasia, won the most prestigious 'Grammy Awards 2024' awards in the field of music.
- ★ Zakir Hussain won three Grammy Awards while Rakesh Chaurasia won two.
- ★ The 66th Grammy Awards ceremony was held in Los Angeles, USA.
- ★ Shakti, a fusion music group of Indian musicians, has won the 2024 Grammy Awards in the category of Best Global Music Album for 'This Moment'.
- ★ The five Indian composers are Tabla player Zakir Hussain, Flute player Rakesh Chaurasia, Singer Shankar Mahadevan, Violinist ganesh rajagopalan and Percussionist Selvaganesh Vinayakram.
- ★ 'Abundance in Millets', a song written by PM Narendra Modi, has also got a place in the Global Song category in the Grammy Awards 2024.

Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable Finance 2024

- ★ REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been bestowed with the prestigious Best Green Bond - Corporate Award at The Asset Triple A Awards for Sustainable Finance 2024.
- ★ REC received the award for issuance of \$750 million USD Green Bonds in April 2023 which was also the first USD Green Bond issuance from India post India's assumption of G20 Presidency and the largest ever Senior Green Bond Tranche by a South or South-East Asian issuer.

- ★ The bond issue was priced at a minimum new issue premium of 7.5 bps, which was tighter than the most recent high-rated issuances from the region.
- ★ The issue was well received by the investors and demonstrates REC's significant contribution to financing projects aimed at mitigating climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.
- ★ This recognition represents a milestone in REC Limited's dedication to support initiatives that drive positive environmental impact and foster sustainable development.

Lakshminarayan International Award

- ★ Renowned musician Pyarelal Sharma has been honored with the Laxminarayan International Award.
- ★ The award was presented to Pyarelal Sharma by L Subramaniam and Kavita Krishnamurthy Subramaniam at the Laxminarayan Global Music Festival.
- ★ Pyarelal Sharma is best known as the composer of the famous song 'My Name Is Lakhan'.
- ★ Composer Pyarelal Sharma is one of the most successful composers of Hindi cinema in his career spanning over eight decades.
- ★ Dr L Subramaniam started LGMF in 1992 in the memory of his father and mentor Professor V Lakshminarayana.
- ★ Its main idea is to give everyone the opportunity to enjoy diverse music genres. To this end, the festival showcases some of the world's best artists.

Bharat Ratna Award

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that former Prime Ministers PV Narasimha Rao, Chaudhary Charan Singh, and scientist Dr MS Swaminathan will be awarded the Bharat Ratna.
- ★ Chaudhary Charan Singh played a pivotal role in implementing land reforms in Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ He was instrumental in formulating and finalising the Debt Redemption Bill of 1939, which provided significant relief to rural debtors.
- ★ He also introduced the Land Holding Act of 1960, aimed at reducing the ceiling on land holdings to make it uniform across the state.
- ★ PV Narasimha Rao is often credited with bringing economic reforms to India in 1991, which paved the way for the end of the notorious license raj and economic revival.
- ★ He brought his scholarly background and rich political and administrative experience in international diplomacy.
- ★ Swaminathan began his research career in 1949, studying the genetics of wheat, potato, rice, and jute.
- ★ During India's food crisis in the 1960s and 70s, he worked with Norman Borlaug to develop high-yield wheat varieties, leading to the "Green Revolution" initiative that revolutionized agricultural productivity.

NIMHANS Receives WHO Nelson Mandela Award

- ★ National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) has been awarded the 2024 Nelson Mandela Award (NMA) by the World Health Organization (WHO) for Health Promotion.
- ★ NIMHANS stated the award acknowledges its dedication and outstanding contribution to mental health and well-being.
- ★ NIMHANS has been at the forefront of mental health and neuroscience.
- ★ NIMHANS supports innovative approaches to research, education and patient care.
- ★ This institute has been recognized for integrating mental health care into general health care. Globally recognized for community-based strategies and digital health innovations.
- ★ The World Health Organization started giving the Nelson Mandela Award in the year 2019.
- ★ The NMA recognizes contributions in health promotion by individuals, institutions and organizations.

Names of 'Indira' and 'Nargis' National Film Awards are Renamed

- ★ The 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' and the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration', which are part of the National Film Awards, have been renamed on the recommendation of the Committee for Rationalisation of Film Awards.
- ★ The committee recommended that the 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' be renamed as 'Best Debut Film of a Director', and the award money be increased to ₹3 lakh.
- ★ It also recommended that the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration' be renamed as 'Best Feature Film Promoting National, Social and Environmental Values'.
- ★ This award carries a Rajat Kamal to the Director and the Producer with ₹1.5 lakh each.
- ★ The committee recommended that it be clubbed with 'Best Film on Social Issues and Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation'.
- ★ The award amount has been increased to ₹2 lakh each to the Director and Producer.
- ★ The Dadasaheb Phalke Award has increased from ₹10 lakh to ₹15 lakh.

India wins 9th Gov Tech Award at World Government Summit in Dubai

- ★ At the World Government Summit 2024, India secured the prestigious 9th GovTech Prize for endeavours in Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered government services.
- ★ India won the award under the category of 'AI-Powered Government Services'.
- ★ The award has been presented to recognize the 'iRASTE' project of the Ministry for Road Transport & Highways.
- ★ This initiative is a collaborative effort of the government, industry, and academia.
- ★ Its main aim is to reduce 50% of road accidents anticipated in urban areas.
- ★ Additionally, iRASTE aims to significantly diminish black spots within the city's road network.
- ★ The government of the UAE instituted this award and is presented to government entities, central or local, worldwide, to recognise creative and innovative solutions.

- ★ This award was distributed by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum.

Recipients of Jnanpith Award 2023

- ★ Jnanpith Selection Committee announced Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya as recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award.
- ★ Sampooran Singh Kalra, who is popularly known as Gulzar, is a renowned figure in Hindi cinema and a highly regarded Urdu poet. He is considered one of the best poets of his time.
- ★ Gulzar has received many accolades for his works, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for Urdu in 2002, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2013, the Padma Bhushan in 2004, and at least five National Film Awards.
- ★ Gulzar has created something new through his poetry. Recently, he has been paying serious attention to writing children's poetry.
- ★ Rambhadracharya, who is 74 years old, is a well-known Hindu spiritual leader, educator and writer. He is the founder and head of Tulsi Peeth in Chitrakoot and has written over 240 books and texts, including four epics.
- ★ Rambhadracharya has been holding the position under the Ramananda sect as one of the current four Jagadguru Ramanandacharya since 1982.
- ★ He had memorized the entire Bhagavad Gita by the age of eight and the entire Ramcharitmanas.
- ★ The Jnanpith Award is an annual Indian literary award presented by the Bharatiya Jnanpith to an author for their exceptional contribution to literature.

The Legion of Honor: Tharoor Receives France's Highest Civilian Honor

- ★ Noted author and MP Shashi Tharoor was awarded France's highest civilian honor 'Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur' on 20 February 2024.
- ★ Tharoor was presented with the award by French Senate President Gerard Larcher at the French Embassy.
- ★ The French government had announced to give the award to Tharoor in August 2022, but he was given the award on 20 February 2024.
- ★ According to the French Embassy, Dr.Tharoor has been given this honor to strengthen India-France relations.
- ★ Generally, this honor is given by France to the leaders, diplomats, administrators etc. of different countries for establishing excellent relations with France and to establish a commitment to international peace and co-operation.
- ★ Shashi Tharoor is currently the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram.

G.D. Birla Award

- ★ Aditi Sen De becomes the first woman scientist to win the G.D. Birla Award.
- ★ In a ground-breaking moment for Indian science, Prof. Aditi Sen De has been awarded the prestigious G.D. Birla Award for Scientific Research for the year 2023.

- ★ The award, established in 1991, recognises exceptional scientific research conducted by Indian scientists below the age of 50.
- ★ Aditi Sen De, a distinguished physicist from the Harish-Chandra Research Institute in Prayagraj, has been honoured for her outstanding contributions to the field of Physics.
- ★ The G.D. Birla Award, carrying a cash prize of ₹5 lakhs, is a testament to Prof. Aditi Sen De's exceptional contributions to the scientific community.
- ★ The rigorous selection process, overseen by the Indian National Science Academy, emphasizes the award's prestige.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Anil Kumar Lahoti Appointed as New TRAI Chairman

- ★ Former Railway Board Chief Anil Kumar Lahoti has been appointed Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).
- ★ Before this, the tenure of former TRAI Chairman PD Vaghela had ended. After PD Vaghela, this post was vacant for about 4 months.
- ★ Lahoti will serve as Chairman of TRAI for the next three years from the date of assuming charge.
- ★ TRAI's objective is to create a clean and transparent environment so that there can be fair and healthy competition among companies.
- ★ TRAI's mission is to create and improve favorable conditions for the development of telecommunications in the country.

Four Full-Time Members Appointed to 16th Finance Commission

- ★ The Government of India has appointed four members to the 16th Finance Commission, which will have tenure of five years.
- ★ A.N. Jha, Former Expenditure Secretary and member of the 15th Finance Commission.
- ★ Annie George Mathew, Special Secretary of the department of expenditure.
- ★ The State Bank of India's Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Advisor.
- ★ Niranjana Rajadhyaksha, Executive Director of Artha Global.
- ★ The Sixteenth Finance Commission is headed by Arvind Panagariya, who was earlier Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog.
- ★ The commission will define the distribution of the Centre's tax revenue to states for the next five years, starting in FY2027.
- ★ The Finance Commission's report must be submitted by October 31, 2025 and cover a five-year period from April 1, 2026.

Part-Time Chairman of AU Small Finance Bank

- ★ AU Small Finance Bank (SFB) has announced the appointment of Reserve Bank of India's former Deputy Governor Harun Rasid Khan as part-time Chairman.
- ★ Raj Vikash Verma has completed his tenure on 29 January, 2024 and will cease to be a part time Chairman and Independent Director of the bank with immediate effect.
- ★ Harun Rasid Khan, Independent Director (Non-Executive) shall assume the position of Part Time Chairman of the Bank w.e.f. January 30, 2024 till completion of his 1st tenure as Independent Director of the Bank i.e. December 27, 2024.

Executive Director of Bank of Baroda

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the Department of Financial Services (DFS) proposal to post Sanjay Vinayak Mudaliar as Executive Director at Bank of Baroda.
- ★ Mudaliar is currently the Executive Director at Indian Overseas Bank.
- ★ Mudaliar will serve his new post from the day he assumes charge for the remainder of his term, i.e. up to December 31, 2025, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.
- ★ Simultaneously, ACC has approved the DFS proposal to post Joydeep Dutta Roy, Executive Director, Bank of Baroda, as Executive Director in the Indian Overseas Bank.
- ★ Roy will serve his new posting from the day he took charge for the remainder of his term, i.e. up to October 20, 2024, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

Jay Shah Elected President of ACC

- ★ BCCI Secretary Jay Shah has been elected as President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) for the third time.
- ★ In this way, Jay Shah's tenure has been extended for one year. A decision in this regard was taken unanimously in the annual general meeting held on 31 January 2023.
- ★ Jay Shah is the youngest administrator to become the ACC President.
- ★ Under Shah's leadership the ACC has made many significant strides in promoting and developing cricket across the Asian region.
- ★ The ACC successfully hosted the Asia Cup in T20 format in 2022 and the ODI format in 2023.

New Advocate General of Rajasthan

- ★ Senior advocate Rajendra Prasad Gupta has been appointed as the new Advocate General of Rajasthan.
- ★ Governor Kalraj Mishra has approved the proposal for appointment of Prasad.
- ★ He graduated in Commerce in 1981 and did LLB from Rajasthan University in 1985 and as a lawyer enrolled in BCR in 1985.
- ★ He also received the degree of Chartered Accountant in 1986.
- ★ He will be the 19th Advocate General of the state from the hierarchy.

- ★ After the change of government in December, the post of Advocate General was vacant for about two months. Prasad replaced MS Singhvi as the state's advocate general.
- ★ The Office of the Advocate General of Rajasthan came into existence upon the formation of the State of Rajasthan as per the States Reorganization Act 1956 when the Rajasthan High Court was established.

First Woman Chief Justice of Uttarakhand HC

- ★ Justice Ritu Bahri was sworn in as the first woman Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court.
- ★ Uttarakhand Governor Lieutenant General Gurmeet Singh (Retd) administered the oath.
- ★ With this appointment, Justice Ritu Bahri has become the first woman in the history of the Uttarakhand High Court to hold the post of Chief Justice.
- ★ Earlier, she served as a senior judge in the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court

- ★ Justice P.S. Dinesh Kumar was appointed Chief Justice (CJ) of the Karnataka High Court (HC).
- ★ He holds the position as an acting Chief Justice following the elevation of Justice P.B. Varale to the Supreme Court.
- ★ Justice Kumar's tenure is short-lived as he is set to retire on February 24, 2024.
- ★ The notification issued in this regard stated that, in the exercise of the power conferred by clause (1) of Article 217 of the Constitution of India.
- ★ The Supreme Court Collegium had recommended his name to the government on January 19.

Australia's New Race Discrimination Commissioner

- ★ Giridharan Sivaraman, a prominent Indian-origin lawyer in Australia, has been appointed the new Race Discrimination Commissioner (RDC) of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).
- ★ The RDC in Australia is able to deal with all types of racial discrimination.
- ★ Giridharan Sivaraman will replace Chin Tan as the AHRC's new Race Discrimination Commissioner.
- ★ Sivaraman's tenure as RDC of the AHRC will be for 5 years. Sivaraman will take charge as the RDC from March 4, 2024.
- ★ The Commission is responsible for promoting understanding, tolerance and harmony among all sections of Australian society.
- ★ Giridharan Sivaraman is currently the Chairman of Multicultural Australia and Principal Counsel at Maurice Blackburn.

LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management Appoints Ravi Kumar Jha as MD and CEO

- ★ LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management announced the appointment of Ravi Kumar Jha as its Management Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

- ★ Jha, with a distinguished career and prior association with LIC, comes with a track record of over 30 years in handling diverse positions and he was serving as Executive Director - Corporate Strategy till December 2023.
- ★ His previous roles include Executive Director Corporate Strategy – LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management and various positions at LIC of India.

ADB Names Mio Oka as Country Director for India

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has appointed Mio Oka as its new Country Director for India, succeeding Takeo Konishi, who has been promoted to the position of ADB Director General for South Asia at the Manila headquarters.
- ★ Responsibilities of the Country Director: Mio Oka will be responsible for steering ADB operations in India and nurturing relationships with the government and other development partners in the country.
- ★ Oka will lead the implementation of ADB's country partnership strategy for India spanning from 2023 to 2027.
- ★ The strategy aims to catalyze robust, climate-resilient, and inclusive private sector-led growth in India through accelerated structural transformation, job creation, promotion of climate-resilient green growth, and enhanced social and economic inclusiveness.
- ★ Prior to her tenure at ADB, Oka worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Japan Bank for International Co-operation, and Japan International Co-operation Agency Bangladesh Office.

Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare and Information and Broadcasting Secretary

- ★ Information and Broadcasting Secretary Apurva Chandra has been appointed as the Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare.
- ★ Senior bureaucrat Sanjay Jaju has been appointed as the new Information and Broadcasting Secretary, in place of Apurva Chandra.
- ★ Chandra is a 1988-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officer of Maharashtra cadre.
- ★ He has earlier served as Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- ★ Sanjay Jaju is a 1992-batch IAS Officer from Telangana cadre.
- ★ He has earlier served as Additional Secretary to Government of India from 2018 to 2023 and Director, National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited from October 2014 to March 2018.

Prime Minister of Kazakhstan

- ★ Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed a decree appointing Olzhas Bektenov as the new Prime Minister (PM) of Kazakhstan.
- ★ Olzhas Bektenov, aged 43, succeeded Alikhan Smailov.
- ★ Olzhas Bektenov is the youngest Prime Minister (PM) in the history of Kazakhstan.

- ★ In 2023, Olzhas Bektenov was appointed as the Head of the Administration of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- ★ Before becoming Prime Minister, he held several positions, including Deputy Chairman of the Agency for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption.
- ★ Bektenov also served as the Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Agency before his current appointment.

Non-Executive Chairman of NPCI

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) announced the appointment of Ajay Kumar Choudhary as Non-Executive Chairman of the Board and Independent Director for 3 years starting February 8, 2024.
- ★ Choudhary has replaced Biswamohan Mahapatra, who was appointed Non-Executive Chairman in 2018.
- ★ Ajay Kumar Choudhary is a distinguished central banker with an illustrious career spanning over three decades at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ He concluded his dedicated service to the institution as its Executive Director in October 2023.
- ★ Choudhary has experience in the domains of banking regulation, supervision and fintech in various capacities.
- ★ NPCI is a major organization handling retail payment and settlement systems in India.

President of ICAI

- ★ Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) elected CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal as the President and CA. Charanjot Singh Nanda as the Vice-President.
- ★ CA Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal has been appointed as the 72nd President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.
- ★ He will hold this esteemed position for the year 2024-25.
- ★ He has been associated with the Institute since 2016, initially as a Central Council Member and then as Vice-President in 2023-24.
- ★ He also chairs the ICAI research wing Accounting Research Foundation (ICAI ARF), Extensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL) India, and three funds for the welfare of the CA fraternity - Chartered Accountants' Benevolent Fund (CABF), S. Vaidyanath Aiyar Memorial Fund and Chartered Accountants Students Benevolent Fund (CASBF).
- ★ He also serves as the Director on the Board of the Institute of Social Auditors of India (ISAI).

Brand Ambassador for Fit India Movement

- ★ Indian Revenue Service (IRS) Officer Narendra Kumar Yadav, Additional Director of Goods and Service Tax (GST), has been appointed as the new brand ambassador of The Fit India movement, a flagship initiative by the Government of India.
- ★ He is one of the youngest Indian Revenue Service (IRS) Officers.
- ★ He became the first civil servant to be chosen as the brand ambassador of the Fit India Movement.

- ★ FIT India Movement was launched on 29th August 2019 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The main aim of the mission is to bring about behavioural changes and move towards a more physically active lifestyle.
- ★ Its main aim is to spread awareness about fitness through focused campaigns.

Chairman and Managing Director of IRCTC

- ★ Sanjay Kumar Jain, an Indian Railway Traffic Services (IRTS) Officer of the 1990 batch has taken over the charge of Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC).
- ★ Jain's career spans over three decades with leadership roles in policy-making, commercial ventures, and developmental projects within the Indian government and public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- ★ He brings with himself more than three decades of extensive experience of handling important portfolios in the Ministry of Railways, PSUs and Department of Public Enterprises, Min of Finance, Govt. of India.
- ★ He had the privilege of initiating the prestigious Heritage conservation of Mumbai Byculla Railway Station in 2019 with the support of a leading Industrial House and a well-known NGO in Mumbai.
- ★ The station won UNESCO Asia Pacific Cultural Heritage Award for cultural heritage conservation in 2023.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets

- ★ Virendra Bansal has been appointed as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets (SBICAPS), the wholly-owned subsidiary and investment banking arm of State Bank of India (SBI).
- ★ He replaces Rajay Kumar Sinha, who has been appointed as the Whole Time Member (Finance and Investment) of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for 3 years in January 2024.
- ★ Prior to his appointment as SBICAPS' Chief, Bansal was the Country Head for SBI's US Operations, which includes its offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Sao Paulo and Washington DC.
- ★ The new SBICAPS' Chief has also worked as the Chief Executive Officer, SBI New York branch and Vice-Chairman of SBI (California), a US Retail Banking subsidiary of the bank.
- ★ He has also worked in SBI UK operations as Head (Trade) and Head of the retail branch handling high net-worth customers.

Finland's 13th President

- ★ Former Prime Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb became the 13th President of Finland.
- ★ Stubb received 51.7% of the vote while his Green Party rival, former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, received 48.4%.
- ★ On 1 March 2024 Mr Stubb will officially assume office, replacing Sauli Niinisto.

- ★ On 11 February, after a seven-year hiatus, Former Prime Minister, triathlete, and Europhile Alexander Stubb made a triumphant return to politics, winning the Finnish presidency in the election.
- ★ In the counting, 98% of the votes were counted.

MD and CEO of SBM Bank India

- ★ SBM Bank India announced the appointment of Ashish Vijayakar as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank for 3 years.
- ★ This appointment has been made as per the approval accorded by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ He Succeeds Sidharth Rath, who resigned from the post of MD and CEO of SBM Bank India in November 2023.
- ★ Vijayakar is a senior banker with a proven track record spanning around three decades across multiple business and risk management areas of the banking and financial services sector.
- ★ He comes with a strong background in building and growing global businesses, with involvement in portfolio management and credit risk.

Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank

- ★ Pradeep Kumar Sinha is set to assume the role of Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank following the conclusion of C. Chaturvedi's term.
- ★ Sinha's appointment will take effect from July 1, 2024, or upon approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), whichever occurs later, ensuring a smooth transition in leadership.
- ★ He will serve in this capacity until February 16, 2029, filling the vacancy created by the retirement of Mr. Chaturvedi, highlighting the long-term commitment to leadership stability.
- ★ Sinha joined the Indian Administrative Service (Uttar Pradesh in 1977).

First Female Chief Minister of Pakistan

- ★ Maryam Nawaz was sworn in as the first woman Chief Minister (CM) of Pakistan's Punjab province on 26 February 2024.
- ★ Maryam Nawaz took oath at the Punjab Governor House in the presence of her father Nawaz Sharif and uncle Shahbaz Sharif.
- ★ Maryam has become the first woman Chief Minister of any state of Pakistan.
- ★ Whereas Benazir Bhutto was the first and only woman Prime Minister of Pakistan till date.
- ★ Maryam Nawaz has been the Senior Vice President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party.
- ★ Voting took place in the Punjab Assembly, in which Maryam Nawaz won. Maryam got the support of 220 MLAs.

World Bank's Global Environment Facility's First Female Director

- ★ Geeta Batra has been appointed as the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- ★ She is the first woman from a developing country to hold this position.
- ★ Her nomination for the role received unanimous approval during the 66th GEF Council Meeting in Washington.
- ★ Her role involves building partnerships with multilateral and bilateral agencies, foundations, and networks, and sharing knowledge on effective environmental strategies.
- ★ Batra currently serves as the Chief Evaluator and Deputy Director for Evaluation at the GEF's Independent Evaluation Office, affiliated with the World Bank.

DEFENCE

SARVATRA: A Multispan Mobile Bridging System

- ★ SARVATRA, a Multispan Mobile Bridging System designed and developed by Armament and Combat Engineering Systems (ACE) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Ministry of Defence.
- ★ SARVATRA assists the Army in constructing bridges over flowing water, ensuring robust connectivity between two areas during natural disasters.
- ★ The truck-mounted bridge is composed of five aluminum alloy scissor bridges that are mounted on a separate moving platform.
- ★ Each scissor bridge spans approximately 15 metres and together, they can tackle bridge-related obstacles up to a distance of 75 metres.
- ★ This moving bridge is a one-step solution for multiple challenges faced by the Indian Defence Force and can be developed within 100 minutes.
- ★ The moving bridge has proven its effectiveness by ensuring connectivity during several natural calamities, such as earthquakes, floods and others.
- ★ Each scissor is mounted on Tatra 815 trucks, developed by the Czech company Tatra and is operationalised using a microprocessor-based control system.
- ★ The bridges can be launched and recovered from both ends and their height can be adjusted from 2.5 meters to 6 metres with the help of telescopic legs.
- ★ The adjustable legs of SARVATRA help in reducing the visibility of the bridge.

IAF will Conduct Mega Exercise Vayu Shakti 2024

- ★ The Indian Air Force will conduct mega exercise Vayu Shakti 2024 at Pokhran Range in Jaisalmer on February 17.
- ★ During the exercise, the Air Force will showcase its air combat and operational capabilities with a focus on interoperability and manoeuvres.

- ★ More than 100 aircraft and helicopters will participate in Vayu Shakti, 2024. A number of indigenously manufactured and designed aircraft and helicopters like Tejas, Prachanda and Dhruv will participate in the exercise.
- ★ Air-to-air and surface-to-air missile systems including MICA, R-73, SAMAR and Akash will also demonstrate lethality, Mr Singh said.
- ★ According to the Indian Air Force, 77 fighter aircraft including Rafale, Jaguar, Mirage 2000, Sukhoi 30 MKI, 41 helicopters including MI 17, Apache and five transport aircraft including C130 and C17 will participate in Vayu Shakti 2024.

Country's First Survey Ship Commissioned in Indian Navy

- ★ The country's first and largest survey ship INS Sandhayak (Yard 3025) formally commissioned into the Indian Navy.
- ★ INS Sandhayak was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.
- ★ With the induction of INS Sandhayak into the Navy, the strength of the Indian Navy will increase along with self-reliance.
- ★ The Navy will get assistance in analysing marine data.
- ★ At present the Indian Navy is so strong that we have become the first responder in terms of security in the Indian Ocean and Indian Pacific region.
- ★ INS Sandhayak will help in achieving the dual objective of obtaining information about the oceans and protecting the country as well as other countries.
- ★ The ship is capable of carrying out a variety of naval missions.

Four Flight Trials of 'ABHYAS' Conducted by DRDO

- ★ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted four flight trials of the high-speed expendable aerial target named 'ABHYAS' from the integrated test range located at Chandipur, Odisha.
- ★ These trials were carried out between January 30 and February 2, and achieved four different mission objectives using a revised robust configuration.
- ★ Additionally, the single booster, which was designed by the Advanced Systems Laboratory in Hyderabad, provided reduced launch acceleration.
- ★ Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) designed and developed the ABHYAS.
- ★ The flight trials validated various parameters such as endurance, speed, manoeuvrability, altitude, and range.
- ★ It serves as a realistic threat scenario for practising weapon systems.

Navy Chief Inaugurates New Defence System

- ★ Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar inaugurated a new defence system Precision Approach Radar (PAR) in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- ★ The Naval Chief inaugurated the PAR at INS Utkrosh located in the South Andaman Islands.
- ★ The Naval Chief was on his 3-day visit to the strategic tri-service command to strengthen the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC).
- ★ The Precision Approach Radar is manufactured by a Chennai company.
- ★ PAR will be helpful in safely landing the aircraft in low visibility conditions like heavy rain and fog.
- ★ The PAR will provide highly accurate horizontal and vertical guidance even in low visibility.

12th Edition of MILAN Naval Exercise

- ★ The MILAN naval exercise's 12th edition will be held in Visakhapatnam from February 19-27, with over 50 countries participating.
- ★ The "Forging Naval Alliances for a Secure Maritime Future" is the theme of the exercise which aims to facilitate collaboration and idea-sharing among participating navies to enhance security on the high seas.
- ★ Its primary objective is to ensure the safety of maritime trade for the benefit of all stakeholders.
- ★ MILAN is a biennial multinational naval exercise started in 1995 under India's 'Look East policy'.
- ★ MILAN 24 exercise would comprise the 'Harbour phase' and the 'Sea phase'.
- ★ The MILAN provides a platform for nations to establish partnerships, exchange ideas and enhance maritime security to bolster their maritime prowess.

ADA and IAF Signed MoU

- ★ Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) has signed an MoU with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for the purpose of integration of future weapons and sensors for the Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas'.
- ★ In the current war scenario, there is a constant need to modernize the aircraft's weapons and sensor suites.
- ★ In this direction, Aeronautical Development Institute has started technology transfer for integration of weapons and sensors in the Software Development Institute.
- ★ This will help the Indian Air Force in many ways to increase the operational capability of Tejas-Light Combat Aircraft.
- ★ ADA is a premier organization under the administrative control of the DRDO. ADA has the mandate to design and develop the Tejas-Light Combat Aircraft and its equipment.

Milan 2024: War exercise

- ★ Indian Navy's largest-ever multilateral naval exercise, Milan 2024, has commenced in Vizag with an impressive lineup of warships from Indian and foreign navies participating in the Harbour Phase.
- ★ The exercises will include gunnery shoots on aerial and surface targets, manoeuvres, and underway replenishment.

- ★ For the first time, Vizagites will have the opportunity to see the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, anchored off the coast of Vizag.
- ★ This event marks the first time both the aircraft carriers – INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya – will be present in the city.
- ★ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the Milan Village on February 21, while Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar will attend the International City Parade programme on February 22.

India, Maldives and Sri Lanka to Conduct Trilateral Exercise 'Dosti'

- ★ India has been conducting trilateral military exercises 'Dosti'.
- ★ The exercise involves all three countries – India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. This biennial exercise programme has been named 'Dosti'.
- ★ This is the 16th edition of this exercise. Therefore, it has been named Dosti-16.
- ★ This exercise is very important keeping in mind maritime security.
- ★ The coast guard forces of the three countries have started a four-day trilateral exercise to deal with the emerging challenges in the Indian Ocean region.
- ★ Exercise Dosti-16 was organized from 22 to 25 February 2024. Indian Coast Guard ships ICGS Samarth, ICGS Abhinav and ICG Dornier arrived in Maldives on 22 February to participate in the exercise. The Sri Lanka Navy ship Samudra also reached Maldives on 22 February.
- ★ At the same time, Bangladesh is participating in this exercise as an observer.

5th India-Japan 'Dharma Guardian' Joint Exercise

- ★ Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defence Force (JGSDF) launched the 5th joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian' on 25 February 2024.
- ★ This exercise between the Indian Army and JGSDF is being conducted from 25 February to 9 March 2024 at the Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.
- ★ The exercise aims to enhance military co-operation between the two nations.
- ★ The objective is to enhance joint capabilities to carry out joint operations in peri-urban settings under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- ★ The exercise will focus on high level physical fitness, joint planning, joint tactical exercises and special weapons skills.
- ★ 'Dharma Guardian' exercise is held annually as a military drill.
- ★ It is organized alternately in India and Japan.
- ★ In this exercise, 40-40 soldiers are included in the contingent of both the countries.
- ★ Soldiers from the 34th Infantry Regiment are representing the Japanese contingent.
- ★ The Indian Army contingent is being represented by a battalion of Rajputana Rifles.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Woman Robot Astronaut “Vyommitra” to Fly into Space

- ★ ‘Vyommitra’, a female robot astronaut, will fly into space ahead of the Gaganyaan mission.
- ★ Gaganyaan mission India’s first human-manned space flight will carry Indian astronauts.
- ★ The uncrewed “Vyommitra” mission is scheduled for the third quarter of 2024, while the manned “Gaganyaan” mission is set for launch on 2025.
- ★ A female robot astronaut named ‘Vyommitra’ has been designed to simulate human functions in space and interact with the life support system.
- ★ It can monitor module parameters, issue alerts, operate six panels, and respond to queries.
- ★ In preparation, a Test Vehicle Flight TV D1 was completed on October 21, 2023, to qualify the crew escape and parachute systems.
- ★ The propulsion stages are qualified, and the human rating of the launch vehicle is complete.
- ★ This year, an unmanned robot flight named ‘Vyommitra’ will occur.
- ★ The objectives of the TV-D1 launch included demonstrating and evaluating various subsystems, crew escape systems, and deceleration systems at higher altitudes and their recovery.
- ★ The Gaganyaan project aims to demonstrate human space capabilities by launching astronauts into an orbit 400 kilometers from Earth and safely bringing them back to Earth by landing them in India’s sea waters.

IIT Madras to Create India’s First 155mm Smart Ammunition

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT-M) will manufacture India’s first indigenous 155 smart ammunition.
- ★ This step of IIT-M will be an important step towards achieving self-reliance in the Indian defence sector.
- ★ Indian Institute of Technology Madras has partnered with state-owned defence sector company Munitions India Limited to manufacture 155 smart ammunition.
- ★ This is to achieve self-reliance in the defence sector by developing ammunition with better accuracy than before and also to increase firepower.
- ★ It will have a circular error probable (CEP) of only 10 meters. Whereas currently the CEP of indigenous ammunition is 500 meters. CEP, circular error probability or circle of equal probability, is a measure of the accuracy of a weapon system in the military science of ballistics.
- ★ Munitions India is a manufacturer of ammunition and explosives for the armed and paramilitary forces.

Taiwan’s First Lunar Mission Set to Launch in 2024

- ★ Taiwan is set to launch its first lunar mission in 2024, marking a significant milestone in the country’s space exploration efforts.

- ★ Taiwan's National Central University revealed details about this groundbreaking lunar mission, underscoring the collaboration between academia and the space sector.
- ★ Developed by faculty and students of Taiwan's National Central University, the Deep Space Radiation Probe (DSRP) is a crucial component of the mission.
- ★ Weighing only 400 grams and slightly larger than the size of a hand, it aims to study the radiation environment in deep space.
- ★ The DSRP is specifically designed to assess the radiation effects on technology during a four-month journey to the Moon. This research will provide valuable insights for future space missions and the design of space and electronic products.

Microsoft to Train Over 2 Million People in India

- ★ Chairman and CEO of Microsoft Satya Nadella have announced that the company will train over 2 million people in India in generative Artificial Intelligence skills by 2025.
- ★ At an event organised by the company in Mumbai, Mr. Nadella talked about the co-operation between the United States and India on AI.
- ★ The Indian-origin Microsoft Chief said that AI can help in boosting GDP growth in the country.
- ★ He also called India one of the highest-growth markets.

C-DOT and IIT-K signed an Agreement for Developing Prototypes

- ★ C-DOT has signed an agreement with Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (IIT-K) for the purpose of developing prototypes for a 10-gigabit-capable symmetric Passive Optical Network (XGS-PON) Optical Line Terminal (OLT) and Optical Network Unit (ONU).
- ★ The Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) scheme of the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India has signed an agreement to provide funding support to domestic companies and institutions that are involved in the technology design, development and commercialization of telecommunications products and solutions.
- ★ This is aimed at enabling affordable broadband and mobile services in rural and remote areas.
- ★ As part of this initiative, IIT Kharagpur will be developing prototypes for 10-Gigabit-capable symmetric passive optical network (XGS-PON) optical line terminal (OLT) and optical network unit (ONU).
- ★ The project aims to create a state-of-the-art 10 Gbps upstream and downstream access network technology solution. It is expected that this will lead to the development and commercialization of new designs, leading to growth in affordable broadband and mobile services in India.
- ★ The Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), which operates under the Department of Telecommunications, has officially launched the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Scheme on October 1st, 2022.
- ★ This scheme is in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's goal of including Jan Anusandhaan in the new phase of Amrit Kaal.

NASA's PACE Mission

- ★ Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, Ocean Ecosystem (PACE) is a NASA mission that took off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.
- ★ The satellite will spend at least three years studying the oceans from 420 miles (676 kilometres) up, as well as the atmosphere.
- ★ SpaceX conducted the PACE satellite launch as part of a \$948 million mission, with the Falcon rocket taking a southward trajectory over the Atlantic Ocean to achieve a rare polar orbit.
- ★ PACE's primary goal is to enhance understanding of how oceanic processes and atmospheric particles contribute to global warming.
- ★ It employs a hyperspectral ocean colour instrument to measure water bodies across a broad spectrum of light.
- ★ Data collected during the PACE mission will have significant societal impacts, including improvements in ocean health assessment, monitoring of harmful algal blooms, ecological forecasting, and air quality analysis.

Google Renames Its Artificial Intelligence Chatbot to Gemini

- ★ Google has renamed its chatbot Bard to Gemini, presenting it as an advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool accessible to users worldwide.
- ★ The tech giant has made the Gemini Pro 1.0 model available for users in over 230 countries and territories, offering engagement in more than 40 languages.
- ★ Gemini Advanced has been incorporated into the newly launched Google One AI Premium Plan, priced at \$19.99 per month, with a two-month complimentary trial period.
- ★ Google has introduced a dedicated mobile application for Gemini and Gemini Advanced to enhance the user experience on mobile devices.

Google Introduces Lumiere Artificial Intelligence

- ★ Google has introduced its latest Artificial Intelligence (AI) model, Lumiere, a multimodal video generation tool capable of producing realistic 5-second-long videos.
- ★ Lumiere is a text-to-video diffusion model designed for synthesising videos that portray realistic, diverse and coherent motion.
- ★ The model facilitates content creation tasks and video editing applications such as image-to-video, video in painting, and stylized video generation.
- ★ Lumiere model uses a Space-Time u-Net (STUNet) architecture to generate videos.
- ★ Using this architectural design, the model processes all frames in a video at once instead of generating keyframes and then filling the missing frames using temporal super-resolution (TSR) models, which is a common approach for existing video generators.
- ★ Lumiere generates the entire temporal duration of the video at once by deploying both spatial and temporal down- and up-sampling.

The Healthy Indian Project Becomes Part of WHO's Vaccine Safety Net

- ★ The Healthy Indian Project (THIP) has been included as a member of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Vaccine Safety Net (VSN).
- ★ The Vaccine Safety Net (VSN) was established by WHO to serve as a global network of websites providing trustworthy and verified vaccine safety information.
- ★ Currently, the VSN comprises 110 websites from 45 countries, offering vaccine safety information in 43 languages.
- ★ The Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS), established by WHO in 1999, plays a key role in the project.
- ★ It responds promptly, efficiently, and with scientific rigor to vaccine safety issues of global significance.
- ★ The Healthy Indian Project (THIP) is a health information platform in India that offers credible and verified health information.
- ★ It specifically focuses on providing verified vaccine safety information to the diverse population of the country.

NASA Launches Extensive Air Pollution Monitoring Flights

- ★ In a bid to enhance the forecasting and management of air pollution, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has initiated an extensive series of flights across Asia using its DC-8 flying laboratory.
- ★ Flights are conducted using NASA's DC-8 flying laboratory, which can last up to 8 hours and sometimes occur at altitudes as low as 15 meters above the ground.
- ★ A smaller NASA Gulfstream jet capable of creating 3D maps of pollutants is also utilized for the mission.
- ★ The mission, named ASIA-AQ, is a partnership between NASA and the governments of the regions experiencing some of the highest rates of air pollution-related fatalities globally.
- ★ Flights have already been conducted over densely populated areas in the Philippines as part of the initiative.
- ★ The data collected during these flights will contribute significantly to the global effort to tackle air pollution and its devastating impacts on human health and the environment.

Uttar Pradesh Government to Collaborate With IITR

- ★ To enhance disaster management, the UP government will collaborate with IIT Roorkee.
- ★ The MoU will be signed between both as part of a strategic move aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts over the next five years.
- ★ To reduce the loss of life and take people to safe places before the disaster, an MoU will be signed between the Relief Commissioner's Office and IIT Roorkee.
- ★ Under the MoU, experienced professionals from IIT Roorkee will provide specialized training to personnel in the Office of the Relief Commissioner, equipping them with advanced skills and techniques in disaster management.

- ★ During this period, experts from IIT Roorkee will lead important research initiatives and capacity-building exercises.

World's 1st Wooden Satellite Will be Launched by NASA and JAXA

- ★ NASA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) are planning to launch the world's first wooden satellite called the LignoSat probe into space to make space flight more sustainable.
- ★ Lignosat is a coffee mug-sized satellite which is made of magnolia wood, and is set to launch into Earth orbit by the summer of 2024.
- ★ Wood doesn't burn or rot in the lifeless vacuum of space, but it will turn into fine ash upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere, making it a surprisingly useful, biodegradable material for future satellites.
- ★ After successfully testing their wood samples on the International Space Station (ISS) earlier this year, scientists believe the test is suitable for satellite launch.
- ★ According to researchers, wooden satellites like LignoSat should theoretically be less harmful as space junk.

India's First Military Grade Spy Satellite will be Launched by SpaceX

- ★ India's first spy satellite built by Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) will be launched in a SpaceX rocket by April and will be used by the armed forces to obtain secret information.
- ★ The ground control centre is expected to be operational soon in Bengaluru.
- ★ It will be used for guidance and processing of imagery sent by the satellite.
- ★ The report said that this centre is being built in partnership with Latin-American company Satélogic.
- ★ Imagery sent by the TASL satellite will also be allowed to be shared with friendly countries.
- ★ The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) also has satellites that can help in sharing imagery but their application is only limited given the vast coverage required. India currently uses US companies to obtain necessary spying data.
- ★ Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) is the strategic aerospace and defence arm of Tata Group, functioning as both an operating and holding company.
- ★ ISRO has also been involved with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to develop synthetic aperture radar satellites to study the Earth.

ISRO Collaborates with Sahyadri Farms

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Sahyadri Farms are poised to transform agriculture through advanced satellite technology and data analytics.
- ★ This partnership promises to transform traditional farming practices, enhance crop health monitoring, predict weather patterns and optimise resource management.
- ★ One of the key areas of focus is the exploration of climate-compatible grape varieties.
- ★ This research is essential for ensuring the sustainability and resilience of viticulture in the face of climate change.

- ★ Ongoing research and innovative practices in this field are driving the grape industry forward, offering a glimpse into a more sustainable future, according to Sahyadri Farms.
- ★ This initiative aligns with the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, a crop insurance scheme aimed at providing financial support to farmers.
- ★ The satellite's launch is expected to provide farmers with valuable insights and data-driven solutions, enabling them to make informed decisions and increase productivity.

India Selects 4 Pilots for its 1st Manned Space Mission, Gaganyaan

- ★ India announced the names of four Indian pilots for the Gaganyaan mission to space on 27 February 2024.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced their names during his visit to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram.
- ★ The Gaganyaan mission represents a significant milestone in India's human spaceflight programme led by ISRO.
- ★ The Gaganyaan mission marks India's inaugural manned spaceflight endeavour. These four Indian pilots are Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair (Kerala), Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Subhanshu Shukla.
- ★ Gaganyaan mission is India's first manned space mission. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) aims to launch in 2024-2025.
- ★ The astronauts were given rigorous training, both physical and mental. This is necessary to increase the ability to live and work in space. This training strengthens physical balance and endurance in zero gravity conditions.

Amazon Web Services Collaborates with T-Hub and Minfy

- ★ Amazon Web Services (AWS) India announced its launch of an accelerator programme for space startups called AWS Space Accelerator: India.
- ★ It is a technical, business, and mentorship opportunity designed to foster startups focused on space technology, and accelerate their development, with support from T-Hub and Minfy.
- ★ This initiative follows a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between AWS, ISRO, and IN-SPACe in September the previous year.
- ★ The partnership aims to nurture startups in the space tech sector and support innovation in the field.
- ★ The 14-week accelerator program will offer dedicated business resources, expertise, and guidance on technology and business capabilities. Startups will leverage AWS to build, grow, and scale their missions.
- ★ Startups will learn about space domain technologies and applications, leveraging space data, and building scalable solutions using cloud computing, data analytics, machine learning, and generative artificial intelligence (AI).

IMPORTANT DAYS

Indian Coast Guard Day

- ★ The ICG Day or Indian Coast Guard Day is celebrated on 01 February every year.
- ★ ICG was established to prevent sea-borne smuggling of goods that hampers India's domestic economy.
- ★ The primary responsibilities of the Coast Guard include offshore security, maritime security and coastal security as well as safeguarding India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- ★ The ICG was established on February 1, 1977. Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Day was officially established by Parliament on August 18, 1978, and officially celebrated on February 1.
- ★ The Coast Guard is also involved in voluntary work, conducting searches, conducting rescue operations at sea and protecting the national waters and borders of our country.
- ★ The ICG functions in collaboration with the Indian Navy, customs and police in various sectors.

World Wetlands Day

- ★ World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 02 February every year.
- ★ It aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet.
- ★ Because of the many benefits we get from wetlands, World Wetlands Day is observed on February 2 every year to raise awareness about their importance and the need to preserve them.
- ★ The Convention on Wetlands was adopted in 1971.
- ★ This year is especially significant as World Wetlands Day 2024 will be observed as a United Nations international day for the second time.
- ★ On August 30 last year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to mark the day.
- ★ The day is celebrated to mark the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on February 2, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.
- ★ World Wetlands Day was first celebrated in 1997.

World Cancer Day

- ★ World Cancer Day is celebrated every year on 4 February with the aim of making people aware and educating people about the increasing threat of cancer in the world.
- ★ Cancer is one of the rapidly increasing serious and life-threatening health problems globally.
- ★ Every three years, World Cancer Day and UICC announce a new campaign theme and specific focus. The theme for the year 2022 to 2024 is "Close the Care Gap".
- ★ The theme of World Cancer Day 2024 is 'Together, we challenge those in power'.
- ★ This day highlights reducing the global impact of cancer. The day serves as a catalyst for a quicker and more effective response to the challenges posed by cancer globally.

- ★ The importance of World Cancer Day is to prevent millions of deaths from cancer by dispelling cancer myths and working with governments to take action.

International Development Week 2024

- ★ International Development Week is celebrated every year in the first full week of February (4th to 10th February).
- ★ The aim of International Development Week (IDW) is to draw attention to international development and shine a spotlight on the important contributions that Canadians are making through partnerships around the world.
- ★ International Development Week is a national event promoted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- ★ The Agency is concentrating more and more of its bilateral (country to country) aid in a group of 20 countries of focus.
- ★ International Development Week was initiated in 1990 by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- ★ CIDA was established in 1968 to administer the bulk of Canada's official development assistance (ODA) program.
- ★ CIDA works in concert with its development partners, fragile states and countries in crisis, countries of focus, and the Canadian population and institutions.
- ★ IDW explored several dimensions of development with participation from high commissions and consulates, non-government organizations, York research centres, colleges, Faculties, and student groups.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

- ★ International Day of Zero Tolerance against Female Genital Mutilation is observed every year on 06 February.
- ★ The main objective of celebrating Female Genital Mutilation Day (FGM) is to give respect to women by completely eliminating female genital mutilation.
- ★ The theme of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation to be observed on 6 February 2024 is 'Her Voice Her Future'.
- ★ The United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund launched a joint campaign against female genital mutilation in 2007.
- ★ With the beginning of this day, it has been determined that the practice of female genital mutilation will be eliminated by the year 2030.

World Pulses Day

- ★ 'World Pulses Day' is celebrated every year on 10 February to spread awareness about the nutritional and environmental benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production.
- ★ The theme of 'World Pulses Day' for this year 2024 is "Pulses: Nourishing Soils and People".
- ★ Its objective is to integrate pulses into our diet and agricultural practices.

- ★ The day emphasizes the importance of pulses in achieving various Sustainable Development Goals. Goals encompass poverty alleviation, food security, health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability.
- ★ WPD promotes healthy diets and raises awareness to combat malnutrition.
- ★ Pulses play an important role in sustainable agricultural practices.
- ★ Pulses nitrogen fixation and water efficiency bolster soil health and sustainability.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

- ★ International Day of Women and Girls in Science 2024 is observed on 11 February.
- ★ The Commission on the Status of Women adopted a report on March 14, 2011, with the goal of encouraging girls and women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and math.
- ★ Moreover, promoting women's equal access to full employment and respectable jobs should be a priority.
- ★ The General Assembly recognized in a resolution on science, technology, and innovation for development that women and girls should have full and equal access to and participation in science, technology, and innovation to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
- ★ It is necessary for girls and women of all ages.

National Productivity Day

- ★ National Productivity Day 2024 is observed on the 12 February
- ★ National Productivity Day is commemorated to promote India's productivity culture.
- ★ On February 12, 1958, the National Productivity Council of India was Registered under Societies Registration Act XXI, 1860.
- ★ To mark the council's establishment, its members decided to observe National Productivity Day every year on the same day.
- ★ National Productivity Day also celebrates the anniversary of the establishment of the National Productivity Council.

International Epilepsy Day

- ★ International Epilepsy Day 2024 is observed on the 12th of February 2024.
- ★ International Epilepsy Day is the brainchild of the International Bureau for Epilepsy and the International League Against Epilepsy.
- ★ The two organizations have put together various events on the day since their inception.
- ★ Epilepsy is one of the world's oldest-known medical conditions, with records dating back to the beginning of recorded history.
- ★ International Epilepsy Day is commemorated in more than 120 countries all over the world.

World Radio Day

- ★ World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February.
- ★ It is to celebrate radio broadcasts, improve international co-operation among radio broadcasters and encourage decision-makers to create and provide access to information through radio, including community radios.
- ★ World Radio Day was first proposed by Spain in September 2010.
- ★ With backing from broadcasting associations worldwide, it was unanimously accepted by the UNESCO Member States in November 2011.
- ★ Many people in history have contributed to perfecting radio waves and frequencies, but it was Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi who proved the feasibility of communication over the radio. He sent and received a telegram over the first radio signal in history from Italy in 1895.
- ★ The first radio station in America was established in Pittsburgh in 1919, and the FM radio debuted in 1939.

International Mother Language Day

- ★ International Mother Language Day is celebrated every year on 21 February.
- ★ It is organized to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. India has been home to hundreds of languages and thousands of dialects since ancient times.
- ★ The linguistic and cultural diversity of India makes it unique in the world.
- ★ Language is not only a means of communication but it also represents diverse cultural and intellectual heritage.
- ★ The theme of International Mother Language Day 2024 is 'Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning'.
- ★ Its 25th edition is being organized this year.
- ★ UNESCO proclaimed International Mother Language Day in November 1999.

World Thinking Day

- ★ World Thinking Day 2024 is observed on the 22nd of February 2024.
- ★ In 1926, delegates from across the world met at Camp Edith Macy now named the Edith Macy Conference Centre in New York for the 4th World Conference, and decided to create a day for guides and Girl Scouts.
- ★ They selected the joint birthday of Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scout and Guide movement, and his wife Olave as the Thinking Day.
- ★ In 1999, during the Dubai Conference, the name of Thinking Day was changed to 'World Thinking Day'.

Central Excise Day

- ★ Central Excise Day is celebrated every year on 24 February.

- ★ It commemorates the enactment of the Central Excise and Salt Act of 1944. This day was celebrated for the first time in 1944.
- ★ The significance of celebrating Central Excise Day is to recognize the contribution of CBIC and its officials to the country. Central Excise Day serves as a reminder to citizens to fulfill their tax obligations promptly, thereby contributing to the nation's development.
- ★ The government is dedicated to modernizing and streamlining the tax system in India, aiming for enhanced user-friendliness. This day 2024 is an opportunity to take steps towards this goal.
- ★ The Board has organized various programmes and events to create awareness about the importance of payment of taxes and the role of the Excise Department in the economy.

Defence Security Corps Commemorates Its 77th Raising Day

- ★ The Defence Security Corps (DSC) is celebrating its 77th Raising Day on 25th.
- ★ The Corps was raised on this day in 1947 as 'Defence Department Constabulary'.
- ★ DSC troops have been providing security to various sensitive defence and civil installations across the length and breadth of the Country since 1947.
- ★ Chief of the Army Staff General Manoj Pande has conveyed best wishes to all ranks, veterans and families of the Defence Security Corps on the occasion.
- ★ Lieutenant General Rakesh Kapoor, Deputy Chief of the Army Staff and Colonel Commandant of DSC underscored the exemplary role played by the corps in the past seventy-seven years.

World NGO Day

- ★ 'World NGO Day' is celebrated across the world every year on 27 February.
- ★ More than 89 countries and 6 continents of the world celebrate this day at their own level.
- ★ This day was started to recognize and appreciate the invaluable contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the world.
- ★ The day aims to motivate people to become more actively involved within NGOs.
- ★ The purpose of celebrating this day is to increase the awareness of the needy people towards NGO.
- ★ The theme of World NGO Day 2024 focuses on "Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals".
- ★ The initiative to celebrate World NGO Day was first proposed by the 'Baltic Sea NGO Forum' in 2010. Initially it was celebrated only in the countries participating in the Forum.

OBITUTARY NEWS

Veteran Odia Actor and National Award Winner, Sadhu Meher

- ★ Renowned actor and Director Sadhu Meher, who left an indelible mark on both Hindi and Odia film industries, passed away in Mumbai at the age of 84.

- ★ He initiated his career in 1969 with notable Hindi films such as “Bhuvan Shome”, “Ankur”, and “Mrigayaa”, later transitioning his focus to Odia cinema.
- ★ In the Hindi film industry, Sadhu Meher made his debut in Mrinal Sen’s “Bhuvan Shome” (1969), portraying the character of a junior railway official.
- ★ The movie received national acclaim, securing awards for Best Film, Best Director, and Best Actor the following year.
- ★ Concurrently, in 1969, he took on a role in “Ichhapuran”, the only children’s film directed by Sen and based on a story by Rabindranath Tagore.
- ★ In 1974, Sadhu Meher secured the National Award for Best Actor for his compelling portrayal in Shyam Benegal’s debut film, “Ankur” (The Seedling).
- ★ He is recipient of Odisha State Film Award or Jayadev Award for outstanding contribution to Cinema of Odisha for the year 2008.
- ★ He was conferred Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2017.

Marathon World Record Holder Kelvin Kiptum

- ★ Kelvin Kiptum, the current marathon world record holder, and his coach Gervais Hakizimana died in a road accident.
- ★ Kiptum broke the marathon world record by slashing 34 seconds off Eliud Kipchoge’s previous record from Berlin in 2022, becoming the first man to run the marathon in under two hours and one minute.
- ★ He ran three of the seven fastest marathons in history and won all three marathons he participated in, including two top-tier World Marathon Majors (WMM) held between December 2022 and October 2023.
- ★ He achieved the fastest-ever marathon debut at the 2022 Valencia Marathon, becoming only the third man in history to break two hours and two minutes.
- ★ At the time of his death, Kelvin Kiptum was ranked first in the world in the men’s marathon rankings.

Renowned Litterateur and Padma Shri Awardee Usha Kiran Khan

- ★ Renowned litterateur and Padma Shri awardee Usha Kiran Khan passed away at the age of 78 in Patna, Bihar.
- ★ She was an Indian writer who worked in the Hindi and Maithili languages.
- ★ In 2011, Usha won a Sahitya Akademi Award for the Maithili novel Bhamati: Ek Avismaraniya Premkatha.
- ★ The award is presented by Sahitya Akademi, India’s National Academy of Letters.
- ★ In 2012, she was awarded a Kusumanjali Sahitya Samman by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations for her novel Sirjanhaar.
- ★ This was the first year that the awards had been given and they included a purse of ₹2,50,000
- ★ Khan was awarded the Padma Shri in 2015 for her service in the field of literature and education.

Ex Indian Test Cricketer Dattajirao Gaekwad

- ★ India's oldest Test cricketer and former captain, Dattajirao Gaekwad, passed away at the age of 95 due to age-related issues.
- ★ Gaekwad is the father of former India cricketer and coach Aunshuman Gaekwad.
- ★ He represented India in Test cricket from 1952 to 1961, playing a total of 11 Tests during this period.
- ★ Gaekwad was a key player for Baroda in domestic cricket, scoring 3,139 runs, including 14 centuries, in the Ranji Trophy.
- ★ After the death of Deepak Shodhan in 2016, he became the oldest living Indian Test cricketer.

Famous Radio Presenter Ameen Sayani

- ★ India's well-known Radio Presenter Ameen Sayani has passed away at the age of 91.
- ★ Amin Sayani died due to heart failure.
- ★ Sayani gained immense popularity through his prestigious radio presentation 'Geetmala'. He was known for his charming voice and attractive style.
- ★ Ameen Sayani played an important role in popularizing radio in India. He enthralled the audience with his wit, knowledge and charming presentation.
- ★ His voice is synonymous with the golden age of Indian radio. Sayani had a great sense of humor and was an excellent communicator and storyteller.
- ★ Sayani has produced and conducted over 54,000 radio programmes and 19,000 spots/jingles since 1951.

Eminent Jurist and Senior Supreme Court Lawyer Fali Nariman

- ★ Renowned constitutional jurist and senior Supreme Court advocate Fali S Nariman passed away at the age of 95 in New Delhi.
- ★ In November 1950, Nariman became an advocate of the Bombay High Court, later earning the designation of senior advocate in 1961.
- ★ With over 70 years of legal practice, he initially worked in the High Court of Bombay before shifting to New Delhi in 1972 to practice in the Supreme Court of India.
- ★ He was also the President of the Bar Association of India from 1991 to 2010.
- ★ He argued numerous significant cases, such as the NJAC verdict and the SC AoR Association case, which influenced the establishment of the collegium system.
- ★ He was honoured with the 19th Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2018.
- ★ He received the Padma Bhushan in January 1991 and in 2007 he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Former LS Speaker and Former CM of Maharashtra Manohar Joshi

- ★ Manohar Joshi, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra and former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, died on 23 February 2024.
- ★ Manohar Joshi served as Maharashtra's Chief Minister from 1995 to 1999. Manohar Joshi was the first leader from the undivided Shiv Sena to hold the top post in the state.
- ★ Manohar Joshi, also an MP, served as the Lok Sabha Speaker from 2002 to 2004 during Vajpayee's tenure.
- ★ Manohar Joshi was a teacher in his early life. Joshi was associated with RSS in his early life. Then after the establishment of Shiv Sena in 1966, he joined it. Joshi rose from CM to Lok Sabha Speaker from this party.
- ★ Joshi was also the Mayor of Mumbai from 1976 to 1977.

