



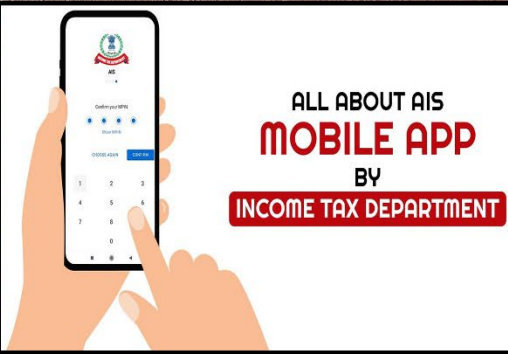
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MARCH - 2023



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MARCH – 2023

NATIONAL NEWS

101 more APMC Mandis to be connected with e-NAM

- ★ By March end, 101 more APMC mandis will be connected with e-NAM.
- ★ The government has approved the integration of 101 more agricultural produce marketing committee (APMC) mandis into the electronic platform e-NAM.
- ★ The total number of mandis will reach 1361 across the country by March 31.
- ★ The joining of more mandis will increase turnover of e-NAM, which was ₹51,000 crore in 2021-22.
- ★ In the current fiscal year, 260 mandis have joined the e-NAM platform.
- ★ National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a pan-India electronic trading portal that provides an integrated national network for Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMCs).

First State in India to Begin Organized Cultivation of Mulethi

- ★ Himachal Pradesh (HP) has become the first state in India to start the organised commercial cultivation of Licorice (Mulethi).
- ★ For the first time, planting material of Mulethi (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) was distributed to the farmers to cultivate it commercially.
- ★ The distribution of planting materials among the farmers was done by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT).
- ★ The demand for Mulethi is high in India as it is not only used as a spice but also used in ayurvedic medicines.
- ★ Currently, Mulethi is largely imported in India from other countries like Afghanistan, Nepal and China.
- ★ Mulethi is a sweet-tasting perennial shrub.

Indian Railways Achieves a Significant Milestone

- ★ Indian Railways achieved a significant milestone in Railway electrification.
- ★ With the completion of the electrification of the Subhagpur-Pachperwa Broad Gauge (BG) route in North Eastern Railway, Indian Railways has completed the electrification of all BG routes in Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ This will improve rail connectivity in the region and will improve the speed of trains in the region.
- ★ With this achievement, Indian Railways has completed electrification of BG routes in six zonal railways: East Coast Railway, North Central Railway, North Eastern Railway, Eastern Railway, South Eastern Railway, West Central Railway.

- ★ Also, Highly Utilized Network (HUN-5), Jhansi-Muzzaffarpur-Katni is fully electrified now.

Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela Organised by IARI

- ★ The Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela, organised every year by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), will be conducted in Delhi from 02 March to 04 March 2023.
- ★ Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela will be inaugurated by Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.
- ★ The theme of the Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela is 'Nutrition, Food and Environmental Protection with Shree Anna'.
- ★ Agri-startups, especially Shree Anna based startups will set up their stalls. This will motivate the youth to start startups as a source of livelihood.
- ★ Awards will be given by the institute to encourage the farmers.

India's 1st Marina to Promote Coastal Tourism

- ★ Karnataka Chief Minister Shri Basavaraj Bommai has confirmed the construction of the India's first Marina which will be constructed at Byndoor in the Udupi district, Karnataka
- ★ The objective is to promote coastal tourism in Karnataka.
- ★ After seeking permission from the Union government for the relaxation of Coastal Regulation Zone rules, it is proposed to take up beach tourism in coastal areas and pilgrim tourism.
- ★ Also, to promote 'yatra tourism' in the state, the government proposed to build a corridor of ancient temples like Madhukeshwara in Banavasi and Dattatreya in Ganagapura.

Amazon to Join Government e-Comm Platform ONDC

- ★ Amazon has announced that it will join the Indian government's ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) platform.
- ★ Amazon is planning to integrate its logistics network (from pickup to delivery) and SmartCommerce services with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).
- ★ SmartCommerce is an AWS-powered suite of SaaS products that enables MSMEs to build and scale their businesses across digital mediums.
- ★ ONDC is an open e-commerce protocol set up by the Ministry of Commerce's Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- ★ Under ONDC, it is envisaged that a buyer registered on one participating e-commerce site may purchase goods from a seller on another participating e-commerce site.

Kerala Signs MoU with UN Women

- ★ Kerala entered into an agreement with UN Women, boosting women-friendly activities in the State's tourism sector by training stakeholders who include young representatives and civil organisations.

- ★ A memorandum of understanding signed by Kerala Tourism Director P.B. Nooh and UN Women India representative Susan Ferguson agreed to work towards promoting gender-inclusive tourism sites in the State.
- ★ The Responsible Tourism Mission will be the implementing agency for the MoU.
- ★ As per the pact inked at the first-ever Global Responsible Tourism Summit in Kumarakom, both parties will promote women-friendly tourism in Kerala.

International Yoga Festival 2023

- ★ The International Yoga Festival 2023, organised by the Uttarakhand Tourism Development Council, was inaugurated by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on the banks of the Ganges in Rishikesh.
- ★ Renowned Yogacharya Padmashree Sivananda and Padmabhushan Rajinikanth were also present on the occasion.
- ★ Sages and sages acquired many methods of yoga on the banks of the Ganges and presented yoga for the welfare of mankind.

Chintan Shivir on 'Drugs: Quality regulation and Enforcement'

- ★ Chintan Shivir on 'Drugs: Quality Regulation and Enforcement' was inaugurated by Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.
- ★ The Chintan Shivir started at Kanha Shanti Vanam, 40 kilometres from Hyderabad.
- ★ Its objective is to review processes and implementation of policies and programmes related to drug quality and enforcement in the country.
- ★ During the meeting, ways and means for facilitating ease of doing business will also be recommended by reviewing transparency and compliance with Indian drug standards and regulatory capacities across states and centre.
- ★ Participants will also discuss global best practices.
- ★ Participants will also discuss the introduction of newer interventions like digital tools and clinical trial standards.

President to Inaugurate 14th Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav

- ★ 14th Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav was formally inaugurated by President Droupadi Murmu.
- ★ The 14th edition of Sanskriti Mahotsav is being held in Bikaner, Rajasthan.
- ★ The Sanskriti Mahotsav is being organized at Dr. Karni Singh Stadium.
- ★ It is a 9-days long festival.
- ★ It is being organized for the first time in Rajasthan.
- ★ Sand sculpture, an exhibition based on crafts and other arts is also being organized as part of the festival.
- ★ The festival is aimed at preserving, promoting and popularizing the rich cultural heritage of the country.

‘Clean Plant Centres’ to Boost Fruit Yield

- ★ In order to increase domestic production, the Centre plans to establish 10 “Clean Plant Centers” as the demand for fruits like apple, avocado and blueberry has increased over time.
- ★ These centers will be set up under the ‘Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program’, which was announced by the Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2023-24.
- ★ The 10 centres will be established for fruit crops like apple, walnut, almond, grapes, mango, pomegranate, etc., and will be fully funded by the Centre.
- ★ The centres will be implemented in a PPP mode in partnership with research organisations, agriculture universities and private sector partners.
- ★ The Clean Plant Centres will provide services of disease diagnostic, therapeutics, multiplying of plants and generation of mother plants.

India’s 1st State to set up ‘Mother Milk Bank’

- ★ Uttarakhand will set up India’s 1st government ‘Mother Milk Bank’ in the state.
- ★ This facility will bring the nutrients of the mother’s milk to be delivered to the newborn to a greater extent.
- ★ The Uttarakhand health department is planning to set up a ‘Maternal Milk Bank’.
- ★ It will be a hope for children whose mother dies during childbirth.
- ★ Under this scheme lactating women will be able to donate milk to the bank.
- ★ Aija Boi Yojana scheme is also being run, under which ₹2,000 is given to pregnant women.
- ★ ₹1500 is being given to the mothers for food and ₹500 for the naming ceremony of the child.

LIFEathon for Mission LiFE

- ★ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the NITI Aayog hosted a hackathon with young people from across the world to contribute ideas and innovations to promote sustainable living and climate-positive behaviour as part of the Government of India’s Mission LiFE.
- ★ The Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) campaign aims to bring individual action to the forefront of climate action and to encourage individuals to consume less plastic, waste-less food, and prefer public transport, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- ★ Mission LiFE was launched by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in Gujarat last year.
- ★ Launching the LIFEathon’, NITI Aayog Vice Chairperson Suman Bery, mission LiFE aims to create and nurture a global network of Pro-Planet People committed to adapting and promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles.

National Assessment Regulator PARAKH

- ★ NCERT selects Educational Testing Service (ETS) for establishing national assessment regulator PARAKH.

- ★ Setting up PARAKH was outlined in National Education Policy (NEP 2020) to help remove disparities in scores of students enrolled with different State boards.
- ★ The Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development (PARAKH) will work on setting norms, standards and guidelines for student assessment and evaluation for all recognised school boards in the country.
- ★ Educational Testing Service (ETS) has been chosen by the National Council for Education Research (NCERT) for setting up the regulatory platform.

Tata Motors Launches First Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility

- ★ Indian automaker Tata Motors launched its first vehicle scrapping facility in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- ★ The registered facility Re.Wi.Re (Recycle with Respect) has a capacity of 15,000 vehicles per annum and offers eco-friendly prices for dismantling end-of-life vehicles.
- ★ The facility will be available for passenger and commercial vehicles and is developed and operated by Tata Motors' partner Ganganagar Vaahan Udyog Pvt Ltd.
- ★ Further, the facility is digitalized for hassle-free, paperless operations and has dedicated stations for the safe dismantling of components such as tyres, batteries, fuel, oils, liquids and gases.

Tamil Nadu Signs MoU with UNEP

- ★ Tamil Nadu and UNEP signed MoU for implementing the urban cooling program.
- ★ The signing of the MoU between Tamil Nadu and UNEP will address the quickly rising demand for cooling in cities of Tamil Nadu.
- ★ The collaboration will support the implementation of initiatives to adapt and counteract rising heat.
- ★ UNEP will work with various departments of the state to create comprehensive action plans like increasing green coverage in cities, building efficiency measures, improving the urban design, etc.
- ★ Tamil Nadu government announced to set up Tamil Nadu Green Climate Fund with a fund size of ₹1,000 crores.

7th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the 7th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference in Bhopal.
- ★ It is being organised by the India Foundation in association with Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies.
- ★ This conference is focused on the principle of humanism in the new era.
- ★ It will conclude on 5 March.
- ★ More than 350 scholars from 15 countries are taking part in the conference.
- ★ Representatives from different countries like Bhutan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam are participating in the conference.

Grievance Appellate Committee for Social Media Firms

- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology recently launched the Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC) portal under the IT Rules, 2021.
- ★ The GAC was one of the provisions in the recently amended Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- ★ GAC will look into user complaints regarding unsatisfactory grievance redressal by social media intermediaries.
- ★ Three such bodies have been constituted of professionals from various fields.
- ★ Each GAC will comprise three government-appointed, full-time members, including a chairperson.
- ★ Any user aggrieved by a decision of a platform's Grievance Officer can appeal to the GAC within 30 days of the receipt of communication from the Grievance Officer.

'Go Green, Go Organic' Cover for Sikkim

- ★ Union Minister Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw and 4 Sikkim Ministers released a unique cover of the Department of Posts, 'Go Green, Go Organic' for Sikkim.
- ★ This release is a tribute to the rich culture of Sikkim and its contributions to the country's agriculture sector.
- ★ It is a recognition of Sikkim's efforts towards promoting organic farming and sustainable development.
- ★ Sikkim has the title of the 'first 100% organic state' in the world.

Centre Launches MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme

- ★ Union Minister for MSME Narayan Rane launched the MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme.
- ★ It aims to provide a roadmap to global competitiveness for the MSMEs of India.
- ★ The scheme will not only strive to improve quality, productivity and performance, but also change the mindset of manufacturers and provide them the ability to become world class manufacturers.
- ★ Through this scheme, MSMEs can significantly reduce wastage, increase productivity, improve quality, expand their markets, operate in a safer manner and ultimately become competitive and profitable.

Five-day Yaoshang Festival Begins in Manipur

- ★ The Yaoshang festival has begun and will continue for 5 days in Manipur.
- ★ The festival is celebrated by the Meitei people who are predominantly Hindu.
- ★ It is celebrated at the same time as Holi and known as 'Manipur's version of Holi'.
- ★ The festival marks the rejuvenation of the spirit of life and commemorates the birthday of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
- ★ The festival also witnessed a number of cultural and religious activities for 5 days.

- ★ From some years back, the village level sport competition held by different clubs or organisations during the Yaoshang festival has become a major feature of the celebration.

International Conference on ‘Shared Buddhist Heritage’

- ★ An international conference on “Shared Buddhist Heritage” will be held on 14 March to 15 March at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi.
- ★ The two-day event is being organized by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs and the International Buddhist Confederation.
- ★ The conference will focus on India’s civilizational connection with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) nations 2023.
- ★ It is the first of its kind event under India’s leadership of SCO (for a period of one year – from September 2022 to September 2023).
- ★ It is to re-establish the trans-cultural link between Buddhist art, art styles, archaeological sites and antiquity of Central Asia in the collections of various museums in SCO countries.

Friendship Hall of Fame in Ahmedabad

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Antony Albanese inaugurated the friendship hall of fame at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad.
- ★ It shows the history of India-Australia Cricket Contests.
- ★ This event has been organized to mark the 75 years of cricket Friendship between India and Australia.
- ★ Antony Albanese announced that Australia and India had finalised the Australia-India Education Qualification Recognition Mechanism.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Inaugurates Keeladi Museum

- ★ The Keeladi museum was inaugurated by Tamil Nadu (TN) Chief Minister (CM) Shri M.K. Stalin in the Sivaganga district.
- ★ It is to showcase the history of Tamils, their heritage and culture and the exhibits kept in the facility include earthenware and brick structures
- ★ The museum is built on 2 acres at Keeladi at a cost of ₹18.43 crore.
- ★ The museum has 6 blocks and is built in the Chettinad style of architecture.
- ★ The museum is adorned with over 15,000 unique artefacts unearthed between the 4th and 8th phases of excavations since 2018.

Wildlife Board Approves IAF Mountain Radar

- ★ The National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) cleared all ways for Indian Air Force (IAF) to set up mountain radars in Ladakh by giving approval for their induction.
- ★ The induction of the mountain radar is part of the larger defence plan to ensure that there is a watch on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which already has strong radar coverage from the Chinese side of the border.

- ★ At a meeting of the NBWL, chaired by Union Environment Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav, cleared the way for the transfer of 31.6 hectares of land from the Changthang wildlife sanctuary in Ladakh for the IAF's new mountain radar.

Asia's First Woman Loco Pilot to Operate Vande Bharat Express

- ★ Asia's first woman loco pilot Surekha Yadav has become the first female to operate the newly-introduced semi-high speed Vande Bharat Express train.
- ★ She piloted a semi-high-speed train between Solapur station and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai.
- ★ Yadav set another record in Central Railway by becoming the first woman loco pilot of Vande Bharat Express.
- ★ Surekha Yadav, a resident of Satara in the western Maharashtra region, became India's first woman train driver in 1988.

BIS Launches 'Learning Science via Standards' Series

- ★ The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has announced the launch of 'Learning Science through Standards', a unique initiative for students to learn science through standards.
- ★ The initiative focuses on a range of lesson plans aimed at using scientific concepts, principles and rules.
- ★ It helps the students to understand their practical applications in manufacturing, working and testing the quality characteristics of various products as stated in the respective Indian Standards.
- ★ BIS officials and resource personnel will administer the lesson plans to the students for an interactive learning experience.

G20 Flower Festival

- ★ The Flower Festival began at Delhi's Connaught Plaza with an aim to showcase the diversity of the G20 participants and invited nations.
- ★ It was inaugurated by Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav.
- ★ The main objective of the festival is to showcase the vibrancy and diversity of the G20 members and guest countries.
- ★ To achieve this objective, the festival will showcase a variety of flowering plants in various colours and arrangements, highlighting the richness of the Indian subcontinent.
- ★ Along with plants, paintings and photographs of flowers from G20 members and invited countries will be displayed.

First Metro to Accept Digital Currency for Parking

- ★ In an initiative to promote Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) has become the 1st metro in India to accept digital currency in its parking facilities.
- ★ The programme was inaugurated by KMRL MD Loknath Behera at Thykoodam Metro station.

- ★ The programme was introduced in association with Maharashtra based IDFC FIRST Bank partnered with Anantham Online, a technology startup.
- ★ This initiative comes at the back of a pilot programme launched by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ The initiative would help the Metro users to pay from their respective Bank's CBDC wallet and avoid exchanging cash.

Atal Innovation Mission launches ATL Sarthi

- ★ Atal Innovation Mission – NITI Aayog launched 'ATL Sarthi', a comprehensive self-monitoring framework to strengthen the ecosystem of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL).
- ★ Atal Innovation Mission is setting up Atal Tinkering Labs in schools across the country to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds.
- ★ Atal Tinkering Labs Sarathi will act as a charioteer and enable Atal Tinkering Labs to be efficient and effective.
- ★ ATL Sarthi will provide a monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance the performance of Atal Tinkering Labs.
- ★ The Atal Innovation Mission has set up Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATL) in schools across India.
- ★ The scheme aims to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds.

16th Meeting of SCO Youth Council

- ★ The 16th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Youth Council was held in hybrid mode in New Delhi, under the chairship of India.
- ★ Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated the meeting of the SCO Youth Council.
- ★ The meeting was chaired by Nitesh Kumar Mishra, Joint Secretary, Department of Youth Affairs, Government of India.
- ★ In the meeting, SCO member states shared information on the activities of the SCO Youth Council in 2022-2023.
- ★ The report of the SCO Youth Conference held in virtual mode on the theme 'Effective Community Development Activities' was delivered to all SCO member states.

First State to Start Insurance Scheme for Sericulturists

- ★ Uttarakhand has become India's first state to launch the "Resham Keet Bima" scheme to protect its sericulturists.
- ★ In the first phase of this pilot project, 200 sericulturists from 5 blocks of 4 districts — Dehradun, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, and Nainital have been insured from the ill effects of climate change, scarcity of water, and other hazards.
- ★ The decision to do this has been taken by the Agriculture Insurance Company of India and the department.
- ★ This scheme will be run under Saral Krishi Beema.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin

- ★ According to the government, 2 crore 18 lakh pucca houses have been built till 11 March 2023, under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).
- ★ The government has set a target of constructing two crore 95 lakh pucca houses with basic facilities by March 2024.
- ★ The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation launched the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana rural in 2016.
- ★ The scheme was initiated with the objective of 'Housing for All by 2022'.
- ★ The scheme has 2 Components - Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).
- ★ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin was earlier called Indira Awas Yojana which was renamed in March 2016.

Narender Singh Tomar Inaugurates 'Agriunifest'

- ★ Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar on 15 March inaugurated a 5-day cultural program 'AgriUnifest' in Bengaluru.
- ★ It was organized by Bangalore Agricultural University in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- ★ More than 2500 meritorious students from 60 State Agricultural Universities, Deemed Universities and Central Universities participated in it.
- ★ The All India Inter Agricultural University Youth Festival was conceptualized and initiated by ICAR during 1999-2000 with the objective of integrating Indian agriculture by connecting various Indian cultures.
- ★ Its objective was to nurture the talent of the youth of the Agricultural Universities and represent Indian culture.

IndiaAI Ecosystem

- ★ The Ministry of Electronics and IT set up a task force for framing a draft roadmap for the artificial intelligence ecosystem by the end of April.
- ★ The Minister of State for Electronics and IT has announced the establishment of the IndiaAI platform, which aims to support research and provide tools for startups in the field of artificial intelligence.
- ★ This platform will focus on promoting Indian startups, research, and innovation, which could contribute to the growth of the Indian economy.
- ★ IndiaAI stands for 'The National AI Portal of India' platform.
- ★ The platform was launched in 2018.
- ★ It is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).

Ministry of Steel Signs MoU with Selected Companies

- ★ The Ministry of Steel on 17 March signed MoUs with selected companies under the Production-linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for specialty steel in New Delhi.
- ★ A total of 57 MoUs were signed with 27 companies during the event.
- ★ The production linked incentive scheme aims to boost domestic manufacturing and cut down on import bills by encouraging local companies to set up or expand existing manufacturing units.
- ★ PLI scheme is an initiative that provides incentives to domestic industries to promote production at the local level.
- ★ Through this scheme, the government aims to incentivize companies to increase the sales of manufactured products in domestic units.

Indian Railways to Become Net Zero Carbon Emitter

- ★ Indian Railways is working on a mission mode to become the largest green railway in the world and towards becoming a 'net zero carbon emitter' by 2030.
- ★ Indian Railways has taken several initiatives to reduce carbon emissions which include the use of energy efficient technologies.
- ★ To achieve net zero carbon emissions, the expected requirement of renewable capacity by 2029-30 would be around 30,000 MW.
- ★ By February 2023, about 147 MW of solar plants and about 103 MW of wind power plants have been commissioned.
- ★ Its first phase is estimated to reduce emissions by about 457 million tonnes over a period of 30 years.

India's First Behavioural Lab to be Set Up in Rajasthan

- ★ The Rajasthan government approved the setting up of India's first Behavioural lab at Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- ★ It will be set up at the Patel Bhawan at Harish Chandra Mathur Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration (HCM-RIPA), Jaipur.
- ★ For this, the Chief Minister (CM) Shri Ashok Gehlot has approved a financial proposal of ₹1.22 crore.
- ★ The lab to be set up in about 2665.04 square feet area will be managed and operated by IIM Udaipur.
- ★ Training programs will be organised in various colleges and universities in the field of experiential studies through this laboratory, along with imparting training to teachers and programs for practical training.

Jharkhand Government Launches Job Portal

- ★ The Jharkhand government launched 'Jharniyojan' portal where all private establishments have to register themselves.

- ★ Its objective is to fulfill the state government's promise of ensuring 75 percent employment to local candidates in the private sector of the state.
- ★ The portal will act as a platform for employers to share information related to occupations and manpower and for candidates looking for jobs.
- ★ Employers using the portal will have to comply with the 'Jharkhand State Employment of Local Candidates in Private Sector Act, 2021'.
- ★ Local companies and employers are expected to voluntarily comply and provide employment opportunities to local youth/women.

Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Kamalam Fruit

- ★ Recently, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare approved a Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Dragon Fruit (Kamalam Fruit) to be established by the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR), Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- ★ Dragon Fruit is a herbaceous perennial climbing cactus widely known as Pitaya, has its origin in Southern Mexico, Central America and South America.
- ★ The plant sustains yield for more than 20 years, is high in nutraceutical properties (medicinal effects) and good for value-added processing industries.
- ★ In this endeavor under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), a roadmap is being prepared for the cultivation of this crop.

Global Conference on Digital Health

- ★ The Government of India hosted a two-day Global Conference on Digital Health in New Delhi and it was chaired by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya.
- ★ The objective of the conference is to reach universal health coverage to the last citizen by taking advantage of India's Chairmanship of G20 and collaboration with WHO South-East Asia Regional Office.
- ★ The conference focuses on unlocking the potential to deliver and share digital health solutions in an ethical, safe, secure, reliable, equitable and sustainable manner.
- ★ The conference is expected to make a significant contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals related to health and well-being, especially SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for people at all ages.

Matua Mela is Being Organised in West Bengal

- ★ The Matua Mela is being organized in West Bengal to commemorate the 212th birth anniversary of Sri Sri Harichand Thakur.
- ★ West Bengal is hosting the Matua Maha Mela 2023 from March 19 to March 25.
- ★ This Mela is being organized by All India Matua Federation.
- ★ The occasion offers the chance for the Matua community to get together, take part in religious rituals, and honour their spiritual elders.

- ★ The occasion provides an important opportunity to this community to highlight their customs and cultural heritage.

Global Millets Conference

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference in New Delhi.
- ★ The conference will be attended by Agriculture Ministers of various countries, international scientists, nutritionists, health experts, start-up leaders and other stakeholders.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has declared the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYM). The declaration was based on India's proposal.
- ★ The two-day global conference will have sessions on all important issues related to millets (Shree Anna).

First Butterfly Park of Tripura

- ★ A butterfly park set up by the forest department in a village near the India-Bangladesh international border in South Tripura district.
- ★ It has become a center of attraction for tourists from across the country and Bangladesh.
- ★ The Butterfly Ecopark at Chhotakhola, near to Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, is the first butterfly park in the Northeast.
- ★ The park is adjacent to the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary commemorating the Liberation War of Bangladesh and the Endangered Bison Park in the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Park.
- ★ The surrounding environment attracts many tourists which helps in the economic development of Tripura.

First Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train

- ★ The first Bharat Gaurav special tourist train will commence its journey from Secunderabad railway station.
- ★ The Bharat Gaurav train service will be launched by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) on March 18.
- ★ SCR General Manager Arun Kumar Jain said that the 'Punyakshetra Yatra: Puri – Kashi – Ayodhya' Bharat Gaurav tour is a great opportunity for rail passengers intending to visit several historical and pilgrimage places.
- ★ Punyakshetra Yatra, which is an eight nights and nine days tour from March 18 to 26 will cover important spiritual destinations such as Puri, Konark, Gaya, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Prayagraj.

India's First Tribal Carbon-Free Village

- ★ India's first tribal carbon-free village will come up in Bhiwandi, Maharashtra, India.
- ★ Union Rural Development Minister Shri Giriraj Singh, who was on a tour of Thane district, has assured funds for this project.
- ★ Palli village in Jammu has become the first carbon neutral village in the country.

- ★ Solar energy is being used in this village and all the records of Gram Panchayat are digital.
- ★ A 500 KW solar project has been installed in this village.
- ★ Solar projects will be set up in 15 villages of Bhiwandi Lok Sabha constituency under the carbon-free village initiative.
- ★ It will make electricity available to the citizens at a cheap rate.

Five-Year Tamil Nadu Millet Mission

- ★ Tamil Nadu Minister for Agriculture MRK Panneerselvam announced that the state government will implement the Tamil Nadu Millet Mission for five years.
- ★ The government has decided to take up millet cultivation in 50,000 acres of fallow land under its Tamil Nadu Millet Mission and provide subsidy for crop diversification into millets.
- ★ By bringing millet farmers together, 100 groups of millet producers will be formed and training programs will be run for them.
- ★ Subsidy will be provided for setting up sprinkler irrigation system in 12,500 acres.
- ★ Subsidy assistance will be provided to farmer producer groups for setting up millet processing centers to sell value-added millets.
- ★ To create awareness about the goodness of millets, the government will celebrate 'Bajra Utsav'.

World Food India-2023

- ★ The second edition of 'World Food India-2023' will be organised by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India, from 03 November to 05 November 2023 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.
- ★ Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras and Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries and Jal Shakti, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, launched the website, publicity brochure and promotional video for WFI-2023.
- ★ Addressing the Curtain Raiser event, Shri Pashupati Kumar Paras emphasised that India is one of the fastest-growing economies with many investment opportunities, especially in the food processing sector.
- ★ He outlined five pivotal elements of the WFI-2023 as Millets- 'Shree Anna-The Super Food of India', Innovation and Sustainability 'Green Food', White Revolution 2.0, making India an export hub and focus on technology and digitisation.

CCI Clears Reliance Retail's Acquisition of Metro Cash and Carry India

- ★ The Competition Commission of India has approved Reliance Retail Ventures' (RRVL's) acquisition of METRO Cash and Carry India for a cash consideration of ₹2,850 crore.
- ★ RRVL is a subsidiary of Reliance Industries, while METRO Cash & Carry India is engaged in wholesale operations in India.
- ★ In December last year, RRVL had signed a definitive agreement to acquire a 100 per cent stake in the German firm Metro AG's wholesale operations in India.

- ★ METRO India began operations in India in 2003 and was the first company to introduce a cash-and-carry business format in the country.
- ★ It currently operates 31 large format stores across 21 cities with about 3,500 employees.

Loans Worth Over ₹30,000 Crore Sanctioned to Women Entrepreneurs

- ★ Under the Stand-Up India scheme, 1.75 lakh loans amounting to ₹39,517 crore as of February has been sanctioned since the launch in April 2016.
- ★ A total of 1.40 lakh loans amounting to ₹32,161 crore were sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.
- ★ The data was shared by the Minister of State in the Finance Ministry Bhagwat Karad in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.
- ★ Launched in April 2016, the scheme facilitates loans from SCBs between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore to at least one SC or ST borrower and one-woman borrower per bank branch.
- ★ The purpose of granting the loan is for setting up of greenfield enterprise in the manufacturing, services or trading sector.

Asia's Largest 4-Meter Telescope Inaugurated

- ★ Asia's largest 4-meter International Liquid Mirror Telescope was launched in Devasthal in Uttarakhand.
- ★ The telescope was officially inaugurated by Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh.
- ★ It has been established at the Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences (ARIES) located in Nainital, Uttarakhand.
- ★ The observatory will explore the deep sky, collecting an assortment of objects ranging from asteroids to supernovae and space debris.
- ★ It consists of a 4-metre-diameter rotating mirror made of a thin layer of liquid mercury to collect light.

Power Minister Launches SADUN

- ★ RK Singh, the Minister of Power and new and Renewable Energy, has launched the South Asia Distribution Utility Network (SADUN), which aims to modernise distribution of utilities in South Asia via knowledge sharing among the region's discoms.
- ★ SADUN is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Power, USAID and PFC.
- ★ Singh said that all the member nations would benefit from the synergy, exchange of experiences and the sharing of vision-enabled by the network.
- ★ USAID had conceptualised SADUN in January 2020 based on a consensus among the participants over a need for an initiative which focused on distribution network in the region.
- ★ USAID has already shared a white paper on SADUN with member nations to 'get their concurrence on the blueprint of the network' and move ahead in 'the process of implementation'.

Jindal Steel Gets India's First BIS Licence

- ★ Jindal Steel and Power has received BIS certification to manufacture India's First Fire Resistant Steel Structures at its rail mill and special profile mill in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.
- ★ The Hot Rolled Structural Steel, manufactured to IS 15103 standards, will be able to withstand temperatures up to 600 degrees Celsius for a maximum duration of three hours, and it can be used in high-temperature or fire-prone areas.
- ★ Fire protection has been a challenge in the design of steel structures.
- ★ The availability of Fire-Resistant Steel will result in more efficient design of structures.
- ★ The new BIS 15103 grade will be used to manufacture steel structures for infrastructure projects such as industrial structures, refineries, bridges, metro projects, hospitals, and commercial and residential buildings, besides steel and power plants.

Tamil Nadu's 18th Wildlife Sanctuary to come up in Erode

- ★ The Government of Tamil Nadu (TN) will notify Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, spread over 80,567 hectares in the forest areas of Anthiyur and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district, as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in TN.
- ★ It will include 4 reserve forest areas in Anthiyur, Bargur, Thattakarai and Chennampatti.
- ★ The sanctuary is located on the western side of Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.
- ★ It is located on the northern side of Kollegal forest division.
- ★ It lies on the eastern side of Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka.
- ★ It is adjacent to Cauvery North and South Wildlife Sanctuaries in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri.

Bhupender Yadav Launches Aravalli Green Wall Project

- ★ Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav inaugurated the Aravalli Green Wall Project at Tikli village in Haryana in a program organized on the occasion of International Forest Day.
- ★ The project will increase the green cover and biodiversity of Aravallis through afforestation, reforestation and restoration of water bodies.
- ★ It will also improve soil fertility, water availability and climate resilience of the region.
- ★ The project will benefit the local communities by providing them with employment opportunities, income generation and ecosystem services.
- ★ The project is part of the Union Forest Ministry's vision of creating green corridors across the country to combat land degradation and desertification.

Indian Government Launches DigiClaim Platform

- ★ The Agriculture Minister of India, Narendra Singh Tomar, has introduced a new platform called 'DigiClaim' on the national crop insurance portal.
- ★ This platform is aimed at expediting the disbursement of insurance claims to farmers who have availed themselves of crop insurance.

- ★ To demonstrate its effectiveness, the Minister used the platform to transfer a total insurance claim of ₹1,260.35 crore to insured farmers in several Indian states.
- ★ The newly launched DigiClaim platform will enable farmers to receive their insurance claims directly in their bank accounts, in a transparent and accountable manner.
- ★ The technology behind this platform has been developed through the integration of the National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP) and the Public Finance Management System (PFMS).

Cabinet Hikes Dearness Allowance (DA) by 4%

- ★ The cabinet has announced a 4% increase in dearness allowance for central government employees and pensioners.
- ★ The Union Cabinet has approved the release of additional instalment of Dearness Allowance to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief to pensioners with effect from 01 January 2023.
- ★ The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both dearness allowance and dearness relief would be more than ₹12 thousand 815 crore per annum.
- ★ The increase in Dearness Allowance is as per the approved formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission.
- ★ Dearness Allowance (DA) is compensation given to employees to offset the effects of inflation and is calculated as a percentage of an employee's basic salary.

PM Modi Launched 'Call Before U Dig' App

- ★ The Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Call Before u Dig' (CBuD) app, to tackle Uncoordinated digging and excavation.
- ★ The mobile application is an initiative of the Department of Telecom, Ministry of Communications.
- ★ It aims to prevent damage to underlying assets such as optical fiber cables, which is caused by unorganized quarrying and mining, which leads to a loss of about ₹3,000 crore every year.
- ★ This will save potential business losses due to lesser disruption of essential services like road, telecom, water, gas and electricity and reduce the inconvenience caused to citizens.
- ★ The app will connect excavators and property owners so that planned excavation can be carried out in the country while ensuring the safety of underground assets.

5th Poshan Pakhwada

- ★ The Women and Child Development Ministry will celebrate the 5th Poshan Pakhwada from 20 March to 03 April 2023.
- ★ The main aim of the Pakhwada is to raise awareness about the importance of nutrition and promote healthy eating habits through Jan Andolan and Jan Bhagidari.
- ★ The theme of the 5th Poshan Pakhwada is 'Nutrition for All: Together Towards a Healthy India'.
- ★ It will focus on popularising 'Shree Anna'- the mother of all grains as a valuable asset to resolve the problem of malnutrition.

1st Indian State to Launch PM MITRA Mega Textile Park

- ★ India's first PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Park for the textile industry was launched at E. Kumaralingapuram in Virudhunagar district of Tamil Nadu.
- ★ Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Shri MK Stalin and Union Textiles Minister Shri Piyush Goyal jointly launched the park.
- ★ The PM Mitra Mega Textiles Park will give a boost to the local economy of Virudhunagar, an aspirational district in Tamil Nadu.
- ★ Under the Virudhunagar PM Mitra project, infrastructure work will be done with an estimated ₹2,000 crore, which includes a central subsidy of ₹500 crore.
- ★ The Virudhunagar PM MITRA Park is among the 7 such proposals announced by the Centre.
- ★ The other 6 parks will come up in Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh under the ₹4,445 crore PM MITRA scheme.

NRCP for Prevention and Control of Rabies

- ★ The Central Government has launched the National Rabies Control Programme (NRCP) for prevention and control of Rabies recently.
- ★ Provision of Rabies Vaccine and Rabies Immune Globulin through National Free Drug Initiative will be organized.
- ★ Training on proper management of animal bites, prevention and control of rabies, surveillance and inter-sectoral coordination.
- ★ Strengthening monitoring of reporting of animal bites and rabies deaths.
- ★ Awareness about prevention of rabies will also be included.

PM Inaugurates Whitefield-KR Puram Metro Line

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the much-awaited Whitefield - KR Puram metro line in Bengaluru.
- ★ With this 13.71 km stretch with 12 stations, Bengaluru Metro has a connectivity of 69.66 km with 63 stations, making it the second largest network in the country after the Delhi Metro.
- ★ The ₹4,249-crore project will reduce travel time between Whitefield and KR Puram by 22 minutes and is expected to increase passenger traffic by 1.5 lakh.
- ★ The Whitefield-KR Puram Metro Line is an extension of the existing Purple Line.

Conservation Plan for Great Indian Bustards

- ★ The ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is taking various measures for conservation and protection of Great Indian Bustard in the country, including in Rajasthan.
- ★ The Great Indian Bustard is listed in Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Highest degree of legal protection from hunting.
- ★ Important habitats of Great Indian Bustards have been designated as National Parks/Sanctuaries for their better protection.

- ★ This species has been identified for conservation efforts under the centrally sponsored scheme 'Species Recovery Programme'.

Government Approves Installation of 'Statue of Knowledge'

- ★ The 'Statue of Knowledge' installation dedicated to Ambedkar was approved by Govt.
- ★ The construction of a 75-foot-tall "Statue of Knowledge" dedicated to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the city of Latur has received approval from the Maharashtra government.
- ★ The state government issued an order regarding the beautification of the statue and Ambedkar Park in the city.
- ★ ₹10 crore has been sanctioned for this entire project.
- ★ On April 14, the foundation stone laying ceremony for the project will be performed on Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary.

Regional Conference on Drug Trafficking and National Security

- ★ Union Home Minister Amit Shah chaired a regional conference on 'Drug Trafficking and National Security' in Bengaluru.
- ★ Representatives from 5 Southern States and 3 UT s attended the conference.
- ★ During the meeting, emphasis was laid on various aspects like ways to curtail drug trafficking through maritime routes, stringent punitive action on drug traffickers, etc.
- ★ The government has adopted a policy of zero tolerance against drugs to make a Drug-free India.
- ★ Ministry of Home Affairs has adopted a three-pronged formula to deal with this menace, including strengthening the institutional structure, empowerment and coordination of all narcotics agencies and a comprehensive awareness campaign.
- ★ The government is also considering for using la test technology in the fight against drugs.
- ★ Satellite mapping will be used for the identification of areas cultivating opium.
- ★ The cases of drugs will be investigated thoroughly from their source to destination to find out the entire network.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Financial Action Task Force Suspends Russia's Membership

- ★ Global anti-money laundering watchdog the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has suspended Russia's membership for its 'illegal, unprovoked and unjustified' full-scale military invasion of Ukraine.
- ★ Russia's actions were 'unacceptably run' counter to FATF's core principles that aims to promote security, safety and integrity of the global financial system.
- ★ FATF added Nigeria and South Africa to its grey list of countries subject to increased monitoring and removed Cambodia and Morocco from the grey list category.

- ★ FATF is an inter-governmental policy-making and standard-setting body dedicated to combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

India to host Permanent Mission Roundtables at UN Head Quarter

- ★ India, as Chair of the Group-20 (G-20), will host the 62nd Permanent Mission Round Table at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit to be held in New York later 2023.
- ★ During the event, India will focus on its growth story and achievements, as well as its goals to reap the potential benefits of the Global South.
- ★ A roundtable titled ‘Gandhian Trusteeship: A panel discussion on Sustainable Lifestyles and Enduring Pace’ will be organised.
- ★ On 09 March 2023 a roundtable on ‘A world we women and girls want: Technology enabled social and economic advancement’ will be organised.
- ★ On 16 March 2023 a roundtable on ‘Grassroots leadership and transformation: Charting the path of empowerment through technology and skill development’ will be organized.

Bangladesh Government Signs Agreement with ISA

- ★ The government of Bangladesh signed an agreement with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to increase the use of solar energy in Bangladesh.
- ★ The agreement is to be implemented by December 2026.
- ★ The government has set up a target of generating 40% of its total energy through renewable sources by 2041.
- ★ Bangladesh aims to produce 4000 MW of solar power by the end of 2030 for which various projects have been taken up.

Japan to Provide Loans for 2 Projects in India

- ★ Japan will provide loans worth ₹2,288 crore to India for the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link Project in Maharashtra and a Super-Specialty Cancer and Research Centre in Mizoram.
- ★ Japan has approved JPY 30.755 billion or about ₹1,728 crore for the project in Maharashtra and JPY 9.918 billion or around ₹560 crore for developing the centre in Mizoram.
- ★ Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link Project aims to improve connectivity in Mumbai Metropolitan Region by connecting Mumbai with Navi Mumbai, thereby contributing to the mitigation of traffic congestion and promoting regional economic development.
- ★ The project for the centre in Mizoram aims to improve access to cancer prevention, detection and treatment as well as human resource development and research that support cancer control systems.

First Anti-Corruption Working Group Meeting (ACWG) of G20

- ★ The first meeting of the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) meeting is being organized in Gurugram, Haryana, India.

- ★ The ACWG was joined by over 90 delegates from 20 member countries, 10 Invitee countries and 9 International Organizations.
- ★ The objective is to strengthen International Anti-corruption mechanisms
- ★ G20 ACWG meetings have one Chair (Presidency country) and one co-chair country.
- ★ It is under India's Chairmanship, and Italy is the co-chair country.

India to Host Quad Foreign Ministers Meeting

- ★ India hosted Quad Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi.
- ★ The meeting will be chaired by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar.
- ★ It will see the participation of Foreign Ministers of Australia and Japan and the Secretary of State of the US.
- ★ The meeting presented an opportunity for the Ministers to continue their discussions held at their last meeting in New York in September 2022.
- ★ The meeting is expected to focus on the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of increasing assertiveness by China in the region.

India and Australia Sign Framework Mechanism

- ★ India and Australia signed a 'Framework Mechanism for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications' that will help ease the mobility of students and professionals between the two countries.
- ★ The agreement was signed following a bilateral meeting in New Delhi between Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and his Australian counterpart Jason Clare.
- ★ At least 11 institutional-level memorandums were also exchanged between India and Australia's university sectors, which will promote research and academic collaborations between the two countries in several key sectors.
- ★ India has set the target of providing 50 per cent of its youth with either higher education or skill education by 2035 and Australia would be privileged to partner with India in this programme.

India Sign MoU with Mexico

- ★ India and Mexico signed an agreement on research, technology and innovation cooperation in New Delhi.
- ★ This particularly includes aerospace, electronics, ocean science, biotech and several major technology sectors involved which further involve healthcare.
- ★ Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh and Foreign Minister of Mexico Marcelo Ebrard were present on the occasion.

India Signed a MoC with Sweden

- ★ A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was signed between India and Sweden to strengthen cooperation and promote research networking between research institutions from both countries.
- ★ Its main objective is to promote opportunities for money mobility in both the countries.

- ★ The MoC aims to encourage academic collaboration through organising various mobility activities, such as exchange programmes, seminars, workshops and conferences.

The First Country in the World to Import CO₂

- ★ Denmark has launched a project to store carbon dioxide 1,800 metres below the North Sea, making it the first country in the world to bury CO₂ imported from another country.
- ★ CO₂ burial project, where carbon is injected into the site of an old oil field to prevent further warming of the atmosphere.
- ★ The project aims to store eight million tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2030.
- ★ The North Sea was chosen for the project because it already has pipelines and potential storage sites due to decades of oil and gas production.

Afghanistan is the World's Most Repressive Country for Women

- ★ The United Nations (UN) stated that, since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the country has become the most repressive in the world for women and girls, deprived of many of their basic rights.
- ★ Afghanistan's new rulers have shown an almost singular focus on imposing rules that leave most women and girls effectively trapped in their homes.
- ★ About 11.6 million women and girls are no longer receiving vital assistance.
- ★ Afghanistan is home to the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with two-thirds of the population, or 28 million people, estimated to need aid in 2023.

India and Luxembourg Release Joint Commemorative Postage Stamp

- ★ India and Luxembourg celebrating 75 years of friendship on March 15, 2023. To mark the occasion, both the countries launched a joint Commemorative Postage Stamp.
- ★ The Postage Stamp symbolises the long standing and strong ties between India and Luxembourg.
- ★ Both the countries have been cooperating in the steel sector for the last 20 years.
- ★ The Paul Worth Company of Luxembourg has been working in India for the last two decades under this collaboration.
- ★ The partnership between India and Luxembourg in various fields reflects their commitment to strengthen their friendship and explore future opportunities for cooperation.

Appeal Arbitration Arrangement

- ★ Japan has become the latest country to join an alternative mechanism, Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) to resolve the trade dispute mechanism at the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- ★ The MPIA is an alternative mechanism for resolving WTO disputes.
- ★ It was set up by the EU and their key partners.
- ★ Including Japan, 26 WTO members currently participate in the MPIA.

- ★ Any member can join the MPIA by notifying the Dispute Settlement Body and a range of members have done so.

Defence Cooperation Dialogue Between India and Maldives

- ★ India and Maldives held the 4th Defense Cooperation Dialogue (DCD) in Male.
- ★ The dialogue was co-chaired by Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and his Maldivian counterpart, Chief of Defence Force Major General Abdulla Shamaal.
- ★ During the talks, the ongoing bilateral Defense Cooperation activities were reviewed.
- ★ The talks covered existing bilateral exercises, with both countries agreeing to increase the complexity of these exercises.
- ★ There is bilateral cooperation between the armed forces of India and Maldives in a number of fields, a positive sign for the future of bilateral relations.

India Invited for G7 Hiroshima Summit in Japan

- ★ India and Japan have signed two documents on the sidelines of the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.
- ★ The agreements include the Renewal of the Memorandum of Cooperation in Japanese language and Exchange of notes on JICA loan for 300 billion Yen on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed railway project.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi expressed his desire with Prime Minister Kishida to declare next year as the year of Youth Exchanges between the two countries.

South Korea to Build 'World's Largest' Chip Centre

- ★ Samsung Electronics expects to invest 300 trillion won (\$230 billion) over the next 20 years as part of an ambitious South Korean national project to build the world's largest semiconductor manufacturing base near the capital, Seoul.
- ★ The plans were announced by President Mr Yoon Suk Yeol and confirmed by the electronics giant.
- ★ The chip manufacturing "mega cluster" of facilities will be built in various locations in Gyeonggi province by 2042.
- ★ The centre will be anchored by 5 new semiconductor plants built by Samsung.
- ★ The chip cluster would be located in Gyeonggi province, which is part of the Seoul Metropolitan area, and the total investment would be completed in about 20 years.

Annual Edition of International SME Convention 2023

- ★ The 3rd annual edition of the International SME Convention 2023 (ISC) to be organised in New Delhi, India.
- ★ The ISC is being jointly organised by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and the Ministry of External Affairs and the India SME Forum.
- ★ The event has the Government of Madhya Pradesh (MP) as a major partner state and the Government of Uttar Pradesh (UP) as an associate partner state.

- ★ International Network of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (INSME) and World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises (WUSME) are the International Partners for ISC 2023 and Tata AIA is the Insurance Partner.

IMF Approves USD 3 Billion in Financial Assistance

- ★ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a \$3 billion bailout programme that will be available over 4 years, to help debt-ridden Sri Lanka overcome its economic crisis and catalyse financial support from other development partners.
- ★ The Executive Board's decision will enable an immediate disbursement equivalent to Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 254 million (about \$333 million) and catalyse financial support from other development partners.
- ★ This is Sri Lanka's 17th credit programme with the IMF.
- ★ Sri Lanka is going through its worst-ever economic crisis since its independence in 1948.
- ★ India had provided assistance of 4 billion dollars to Sri Lanka.
- ★ Under Extended Fund Facility, financial assistance is provided to countries facing medium-term balance of payments problems due to structural weaknesses.
- ★ SDR are supplementary foreign exchange reserve assets defined and maintained by the IMF.

Egypt Became a Member of the BRICS NDB

- ★ Egypt officially became a member of BRICS' New Development Bank (NDB) which includes India, Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa as member countries.
- ★ Egypt completed all the necessary procedures to become an eligible member on February 2023.
- ★ BRICS' New Development bank was established in July 2014, after an intergovernmental agreement at the 6th BRICS summit in Fortaleza.
- ★ The bank's goal is to finance infrastructure projects and sustainable development projects in BRICS member states and developing countries.
- ★ Previously, the bank received an "AA+" international credit rating from Fitch Ratings and S&P Global Ratings.
- ★ South Africa is to host the 15th BRICS Summit which is scheduled to be held in Aug 2023 in Durban, South Africa.

United States and Canada Signed a Deal

- ★ The United States (US) and Canada have reached an agreement on a decades-old asylum accord that will restrict certain migrants from seeking protection in Canada.
- ★ As part of the deal, Canada will create a new refugee programme for 15,000 migrants fleeing violence in South and Central America.
- ★ The deal is an amendment in the 2004 Safe Third Country Agreement between the US and Canada.
- ★ The new arrangement will close the loophole in the Safe Third Country Agreement that prevents Canada from turning away those crossing the border at unofficial crossing points.

- ★ The accord is expected to allow both sides of the border to turn back such asylum seekers heading in either direction.
- ★ The discussions on the agreement were going on over the years but after the sharp increase of people crossing into Canada from the US, this decision has been taken.

BANKING, FINANCE & ECONOMICS

Reserve Bank of India Paper

- ★ According to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) occasional paper, titled Do Bank Mergers Improve Efficiency? In the Indian Experience, banking mergers in India have been, on an average, beneficial to the banking sector as the financial performance and efficiency of acquirers improved post-merger.
- ★ The study covered all registered Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As) in the Indian commercial banking industry, between 1997 and 2020.
- ★ The study's findings suggest that the mean technical efficiency of acquirers increased from 90.88 in the pre-merger period to 93.80 post-merger after 3 years and 94.24 post-merger after 5 years.
- ★ Mergers have provided avenues for increasing the scale of operations, geographical diversification and adoption of more efficient business strategies.

HDFC Bank Raises \$750 Million in Dollar Bond Sale

- ★ The country's largest private sector lender HDFC Bank has raised USD 750 million through a dollar bond sale.
- ★ HDFC bank will be paying a coupon of 686%.
- ★ The USD-denominated senior unsecured instruments will have a 3-year maturity, with settlement on 02 March 2023 and the maturity on 02 March 2026.
- ★ The paper, rated Baa3 by Moody's Rating Services and Bbb by S&P, will be listed on the India International Exchange.

Karnataka Bank Partnered with Paisalo Digital Limited

- ★ Karnataka Bank and Paisalo Digital Limited, a non-deposit taking Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), entered into a co-lending agreement to provide financial support to the low-income segment and to boost the country's Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) segment of India.
- ★ The arrangement will leverage Karnataka Bank's low cost of funds and the end-to-end digital capabilities of KBL and Paisalo, to help the sourcing, servicing and recovery of small-ticket income generation priority sector loans.
- ★ In line with the RBI's guidelines on Co-lending by banks and NBFCs to Priority Sectors to improve the flow of credit to unserved and underserved segments.

Niva Bupa Launches Health Insurance Plan ‘Reassure 2.0’

- ★ Niva Bupa Health Insurance Company Limited, one of India’s largest independent health insurers has launched ‘ReAssure 2.0’, which includes many industry-first features.
- ★ ReAssure 2.0 improves on the current ReAssure plan’s 3 powerful benefits – ReAssure, Booster and Safeguard – by providing a ‘+’ variant of these benefits to provide unrivalled benefits.
- ★ ReAssure 2.0 is available as an individual, multi-individual and family floater.
- ★ It starts from ₹5 lakh to ₹1 crore for the age bracket of 18 years to 65 years
- ★ This plan offers a ‘live healthy’ benefit that gives a premium discount of up to 30% on policy renewal basis health points earned.

World Bank to Provide Turkey USD 1.78 Billion

- ★ The World Bank will provide USD 1.78 billion in assistance to Turkey to help with relief and recovery efforts after devastating earthquakes in Turkey and neighbouring Syria.
- ★ The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), will provide USD 85 million in urgent humanitarian assistance as the Agency continues to lead the U.S. government response to the worst earthquake to hit the region in nearly a century.
- ★ Up to 23 million people could be affected by the massive earthquake that has killed thousands in Turkey and Syria, the WHO warned, promising long-term assistance.

India’s First International ETF Debt Fund

- ★ IDFC Mutual Fund (MF) is set to launch India’s first international debt fund, the IDFC US Treasury Bond 0-1 Year FOF (fund of funds).
- ★ With this international debt fund, Indian retail investors can now have access to diversify their investments and invest in ultra-safe, currently high-yield US treasury securities.
- ★ They can also use this FOF as a hedge against their exposure to the US dollar (USD).
- ★ The IDFC US Treasury Bond 0-1 Year FOF will invest in JPMorgan Beta Builders US Treasury Bond 0-1 Year UCITS ETF, an exchange-traded fund (ETF) with exposure to 0-1-year US treasuries.

Bank of Maharashtra Partners with Experian India

- ★ The Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) announced a strategic partnership with Experian India, to strengthen the digital security of the services.
- ★ The aim is to provide a comprehensive suite of services such as credit risk, advanced analytics and fraud prevention.
- ★ Experian is collaborating with BoM to provide innovative solutions throughout the customer lifecycle, enabling the bank to on-board New to Credit (NTC) and New to Bank customers (NTB) and service existing customers efficiently.
- ★ BoM will avail the services for retail and non-retail clients, including SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and corporates.

RBL Bank Partners with India Exim Bank

- ★ RBL Bank and Export-Import Bank of India (India Exim Bank), have entered into an agreement under the Trade Assistance Programme (TAP), to support cross-border trade transactions.
- ★ Under the TAP, India Exim Bank aims to facilitate and enhance India's exports globally by providing credit enhancement to trade instruments.
- ★ Through the programme, India Exim Bank will extend trade lines to participating overseas banks/institutions in the emerging markets.
- ★ The credit enhancements to trade instruments will help mobilise trade finance and would increase support to Indian exporters.

Bharti AXA Life Insurance Partners with Unity Bank

- ★ Bharti AXA Life Insurance, announced its bancassurance partnership with Unity Small Finance Bank (Unity Bank), a new-age, digital first bank for the distribution of life insurance products through the Bank's network of 111 branches and 206 offices pan-India.
- ★ Unity Bank's customers will benefit from a diverse range of new-age insurance solutions offered by Bharti AXA Life.
- ★ Bharti AXA Life Insurance is a joint venture (JV) between Paris-headquartered AXA Group and Bharti Enterprises – one of India's leading business groups with interests in Telecom, agricultural business and financial services.
- ★ This partnership arrangement can be profitable for both companies.

SBI Introduced Amrit Kalash Deposit FD Scheme

- ★ India's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has launched a new retail term deposit scheme called Amrit Kalash Deposit.
- ★ The Amrit Kalash Deposit is valid for customers from 15 February to 31 March 2023.
- ★ The scheme is launched for both domestic and Non-Resident Indian (NRI) customers
- ★ The interest rate of regular citizens is 7.10% while the interest rate of senior citizens is 7.60%.
- ★ The total tenure of the deposit scheme is 400 days.
- ★ For example, if they invest ₹1 lakh in the SBI Amrit Kalash deposit scheme, after 400 days they will receive an interest of ₹8,600.
- ★ A premature loan facility is also available under the SBI Amrit Kalash deposit scheme.
- ★ There is an additional 1% return for pensioners and employees of SBI.

ABSLI Nishchit Aayush Plan

- ★ Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance (ABSLI), the life insurance subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital Limited (ABCL), has launched a new-age savings solution ABSLI Nishchit Aayush Plan.
- ★ The Plan is a non-linked non-participating individual savings life insurance plan offering guaranteed regular income starting as early as the end of the first policy month along with a lump-sum benefit at maturity.

- ★ The Plan is a non-linked non-participating individual savings life insurance plan offering guaranteed regular income starting as early as the end of the first policy month along with a lump-sum benefit at maturity.
- ★ The maximum entry age to avail ABSLI Nishchit Aayush Plan is 55 years, while the minimum age is 30 days (long term income option) and 30 years (whole life income).
- ★ The minimum annualised premium is ₹30,000.
- ★ Policyholders can choose from multiple premium payment term options ranging from 6, 8, 10, 12 years.

Asian Development Bank to Fund Tourism Projects

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has agreed in principle to provide ₹1,311.20 crore under phase-1 of the proposed infrastructure development investment programme in Himachal Pradesh (HP) to strengthen tourism infrastructure in HP.
- ★ The total cost of the project is ₹2357 crore.
- ★ The projects components to be covered under the 1st phase are beautification of Palampur, convention centre at Dharamshala, thematic cum green Park at Pragpur, wellness centre at Dharamshala, Shimla, Nadaun and Kullu-Manali, high end fountain tourist facility at Dharamshala.
- ★ To develop the religious places, wayside amenities and facilities would come at Baba Balak Nath and development and beautification of Shiv Dham at Mandi.

ESAF Bank Partners with V-Guard

- ★ ESAF Small Finance Bank and electric equipment manufacturer V-Guard Industries signed an agreement to provide financing options to customers looking to install solar rooftop power systems.
- ★ Under the agreement, ESAF Bank will provide various financing options, including loans and attractive instalment payment plans.
- ★ Under the MoU, Consumers can opt to finance up to 80% of the total cost of the rooftop solar power system, including the cost of installation for residential or commercial applications.
- ★ This partnership will enable customers to switch to clean energy with ease and affordability.
- ★ V-Guard's Rooftop Solar Systems come with up to 40% subsidy from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- ★ The solar panels have 25-30 years of onsite warranty.
- ★ Customers can choose from an extensive range of models from 3- 15 KW depending on their requirements.
- ★ 1 KW plant can generate 4-5 units of electricity on a sunny day.

Angel One Received SEBI Approval to Sponsor a Mutual Fund

- ★ The stock broker Angel One Limited, formerly known as Angel Broking Limited has received an in-principle approval from Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) for sponsoring a mutual fund.
- ★ Accordingly, Angel One would be setting up an asset management company and the trustee company, in accordance with applicable SEBI Regulations and other applicable laws.
- ★ Angel One is the largest listed retail stock broking house in India, in terms of active clients on National Stock Exchange (NSE).
- ★ The company provides broking and advisory services, margin funding, loans against shares and distribution of third-party financial products to its clients.

IDFC First Bank Limited and Federal Bank Partner with Sa-Dhan

- ★ Private sector lenders IDFC First Bank Limited and the Federal Bank Ltd partnered with the association of microfinance institutions (MFIs) Sa-Dhan and Delhi-based fintech solutions provider NextGen to encourage feature phone users to use UPI123Pay to make digital payments.
- ★ In 2022, the RBI, in collaboration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), launched the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for feature phone users known as UPI123Pay.
- ★ A key responsibility of this partnership is to enable UPI integration – enabling simple money transfers, bill payments, merchant payments, recurring payments, and EMI collection.
- ★ There are about 45 million individual beneficiaries under the MFI organizations and most of them are on feature phones.
- ★ In UPI123Pay, there are broadly 3 steps that a user will take to complete transactions.

New India Assurance Co Ltd to Offer Surety Bonds

- ★ New India Assurance, the largest non-life insurance company in the country, announced the launch of its surety insurance bond business.
- ★ The state-run company became the second insurer to offer such bonds in the country.
- ★ In December 2022 Union Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari launched India's first surety bond insurance for infrastructure projects by the private sector player Bajaj Allianz General Insurance.
- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) permitted general insurers to issue Surety Insurance Bonds from April 2022.
- ★ Surety bonds are legally enforceable tripartite contracts by which one party (the surety) guarantees the performance or obligations of a second party (the principal) to a third party (the obligee) that guarantee compliance, payment or performance.

IRCTC Partners with HDFC Bank

- ★ Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC), the public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Railways and HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector bank have partnered to launch one of India's most rewarding co-branded travel credit cards, known as the IRCTC HDFC Bank Credit Card.

- ★ HDFC Bank is the first private sector bank to partner with IRCTC to enhance the customer experience for train travellers, right from the time of booking their tickets.
- ★ The card is in a single variant and is available exclusively on the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) RuPay network.
- ★ It will provide exclusive benefits and maximum savings on bookings of train tickets booked through the IRCTC's ticketing website and through the IRCTC Rail Connect app.
- ★ With RuPay Credit Cards now enabled on UPI for payments, this co-branded card will provide impetus to further adoption and reach of 'digital payments across India'.

RBI Imposes Restrictions on Musiri Urban Co-Operative Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a ₹5,000 cap on withdrawals by individual customers from Tamil Nadu (TN)-based Musiri Urban Co-operative Bank.
- ★ It is a part of several restrictions imposed on the lender due to its deteriorating financial condition.
- ★ The restrictions on the lender will remain in force for 6 months.
- ★ The bank will continue to undertake banking business with restrictions until its financial position improves and the RBI may consider modifications of the directions depending on circumstances.
- ★ Without the approval of the RBI, the cooperative bank cannot grant loans, make any investments or disburse any payments.
- ★ The eligible depositors would be entitled to receive a deposit insurance claim amount of his/her deposits up to ₹5 lakh from the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation.

UPI e-Services for Kangra Central Cooperative Bank

- ★ Himachal Pradesh (HP) Chief Minister (CM) Shri Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has launched UPI (Unified Payments Interface) and 'Swadhan-e-pension-Gov' services for Kangra Central Cooperative Bank
- ★ It is to make bank transactions easier and quicker, especially for the elderly and those living in remote areas.
- ★ These services would benefit thousands of account holders of the bank.
- ★ He also released the bank's annual calendar on this occasion.

SIDBI Signed MoU with ShowReel

- ★ The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ShowReel for developing an online digital platform to support innovators and promote Entrepreneurship in India.
- ★ It is to provide handholding support to aspiring innovators with practical-based hand-holding demonstration and equity funding to channelise ideas offering solutions to a multitude of problems.
- ★ ShowReel and SIDBI intend to create this virtual incubator, to harness intellectual capital, help and develop entrepreneurship.

- ★ The platform will be a one-stop-shop for ideators and innovators, providing access to training videos, market analysis, and mentorship, in addition to a virtual incubation program.

CBDT Gives Five-Year Tax Exemption for Insolvency Regulator IBBI

- ★ The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has granted tax exemption to certain specified incomes of the insolvency regulator Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) for 5 financial years starting from the current fiscal.
- ★ The tax exemption will be available for the financial years 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-2025, 2025-2026 and 2026-2027.
- ★ These incomes include grants-in-aid received from the Central Government, fees received under the IBC, fines collected under the IBC and any interest income on these receipts.
- ★ The CBDT is an administrative body of the Income Tax Department.
- ★ It is a statutory body established as per the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963.

European Investment Bank Partnered with IREDA

- ★ The European Investment Bank (EIB) and state-owned Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) Limited are exploring a partnership on the financing of renewable energy and green hydrogen projects in India.
- ★ The collaboration would help in opening up new opportunities for the country's citizens and advancing the Government's goal of achieving 50% of its installed energy capacity from non-fossil fuels by the year 2030.
- ★ It would help to create new opportunities in the emerging segment of renewable energy, green hydrogen, green ammonia, e-mobility, battery storage, etc.

PNB Makes Positive Pay System Mandatory

- ★ In a move to safeguard customers from fraudulent payment of cheques, state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) has made the Positive Pay System (PPS) compulsory for cheque payments worth ₹5 lakh and above.
- ★ This will come into effect from 05 April 2023.
- ★ Earlier, the mandatory submission of cheque details in PPS was set at ₹10 lakh and above.
- ★ The PPS is a system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), which requires customers to reconfirm essential details (account number, cheque number, cheque alpha code, issue date, amount and beneficiary name) when issuing cheques of a certain amount.

YES Bank Enters into Partnership with Aadhar Housing Finance

- ★ YES Bank has entered into a co-lending partnership with Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd to offer home loans at competitive interest rates.
- ★ Under the partnership, the entities will provide products such as Home Loan for Salaried Employees, Loan for Plot Purchase and Construction, Home Improvement Loan, Loan against Residential Commercial Property, Balance Transfers and Top Up, among others, to customers from lower and middle-income groups.

- ★ The partnership is in line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) co-lending framework that enables banks and non-banking companies to jointly bring about financial solutions that address the needs of underserved and underserved sections of society.

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Launches 'Unpause Initiative'

- ★ Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Ujjivan SFB) has launched the 'Unpause Initiative', a programme designed to assist women who have taken a career break for any reason and are now ready to return to the workforce.
- ★ The initiative is part of its commitment to promoting workplace diversity.
- ★ It is to provide women with the resources and support they need to succeed, to enable them to enrich themselves and contribute to the community at large.
- ★ As part of this Initiative', Ujjivan SFB has also announced a special Hiring Drive and Employee referral programme for women who are resuming their careers.
- ★ The hiring programme will be implemented across the bank and women from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply.

Bandhan Bank Opens Mega Currency Chest

- ★ A Mega Currency Chest has been opened by Bandhan Bank in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- ★ This is the Bank's third mega currency chest.
- ★ Shri Gunveer Singh, Chief General Manager, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) inaugurated the currency chest.
- ★ This chest would facilitate fresh currency circulation and help the bank serve its client.
- ★ Bandhan Bank currently has over 1 crore customers in West Bengal.
- ★ In the Kolkata region, the bank has 182 bank branches.

Loan Given to MSMEs under ECLGS

- ★ Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have been given a loan of ₹3 lakh 61 thousand crores under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).
- ★ It was announced as part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Package in 2020.
- ★ Its objective is to help businesses including MSMEs to meet their operational liabilities and resume business in view of the distress caused by the COVID-19 crisis.
- ★ It provides 100 percent guarantee to lending institutions for any losses incurred due to non-payment of ECLGS funding by borrowers.
- ★ The scheme is under the operational domain of the Ministry of Finance, Department of Financial Services (DFS).

IREDA Gets 'Infrastructure Finance Company' Status

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted an 'Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC)' status to Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA).

- ★ It was earlier classified as 'Investment and Credit Company (ICC)'.
- ★ With IFC status, IREDA will be able to take higher exposure in renewable energy financing.
- ★ The IFC status will help the company access a wider investor base to raise funds, resulting in competitive rates for raising funds.
- ★ This will boost investor confidence, enhance brand value and create a positive outlook in the market.
- ★ With IFC status, IREDA will contribute to the government's target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel installed capacity by 2030.

RBI Infuses ₹82650 Crore into the Banking System

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) infused liquidity amounting to ₹82,650 crore into the banking system through the 14-day Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction.
- ★ Banks borrowed ₹82,650 crore at a weighted average rate of 6.53%.
- ★ Notified amount under the VRR auction was ₹1 lakh crore.
- ★ This will be only the second VRR auction conducted by the RBI since February 2020.
- ★ The Variable Repo Rate (VRR) auction is usually undertaken to withdraw excess liquidity from the system.

PNB Signs MoU with Central Warehousing Corporation

- ★ State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate financing under e-NWR (Electronic Negotiable Warehousing Receipt).
- ★ The objective is to provide farmers, food processors and traders with easy access to finance in exchange for the pledge of agricultural commodities stored in CWC warehouses.
- ★ Kanwal Jit Shorey, General Manager of Punjab National Bank, and Rajiv Kumar Bansal, Group General Manager of CWC signed the agreement.

Bank of Baroda Board Approves 49% Stake Divestment in BFSL

- ★ The Bank of Baroda (BoB) board has approved up to 49% divestment in its wholly owned subsidiary BoB Financial Solutions Ltd (BFSL).
- ★ BoB currently holds 100% of the total equity share capital of BFSL.
- ★ The board has also given approval to issuance of an advertisement inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI) from investors/strategic partners to acquire BoB's shareholding in BFSL.

Shriram General Insurance Opens Two Women-Only Branches

- ★ Private non-life insurer, Shriram General Insurance Company (SGIC) has set up two women-only branches in Ludhiana, Punjab and Jaipur, Rajasthan in the first such initiative in the industry.
- ★ The entire workforce, from the Branch Manager to the support staff, consists of women.

- ★ SGIC is a joint venture (JV) of Shriram Capital Pvt Ltd, the holding company of the Shriram group's financial services business, and Sanlam Ltd, a South African financial services group.

PNB Metlife Launches Genius Plan

- ★ PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife), one of India's leading life insurance companies has launched PNB MetLife Genius plan.
- ★ It is a new solution to help parents financially prepare to support their children's future.
- ★ PNB MetLife Genius plan is an individual, non-linked, non-participating, saving, life insurance plan that offers life insurance coverage while allowing parents to save for their child's education.

RBI and Central Bank of UAE signed MoU

- ★ The MoU involves both the central bank to explore Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and examine interoperability between the CBUAE and the CBDCs of the RBI.
- ★ The cooperation aims to increase efficiency and reduce costs in cross-border transactions, which further the economic ties between India and the UAE.
- ★ The MoU also includes technical cooperation and knowledge sharing on matters related to fintech and financial products and services.
- ★ The collaboration between RBI and CBUAE is an important step towards fostering innovation and collaboration in the area of FinTech.
- ★ The joint exploration of CBDCs and cross-border testing is expected to pave the way for increased efficiency and cost reduction in cross-border transactions, benefiting both India and the UAE.

Canara Bank Launches Rupay Credit Card on UPI

- ★ Canara Bank in collaboration with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) launched the Rupay Credit Card through Unified Payment Interface (UPI) using the BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money) app.
- ★ The aim is to leverage the reach of UPI and the strength of credit card products.
- ★ This will enable small merchants to increase sales turnover and business at low cost.
- ★ Currently, customers with Canara Bank Rupay Credit Card variants – Rupay Classic, Rupay Platinum and Rupay Select – can link their cards to UPI
- ★ With this introduction, Canara Bank customers can link their active Rupay Credit Card to UPI and make merchant payments without the physical use of a card, similar to account-based UPI transactions.

HDFC Bank Partners with Flipkart Wholesale

- ★ Private lender HDFC Bank and Flipkart Wholesale launched an industry-first co-branded credit card exclusively for Flipkart Wholesale members.
- ★ The credit card will run on the Diners Club International network, part of the Discover Global Network and can be used in more than 200 countries around the world where Diners Club cards are accepted.

- ★ As part of this collaboration, registered members of Flipkart Wholesale will be able to avail of 5% cashback – an industry-first offer, on Flipkart Wholesale online spends.
- ★ Other benefits include ₹1,500 worth of activation cashback, with zero joining fee, along with additional cashback on utility bills and other expenses.
- ★ The cards will enhance access to credit and accelerate the adoption of digital payments while offering multiple benefits to smaller merchants in India.

PNB MetLife Launches Sustainable Equity Fund

- ★ PNB MetLife India Insurance Company Limited (PNB MetLife), one of India's leading life insurance companies, is launching a Sustainable Equity Fund.
- ★ The new fund which is part of the PNB MetLife Goal Ensuring Multiplier plan, would enable customers to maximise returns while having a good impact on society.
- ★ It will invest the customers' premium in organisations that are setting the standard for environmental, social and governance (ESG) practises.
- ★ The Sustainable Equity fund promotes ESG principles while also providing a balanced exposure to various industries thanks to its diverse portfolio of businesses.
- ★ These companies place a high value on sustainable activities, such as cutting carbon emissions, fostering diversity, equity and inclusion and upholding effective corporate governance.

Bandhan Mutual Fund Launches Bandhan US Treasury Bond

- ★ Bandhan Mutual Fund has launched Bandhan US Treasury Bond 0-1 Year Fund of Fund.
- ★ This is India's first passive debt fund in international space.
- ★ The fund is an open-ended fund of fund scheme investing in units/shares of overseas index funds and/or Exchange Traded Funds (ETF) which track an index with US treasury securities in the 0-1-year maturity range as its constituents.
- ★ The new fund offers (NFO) opened on March 10, 2023, and will close on March 23, 2023.
- ★ It will provide investors with a convenient route to create a dollar asset that benefits from the relatively high quality, reasonable safety, and current high yield of US Treasuries.

Cabinet Approves Listing of IREDA on Stock Exchanges

- ★ The Union Government approved the listing of the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) on the stock exchanges.
- ★ The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) decided to approve an Initial Public Offer (IPO) by way of partial sale of the government's stake in CPSEs to raise funds by issuing fresh equity shares.
- ★ The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) will carry out the listing process.
- ★ The approval will help the IPO unlock the value of the government's investment and provide an opportunity to the public to own a stake in national assets and earn from it.

- ★ This will help IREDA to raise a part of its capital requirement for carrying out development plans without depending on the exchequer.

RBI Imposes ₹5 Lakh Penalty on HDFC

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of ₹5 lakh on Housing Development Finance Corporation Limited (HDFC) for non-compliance with certain provisions issued by the National Housing Bank (NHB).
- ★ A statutory inspection of the company was conducted by NHB with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2020.
- ★ HDFC failed to transfer matured deposits of certain depositors to designated bank accounts of such depositors during the period 2019-20
- ★ The Finance (No. 2) Act, 2019, amended the National Housing Bank Act, 1987 conferring certain powers for regulation of Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) with the RBI.
- ★ Also the RBI has imposed a penalty of ₹11.25 lakh on IGH Holdings Private Limited, Mumbai for non-compliance with certain provisions.

UCO Bank Raises ₹500 Crore in AT1 Bonds

- ★ UCO Bank has raised ₹500 crore through Private Placement of BASEL III Compliant Additional Tier I Bonds (Series I).
- ★ The security issued is 9.50% Unsecured, Subordinated, Perpetual, Non-Convertible Fully Paid Up, Taxable, Basel III Compliant Additional Tier I Bonds in the nature of Debenture of ₹500 crore (Series I).
- ★ Bonds will be listed on the WDM segment of NSE.
- ★ Earlier, the bank had received an approval for raising Tier I Capital aggregating up to ₹1000 crore in the form of Additional Tier I Bonds in one or more tranches up to FY24 i.e. till 31 March 2024.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Partnered with IOCL

- ★ Kotak Mahindra Bank and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) announced a strategic partnership to launch the Indian Oil Kotak co-branded fuel credit card.
- ★ The Card will be available on the RuPay network.
- ★ The partnership will offer more value to customers in the form of an enhanced rewards programme giving customers value on fuel spends and on special non-fuel and frequent-spend categories, such as dining and groceries.
- ★ The IOCL is an Indian central public sector undertaking under the ownership of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India.

New Guaranteed Income Plan – ICICI Pru Gold

- ★ ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited has launched the ICICI Pru Gold, a long-term savings product that enables customers to create an additional income stream.
- ★ Besides guaranteed lifelong income, it provides life cover for the family's financial security.

- ★ The product is available in 3 variants: Immediate Income, Immediate Income with Booster and Deferred Income.
- ★ Customers opting for the 'Immediate Income' variant can choose to receive income after 30 days from the date of policy issuance, enabling them to immediately create a supplementary source of lifelong income.
- ★ Customers who purchase the "Immediate Income with Booster" variant receive additional guaranteed income every 5th policy year in addition to the lifelong income, which begins after 30 days from the policy issuance date.
- ★ Under the 'Deferred Income' variant, customers will have the flexibility to choose when they want the income to start, as per their financial goals.

Axis Bank Partners with Autotrac Finance Limited

- ★ Axis Bank, India's third largest private sector bank and Autotrac Finance Limited Ltd (AFL), a Gurgaon based Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), announced its strategic partnership under the co-lending model through the Yubi Co.Lend platform.
- ★ Through this partnership, both lenders will offer 'New Tractor Loans' for the Agricultural and Allied activities to cater the financial needs of the rural segment in India.
- ★ The partnership will leverage the wide customer experience of Autotrac Finance and deep financial expertise of Axis Bank to enable easy credit availability for farmers at an optimal interest rate.
- ★ The digital co-lending platform allows the partnership to scale-up fast at a lower operating cost, offering a superior customer experience.
- ★ Autotrac Finance has an advantage of ready access to a robust customer base and dealers across rural and semi-urban regions in 18 States.

New York Community Bank to Buy Failed Signature Bank

- ★ According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp (FDIC), New York Community Bank has agreed to buy a significant chunk of the Signature Bank in a \$2.7 billion deal after it became the third-largest US bank to fail since the 2008 crisis.
- ★ The 40 branches of Signature Bank will become Flagstar Bank.
- ★ Flagstar is one of New York Community Bank's subsidiaries.
- ★ The \$60 billion in Signature Bank's loans will remain in receivership and will get sold off in time.
- ★ By the time it was closed by regulators, Signature Bank was the third largest bank failure in U.S. history.

Mobile App AIS for Taxpayers

- ★ The Income Tax Department has launched a free mobile app named 'AIS for Taxpayers'.
- ★ Taxpayers can use the app to view their information related to Tax deducted at Source (TDS), interest, dividends, share transactions, tax payments, Income Tax refunds and other Information.

- ★ They can also view GST Data and foreign Remittances as available in Annual Information Statement (AIS).
- ★ Taxpayers will also have the option and facility to provide feedback on the information displayed in the app.

RBI Allows India and Tanzania to Use National Currencies for Trading

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved for India and Tanzania to use their national currencies, Indian Rupee (INR) and Tanzanian Shilling (Tsh) for bilateral trade settlement.
- ★ Under this mechanism, authorised banks in India will open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs) of correspondent banks of Tanzania.
- ★ The use of national currencies in bilateral trade settlements is expected to reduce the cost of transactions and enhance the efficiency of cross-border trade.
- ★ This will lead to increased trade volumes and greater economic cooperation between India and Tanzania.
- ★ Tanzanian banks will have to open SRVAs in India by approaching authorised Indian banks, who will in turn approach RBI for their approval with details of the arrangement.

IndiaFirst Life Insurance Gets SEBI's Approval

- ★ IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company (IndiaFirst Life) has received an approval from capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).
- ★ The company filed preliminary IPO papers with SEBI on 21 October 2022.
- ★ The IPO will comprise a fresh issue of equity shares worth ₹500 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) up to 14.1 crore equity shares from promoters and stakeholders.
- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB), the country's third largest PSU bank holds a 65% stake in the firm followed by Warburg Pincus affiliate Carmel Point Investments India which holds 26% and Union Bank of India which holds a 9% stake.

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23

- ★ In terms of Government of India Notification Sovereign Gold Bonds 2022-23 (Series IV) will be opened for subscription during the period March 06-10, 2023 with Settlement date March 14, 2023.
- ★ The issue price of the Bond during the subscription period shall be ₹5,611 (Rupees Five Thousand Six Hundred Eleven only) per gram.
- ★ Government of India in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India has decided to allow discount of ₹50 (Rupees Fifty only) 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 ₹5,561 (Rupees Five Thousand Five Hundred Sixty-One only) per gram of gold.

RCB Partners with Equitas Small Finance Bank

- ★ Equitas Small Finance Bank has partnered T20 cricket team Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) for the 2023 season of the T20 league.
- ★ The RCB team will don the Equitas Small Finance Bank logo on the lead trousers as part of the team's jersey.
- ★ It is to communicate that Equitas has been playing a progressive role in transforming the lives of individuals through their lending and social responsibilities of 'beyond banking'.

Country's First 'Anywhere Cashless' Facility

- ★ For the first time in the country, ICICI Lombard General Insurance launched 'Cashless Anywhere' facility for health insurance policyholders to avail cashless facilities at any hospital.
- ★ This facility will be subject to the approval of the hospital for cashless facility.
- ★ Policyholders have to inform the company 24 hours before the date of admission giving basic information about the patient, policy details, name of the hospital, diagnosis and treating doctor.
- ★ Any hospital, if not a part of ICICI Lombard's existing network, can get treated with this new facility to avail cashless facilities.
- ★ Initially launched as a pilot project, this facility can now be availed across India through the 'IL TechCare' application, at no cost to the customers from their own pocket.
- ★ It aims to expand insurance coverage by setting up more network partners in Tier-II and Tier-III cities and actively seek and provide better options to customers.

Karur Vysya Signs Bancassurance Agreement with SBI Life

- ★ Karur Vysya Bank (KVB) has executed an agreement with SBI Life, the insurance arm of State Bank of India (SBI) as an additional bancassurance partner in the life insurance category.
- ★ Bancassurance is a relationship between a bank and an insurance company that is aimed at offering insurance products or insurance benefits to the bank's customers.
- ★ SBI Life Insurance declared an interim dividend of ₹2.5 per share for its investors for the financial year 2022-23.
- ★ A dividend is a reward that companies often provide to their shareholders, though not mandatory, from a portion of their earnings.
- ★ The declared interim dividend will be paid on or before 06 April 2023, to eligible shareholders.

CoinDCX Becomes 'FIU-Registered Reporting Entity'

- ★ CoinDCX, India's leading and most valued crypto company, has become a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU)-registered reporting entity under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) norms.
- ★ This brings the cryptocurrency exchange operator under PMLA regulations.
- ★ The government had mandated that Virtual Digital Assets (VDA) service providers such as exchanges, custodians and wallet providers must comply with several regulatory requirements.

- ★ These requirements include Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, record-keeping, reporting of suspicious transactions, the appointment of a Compliance Officer and engaging with regulatory authorities to seek guidance on compliance matters.
- ★ This would lead to increased accountability and implementation of best practices by the Virtual Digital Assets (VDA) industry.
- ★ CoinDCX was also the first exchange to publish proof of reserves.

ADB to provide ₹754 Cr Loan to SAEL Industries

- ★ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and SAEL Industries Limited have signed an agreement for a loan of up to ₹754 crores.
- ★ The loan agreement is to promote the generation of biomass energy using agricultural residue, helping diversify India's energy mix and reduce carbon intensity.
- ★ ADB's funding will be used for the construction of 5 biomass power plants in Rajasthan.
- ★ SAEL Industries is a renewable energy company with a strong focus on the creation of green assets to contribute to the transition to green energy, with biomass and solar power projects in various states in India.

Axis Bank Launches 'Micropay' on 'PIN On Mobile' Technology

- ★ Axis Bank launched a groundbreaking payment solution called "Micropay" by Razorpay and MyPinpad in association with technology partners Ezetap.
- ★ Micropay is a "Pin on mobile" solution that enables a merchant's smartphone to act as a Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal, providing a unique customer experience and simplifying digital payments.
- ★ This solution has the potential to revolutionise digital payments in India, especially in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities where retail and grocery stores often have limited working capital and need cost-effective payment options.
- ★ The launch of Micropay by Axis Bank is expected to have a significant impact on small businesses, making digital payments more accessible and cheaper.
- ★ The new Pin on mobile technology offers merchants an affordable way to accept payments through cards, UPI and BAR codes while maintaining high security standards.

Employees' Provident Fund Organization Increased the Interest Rate

- ★ Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has fixed the interest rate on Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) deposits at 8.15% for the financial year 2022-23, which is higher than the previous year's interest rate of 8.10%.
- ★ EPFO has sought approval from the Finance Ministry for the new interest rate.
- ★ The CBT will also review the annual accounts of EPFO along with the interest rate on EPF deposits for the financial year 2022-23.
- ★ EPFO has given four months' time to the subscribers of Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 to opt for higher pension as per the order of the Supreme Court.
- ★ Members can opt for higher pension till 03 May 2023.

YES Bank Issues First Electronic Bank Guarantee (E-BG)

- ★ YES Bank has issued its first electronic-Bank Guarantee (e-BG) in partnership with National E-Governance Services Limited (NeSL).
- ★ The API integration with the Digital Document Execution (DDE) platform of NeSL has enabled complete digitisation of the existing paper-based process for issuance and maintenance of Bank Guarantee (BG).
- ★ This includes digital stamping and signing, which significantly reduces the issuance turnaround time (TAT).
- ★ The NeSL portal will manage the entire lifecycle of the bank guarantee including issuance, amendment, invocation and cancellation, enabling trade finance stakeholders to access the documents from this secure repository.
- ★ YES Bank's integration with NeSL is consistent with its efforts to work with public digital utilities such as Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDC), Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Account Aggregator (AA), and Government e-Marketplaces (GEM), to accelerate digitization and enabling ease of doing business for our Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and corporate customers.
- ★ An e-BG issued through NeSL's 24 × 7 platform becomes instantly available and the beneficiary can access it on completion of a simple and one-time registration process.

South Indian Bank partners with Central Board of Direct Taxes

- ★ South Indian Bank is associated with the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) for direct tax collections from retail and corporate taxpayers.
- ★ The payment facility will allow taxpayers to remit Direct Taxes under 'Over the Counter Mode'.
- ★ The bank's customers can make payments via 'Over the Counter' as well as 'Internet Banking' modes.
- ★ CBDT is a statutory body established as per the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963.
- ★ It is India's official financial action task force unit.
- ★ It is administered by the Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance.

Surcharge for Google Pay and Other Payment Apps

- ★ The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has issued a circular suggesting "Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI)" charges on merchant transactions on Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- ★ NPCI has introduced an interchange charge of up to 1.1 per cent on merchant UPI transactions done using prepaid payment instruments from April 1.
- ★ It will be levied on UPI payments above ₹2,000 made to online merchants, large merchants and small merchants.
- ★ NPCI has clarified that there will be no charges for UPI payment from bank account to bank account or normal UPI payment.

- ★ With UPI, customers will have the option of using any bank account, RuPay credit card and prepaid wallet on a UPI-enabled app.

IDFC First Bank Partners with Crunchfish

- ★ IDFC First Bank has partnered with Swedish company Crunchfish to participate in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) pilot programme to facilitate offline retail payments.
- ★ This initiative will provide access to digital payments even when there is no network.
- ★ The Crunchfish introduced this one-of-a-kind digital payment system for merchants and customers as part of the RBI's Regulatory Sandbox Program.
- ★ This project will allow offline retail payments in India's payment ecosystem using a Digital Cash platform.
- ★ IDFC FIRST Bank will be one of the first few banks to participate in HDFC Bank's pilot initiative.
- ★ The RBI authorised the proposal to demonstrate offline payments between two banks.
- ★ IDFC First Bank has signed a non-commercial Development and Demonstration Agreement to access the Digital Cash SDK.
- ★ The terms of deployment will be regulated in a Software Licence Agreement.

CRIF Receives the RBI Licence

- ★ CRIF Connect Private Limited, a subsidiary of credit bureau company CRIF S.p.A has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to begin operations as a Non-Banking Financial Company- Account Aggregator (NBFC-AA).
- ★ With CRIF's legacy, knowledge, and experience, CRIF Connect is uniquely positioned to benefit both consumers and financial institutions.
- ★ Based on RBI-approved guidelines, it is an end-to-end encrypted platform that securely fetches and transfers a consumer's financial data based on their explicit consent between financial institutions, making data sharing extremely safe.
- ★ The CRIF Connect application will be available on the web and on mobile devices, allowing users to view all their financial information in one place and to customise the information they want to share with the financial institution in real time.
- ★ The services are used by more than 82,000 companies and 10 lakh consumers.
- ★ CRIF is a global company specialising in credit bureau and business information, outsourcing and processing services, and credit solutions.

J&K Bank Signs Corporate Agency Agreement

- ★ Jammu and Kashmir Bank (J&K Bank) has signed a corporate agency agreement with Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company to sell life insurance products to its customers, with effect from April 1, 2023.
- ★ General Manager & Vertical Head (Cross Selling) Mr Narjay Gupta signed the agreement on representing J&K Bank, while, as, Chief Distribution Officer (Institutional Business) Mr Dheeraj Sehgal put in his signatures on behalf of Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance Company.

- ★ The bank's reach especially in J&K, Ladakh and Bajaj Allianz products makes the tie-up beneficial not only for the customers but a win-win for both the institutions by enabling them to leverage each other strengths.

Geojit Financial Services Teams Up with ESAF Small Finance Bank

- ★ Geojit Financial Services, a leading investment services company, has entered into an agreement with ESAF Small Finance Bank (ESAF SFB) to offer a special 3-in-1 bundled account to the ESAF SFB customers.
- ★ Under this one-of-its-kind 3-in-1 bundled account service, ESAF SFB savings account holders can open a Geojit demat account and trading account for free.
- ★ The 3-in-1 bundled account comes with benefits such as zero demat account opening charges, flexible brokerage plans, AMC waiver till March 2024, no subscription charges on the trading account and an end-to-end digital account opening facility.

BUSINESS NEWS

Sri Lanka Approves \$442 Million Wind Power Project

- ★ Sri Lanka's Board of Investment (BOI) has issued a letter of approval to India's Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL), for the 2 wind power plants to be set up in Mannar and Pooneryn at a total investment of USD 442 million.
- ★ The 2 wind power plants of 350 MW are scheduled to be commissioned in 2 years and they will be added to the national grid by 2025.
- ★ The new project will generate 1500-2000 new employment opportunities.
- ★ The wind power plant in Mannar will operate at a capacity of 250 MW (megawatt) while the wind power plant in Pooneryn will operate at a capacity of 100 MW.

IREDA Plans to Finance Renewable Energy Projects

- ★ IREDA is planning to establish an office in Gujarat's GIFT City to finance Renewable Energy projects in foreign currency.
- ★ The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is the Nodal Ministry.
- ★ It was set up as a specialized non-banking finance agency for the renewable energy sector.
- ★ IREDA plays a key role in renewable energy project financing which gives confidence to the financial institutions/banks to lend in the sector.
- ★ It is a statutory authority established under the International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019.

RIL Sets Up Subsidiary for Development of Commercial Properties

- ★ Reliance Industries Ltd is foraying into the business of commercial property development and has set up a subsidiary called Reliance SOU Ltd.

- ★ It has invested an initial capital of ₹1 lakh in the subsidiary.
- ★ In 2019, it had acquired a 65 per cent stake in a real estate project in the business hub of Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai for ₹1,105 crore.
- ★ It set up Reliance Navi Mumbai Infra Development for real estate development.
- ★ It has a very active real estate division that undertakes major development projects for the group such as the Jio World Centre and Jio World Garden at Bandra Kurla.

TCIL Enters into a Pact with BSNL

- ★ Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) and Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) have agreed to work together to offer enterprise customers captive non-public network (CNP) services.
- ★ Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) under the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications, including TCIL and BSNL (MoC).
- ★ The disruptive 5G technology shall enable widespread industrial automation by providing secure, ultra-reliable, low latency and high throughput communication
- ★ According to the release, the government is supporting several initiatives for the development of indigenous subsystems for 4G/5G networks but for them to succeed and get absorbed in market, they will need to be integrated into commercially deployable solutions that meet customer requirements.

SPORTS

First Indian Woman Cricketer to Take 100 T20I Wickets

- ★ Deepti Sharma has become the first Indian bowler to complete 100 wickets in T20Is.
- ★ The 25-year-old reached the landmark in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup match against West Indies.
- ★ The all-rounder has scalped 100 wickets in 89 T20Is.
- ★ She surpassed Poonam Yadav, who has taken 98 wickets in 72 games.
- ★ No India men's player has completed 100 wickets in the shortest format of the game.

T20 World Cup

- ★ Australia has won the Women's T20 World Cup 2023 title for the sixth time by defeating South Africa by 19 runs in the final.
- ★ It was the eighth edition of the ICC Women's Twenty20 World Cup tournament, held in South Africa from 10 to 26 February 2023.
- ★ The title match of the Women's T20 World Cup 2023 was held at the Newlands Stadium in Cape Town, South Africa, which was won by Australia.
- ★ Australia's all-rounder Ashley Gardner was awarded the 'Player of the Tournament' award.

ACF Confers the Player of the Year Award

- ★ Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh has been honored with the Player-of-the-Year award by the Asian Chess Federation (ACF) for clinching the gold medal with a record-breaking score of 9/11 in the 44th Chess Olympiad at Mahabalipuram last year.
- ★ Gukesh became only the sixth Indian to break the 2700 Elo-rating mark, and the youngest Grandmaster from the country to be rated above 2700.
- ★ The All-India Chess Federation (AICF) bagged the ‘Most Active Federation’ award conferred during the ACF annual summit.
- ★ Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has been conferred with the Man-of-the-Year award for his effort in the successful hosting of the FIDE Chess Olympiad in August last year within a short notice of four months.
- ★ Grandmaster R.B. Ramesh bagged the men’s Coach-of-the-Year award and Grandmaster Abhijit Kunte won the Women’s Coach-of-the-Year awards.

New Chief Coach of Indian Men’s Hockey Team

- ★ Men’s National Hockey Team of India designates South Africa’s Craig Fulton as the new Chief Coach.
- ★ Craig Fulton has replaced the Australian Hockey Player Graham John Reid.
- ★ In the past, Fulton has shown exemplary results while considering his previous duty as a coach.
- ★ His fame began with a duty leading the Irish Men’s Team between 2014 to 2018 when the team qualified for the Rio Olympics in the year 2016.

India’s 81st Grandmaster

- ★ Sayantan Das became India’s 81st Chess Grandmaster.
- ★ He became the 11th player from West Bengal to bag the honour after he crossed the 2500-mark in live ratings and won the Cannes Open with a score of 7.5 out of
- ★ The 26-year-old had achieved his final GM norm in 2017 but had to wait 6 years to cross the 2500-mark in order to become a grandmaster.

Bahrain Grand Prix

- ★ Defending champion Max Verstappen and Red Bull flexed their muscles at the start of the 2023 season, as the Dutchman won the season-opening race in Sakhir Bahrain Grand Prix by over 10 seconds over his teammate Sergio Perez.
- ★ It was the first time he had won in Bahrain and also the first time he had triumphed in a Formula One opener.
- ★ Seven times world champion Lewis Hamilton was fifth for Mercedes with Canadian Lance Stroll giving Aston Martin a bumper point haul with sixth.

ISSF Shotgun World Cup 2023

- ★ Prithviraj Tondiman of India won the bronze medal at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup 2023 in Doha, Qatar.
- ★ Two-time world Champion Oguzhan Tuzun of Turkey won gold with a score of 33/35, while Great Britain's Matthew John took silver with a score of 30/35.
- ★ This was India's first medal at the ISSF World Cup.
- ★ The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) governs the Olympic shooting disciplines of rifle, pistol and shotgun.

IBA Women's World Boxing Championships

- ★ The IBA Women's World Boxing Championships began on 15 March in New Delhi.
- ★ Union Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated it at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex.
- ★ International Boxing Association (IBA) President Umar Kremlev, and Boxing Federation of India (BFI) President Ajay Singh were present on the occasion.
- ★ BFI is hosting the biggest boxing event till the 26 March.
- ★ The tournament will witness the participation of more than 350 boxers from around 74 countries.

Oldest Tennis Player to Win ATP Masters 1000 Title

- ★ India's Rohan Bopanna becomes the oldest tennis player to win an ATP Masters 1000 title.
- ★ Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden defeated Wesley Koolhof of the Netherlands and Neil Skupski of Britain 6-3, 2-6, 10-8 in the final in California, United States.
- ★ Bopanna has so far won 24 ATP titles, including five ATP Masters 1000 titles.
- ★ It was his second title this year after winning the Qatar Open with Ebden.

2022 CMJ Spirit of Cricket Award

- ★ Nepalese Wicketkeeper-batsman Aasif Sheikh has been declared the winner of the 2022 Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket Award.
- ★ The Award is presented every year by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), UK in conjunction with the BBC.
- ★ The CMJ Spirit of Cricket Award was created in 2013 by MCC and the BBC in memory of former MCC President and BBC Test Match Special commentator Christopher Martin-Jenkins (CMJ), who was passionate about promoting the spirit of the game.
- ★ Sheikh was honoured for his sporting conduct shown in a Men's T20 International between Nepal and Ireland in February 2022.

Former Australia Cricket Captain Tim Paine Announces Retirement

- ★ Tim Paine, the former captain of the Australian test cricket team, has announced his retirement from cricket after playing his last Sheffield Shield first-class match for Tasmania against Queensland.
- ★ Paine led the Australian team in 23 tests from 2018 to 2021 and played a total of 35 tests in his career.
- ★ He took over as captain after Steve Smith was stripped of the role following the ball-tampering scandal during Australia's 2018 tour of South Africa.

ISSF Shooting World Cup Begins in Bhopal

- ★ ISSF Shooting World Cup was inaugurated in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ This is the first ever to be held in India outside the national capital of New Delhi.
- ★ Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chouhan was the Chief Guest.
- ★ Around 200 shooters from 30 countries will participate in the ISSF Shooting World Cup.
- ★ The championship is administered by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF).
- ★ These championships, including all shooting events of the ISSF, have been held every four years since 1954.

Men's And Women's Indian Hockey Player of the Year Awards 2022

- ★ Midfielder Hardik Singh and goalkeeper Savita Punia were conferred with the men's and women's Indian Hockey Player of the Year awards 2022.
- ★ The 24-year-old Hardik beat illustrious senior players like Manpreet Singh and Harmanpreet Singh to win the coveted award for 2022, named after hockey legend Balbir Singh Sr, at the fifth Hockey India Annual Awards.
- ★ Savita had led India to the FIH Women's Nation's Cup title in December to book a berth in the women's Pro League.
- ★ Gurbux Singh, who was a member of the 1964 Olympics gold-winning team, won the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contribution to the game.

Fastest Indian in U21 to Swim across the Palk Strait

- ★ Pune-based swimmer, Sampanna Ramesh Shelar has become the fastest Indian in under 21 group to swim across the Palk Strait from Talaimannar in Sri Lanka to Dhanuskodi in Tamil Nadu in 5 hours and 30 minutes.
- ★ The previous record was 8 hours and 26 minutes.
- ★ His swim commenced at 6.00 am from Talaimannar and he reached Dhanushkodi at 11.26 am completing the distance of 29 Kms.
- ★ He is a Bachelor of Physical Education student and trains under the guidance of Mr. Jitendra Khasnis.

- ★ With this achievement, Mr. Shelar is planning to do solo swims across the English and Catalina Channels soon, to eventually complete swimming across the seven oceans popularly known as the Oceans Seven Challenge.

Asian Billiards Championship Title

- ★ Pankaj Advani has won the Asian Billiards Championship title held in Doha, Qatar.
- ★ Pankaj defeated the defending national champion Brijesh Damani (India) 5–1 to win the title for the second time in a row and ninth overall.
- ★ In the women’s section, China’s Bai Yulu won the title beating Panchaya Channoi of Thailand 3-0 in the final.
- ★ Advani has won gold medals in English Billiards singles in the 2006 and 2010 Asian Games.

Women’s World Boxing Championships

- ★ Neetu Ghang has won the Gold Medal by defeating Mongolia’s Lutsekhan Altantseg in the final of the 45-48kg category at the Women’s World Boxing Championships in New Delhi.
- ★ The 22-year-old Neetu won the gold medal in the minimum weight category by defeating Mongolia’s Lutsaikhan Altansetseg 5-0 in the final match.
- ★ The IBA World Boxing Championships, and the IBA Women’s World Boxing Championships, are biennial boxing competitions.
- ★ This is organised by the International Boxing Association (IBA), which is the sport governing body.

Women’s Premier League Trophy

- ★ The team of Mumbai Indians has won the title of the first season of the Women’s Premier League played at the Brabourne stadium, Navi Mumbai.
- ★ The team of Mumbai Indians defeated Delhi Capitals by seven wickets in the final.
- ★ Mumbai won the match by scoring 134 runs for three wickets in 19.3 overs.
- ★ Final Safari Powerful Striker of the Match won by Radha Yadav (Delhi Capitals).
- ★ Final Player of the Match won by Natalie Sciver-Brunt (Mumbai Indians).

World Women’s Boxing Championship

- ★ India’s Lovlina Borgohain defeated Australia’s Caitlin Parker in the 75 kg final to win the gold medal at the World Women’s Boxing Championship in New Delhi.
- ★ Lovlina has been successful in winning gold in the World Championship for the first time.
- ★ Lovlina defeated Caitlin Parker of Australia 4-3.
- ★ India has got a total of four gold medals in the Women’s World Boxing Championship.
- ★ Indian boxers won gold medals in the 48, 50, 75 and 81 kg categories.
- ★ Neetu Ghangash won the gold medal in the 45-48 kg category.

- ★ Sweety Boora won the gold medal in the 75-81 kg category.
- ★ Nikhat Zareen won gold in the 48-50 kg category.
- ★ Lovlina Borgohain won the gold medal in the 70-75 kg category to give India its fourth gold medal.

2023 ISSF World Cup

- ★ Renowned Olympian shooter Manu Bhaker won the bronze medal in the 25m pistol event at the ISSF Pistol/Rifle World Cup held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- ★ China secured the first position by securing a total of 10 medals including six gold, two silver and two bronze medals.
- ★ Host nation India finished second in the medals tally with one gold, one silver and four bronze medals.
- ★ Sarabjot Singh won the gold medal for India in the men's 10m air pistol event.

Stadium Named After Hockey Star Rani Rampal

- ★ Rani Rampal becomes the first women's hockey player to have a stadium named after.
- ★ The Modern Coach Factory, Raebareli has renamed the hockey stadium as 'Rani's Girls Hockey Turf'.
- ★ Earlier this year, Rani Rampal made a comeback to the Indian team during the tour of South Africa.
- ★ Rani Rampal is the former captain of the Indian women's hockey team.
- ★ Under his leadership, the team reached the final of hockey tournament at the Tokyo Olympics.

Asian Billiards Title

- ★ Star Indian player Pankaj Advani defeated compatriot Brijesh Damani 5-1 in the final to retain his Asian Billiards title in the 100-up format at Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation (QBSF) Academy.
- ★ In the women's category, China's Bai Yulu won the title beating Panchaya Channo of Thailand 3-0 in the final.
- ★ This is the eighth Asian Billiards title for Advani.
- ★ Last year, Advani had won the same title in Doha.
- ★ Pankaj Advani had clinched his 25th gold medal on the world stage at the 2022 IBSF World Billiards Championship in Kuala Lumpur.

Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

- ★ Mexican racing driver Sergio Perez has won the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2023 title.
- ★ In the same Red Bull, his partner Max Verstappen secured the second position in the race.
- ★ Seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton finished fifth and Ferrari's Carlos Sainz came in sixth place.

RANKS, INDICES AND REPORTS

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Index 2022

- ★ West Bengal maintained its lead while Uttar Pradesh stood at the bottom among large state categories on the second edition of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Index 2022, an indicator of literacy among children below 10 years of age.
- ★ Among smaller states, Punjab was at the top of the index while Telangana was at the bottom while Puducherry topped the index among union territories while Ladakh was the worst performer.
- ★ Among north-eastern states, Sikkim was at the top while Meghalaya was at the bottom of the index.
- ★ There are four categories in which regions have been divided, large states, small states union territories and north-east, for indexation.
- ★ Bibek Debroy, Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the PM (EAC-PM), released the report which has been prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness.
- ★ The index has ranked states on five key parameters and 36 indicators.
- ★ The second edition of the foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) report captures the role of language in education and focuses on improving the learning outcomes using appropriate assessments and medium of instruction.

Second-Strongest Telecom Brand in the World

- ★ Reliance Jio has climbed up to number two rank up from fifth place last year in a list of the top 10 strongest telecom brands in the world.
- ★ The list is by UK-based Brand Finance, a leading brand valuation company, and part of its latest global report on the world's 150 most valuable telecom brands for 2023.
- ★ The rankings are based on a Brand Strength Index score which looks at various metrics that include evaluating marketing investment, stakeholder equity and business performance.
- ★ The company has also seen its brand value climb sharply in 2023 to hit \$5.4 billion, an increase of 6 percent over the previous year.
- ★ Reliance Jio is behind only Swisscom.

Top 50 Private Water Companies

- ★ Chennai-based water technology firm Va Tech Wabag Ltd. (Wabag) said it had been ranked among the top three water companies globally by Global Water Intelligence (GWI), London, for ensuring safe and clean drinking water and sanitation to more than 88.8 million people across the globe.
- ★ K-based GWI is a water data analytics and publishing company.
- ★ Each year it publishes a list of the world's top 50 private operators.
- ★ Wabag is the only Indian organisation to be featured in the top three water companies globally.

SIPRI Report 2023

- ★ According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2023 report, India will become the world's leading arms importer in 2022.
- ★ According to the report's findings, over the past five years, the US had the world's largest military expenditure, accounting for 40% of the global share, followed by Russia (16%) and France (11%).
- ★ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is a global non-profit research institute.
- ★ SIPRI focuses on resolving conflicts, controlling arms and promoting disarmament.
- ★ The institute provides data, analysis and advice regarding armed conflicts, military expenditure and the arms trade.

Lowest Literacy Rate

- ★ According to the Ministry of Education, Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in India at 61.8%, while Kerala has the highest at 94%.
- ★ Apart from Bihar, other states with low literacy rates are Arunachal Pradesh at 65.3% and Rajasthan at 66.1%, while Lakshadweep with 91.85% and Mizoram with 91.33% follow Kerala.
- ★ The literacy rate in rural India is 67.77%, while the literacy rate in urban areas is 84.11%.
- ★ The objective of the plan was to raise the country's overall literacy rate to 80% and reduce the gender gap to 10% by the end of the Twelfth Five Year Plan. The program was extended till 31 March 2018.
- ★ The objective of the Samagra Shiksha scheme is to provide universal access and retention in education, bridge gender and social category gaps and enhance learning levels from pre-school to senior secondary level.

Global Terrorism Index

- ★ According to the 10th Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report, Afghanistan has remained the most affected country by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year.
- ★ India is ranked 13th in this index.
- ★ The GTI report lists India among countries with a 'high' impact of terrorism.
- ★ According to the report, India is among the 25 worst terrorism affected countries in the world.
- ★ The Global Terrorism Index is prepared by the Institute for Economics and Peace.
- ★ The Global Terrorism Index ranks 163 countries on four indicators over five years and has four factors.
- ★ GTI is a report based on data collected from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

Women and Men in India 2022 Report

- ★ The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released the "Women and Men in India 2022" report.
- ★ The sex ratio at birth increased by three points from 904 in 2017-19 to 907 in 2018-20.

- ★ India's sex ratio (females per 1,000 males) is expected to be 952 by 2036, up from 943 in 2011.
- ★ Population growth, which fell from 2.2% in 1971 to 1.1% in 2021, is projected to decline to 0.58% in 2036.
- ★ India's age and sex composition is expected to see a decline in the population under the age of 15 and an increase in the population over the age of 60 by 2036.

QS World University Rankings

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay has been ranked 1st in India and 47th globally in engineering and technology by the QS World University Rankings for 2023.
- ★ Harvard University is the best-performing institution, ranking first in 14 subjects.
- ★ IIT Bombay scored 80.4 out of 100.
- ★ The institute is ranked in 4 out of 5 broad subject areas, which include Engineering and Technology, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Management and Arts and Humanities.

World Happiness Report 2023

- ★ 11th edition of the World Happiness Report, 2023 was released by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).
- ★ The report says that between 2020 and 2022, the world will see a 'significant' increase in resilience.
- ★ Finland continues to be the happiest country around the world for the sixth consecutive year.
- ★ Denmark is at number two, followed by Iceland at number three.
- ★ India ranks 126 out of 136 countries, making it one of the least happy countries in the world.
- ★ Afghanistan is ranked as the unhappiest nation, followed by Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe respectively.

The United Nations World Water Development Report 2023

- ★ The 'United Nations World Water Development Report 2023: partnerships and cooperation for water', issued UN 2023 Water Conference.
- ★ At conference. it was announced that around 80% of people living under water stress lived in Asia; in particular, northeast China, as well as India and Pakistan.
- ★ India is expected to be the most severely affected as the global urban population facing water scarcity is projected to increase from 933 million in 2016 to 1.7-2.4 billion people in 2050.
- ★ Globally, two billion people do not have safe drinking water and 3.6 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation.
- ★ 2023 United Nations Water Conference is a critical moment for collective progress – the first major UN meeting on water in nearly half a century, and a significant step towards Sustainable Development Goal 6: clean water and sanitation for all.
- ★ Published by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the report focuses on twin themes of partnerships and cooperation, and highlights collaborative ways actors can work together to overcome common challenges.

India's 'Most Valued Celebrity Of 2022'

- ★ According to the report, titled “Celebrity Brand Valuation Report 2022: Beyond the Mainstream” Actor Ranveer Singh has become the ‘Most valued celebrity of 2022’,
- ★ He with a brand value of \$181.7 million surpassed cricketer Virat Kohli.
- ★ Kohli is in second position with a brand value of \$176.9 million.
- ★ Actor Akshay Kumar is in the third position with a brand value of \$153.6 million.
- ★ Alia Bhatt retained the fourth position and is the most valued female celebrity in India.
- ★ Deepika Padukone with a brand valuation of \$82.9 million is on the fifth spot.
- ★ The overall brand value of the top 25 celebrities in 2022 is estimated at \$1.6 billion.
- ★ For the first time, South Indian stars Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna got a place in the top 25 celebrities of India.

AWARDS & PRIZES

International Mother Language Award in Dhaka

- ★ Mahendra Mishra was conferred the International Mother Language Award by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka.
- ★ Mahendra Mishra is an Indian educationist and social worker for the promotion of indigenous languages in Odisha.
- ★ Dr. Mishra is the first Indian to receive this award.
- ★ He has worked on the language, culture and education of the marginalised languages of Odisha.
- ★ The award was instituted in 2021 by UNESCO.
- ★ It is given in recognition of the extraordinary contribution to the preservation, revitalization and development of mother languages.

Hollywood Critics Association Awards 2023

- ★ SS Rajamouli's RRR has achieved laudable success as the spectacular action-drama film bags five awards at the Hollywood Critics Association Awards ceremony 2023 in Los Angeles, California.
- ★ The film was honoured with various category awards, five major category awards in the Best Stunts, Best Original Song (Naatu Naatu), Best Action Film, Best International Film and Spotlight award categories.
- ★ Hollywood Critics Association (HCA) is a film critic organization located in Los Angeles, California.
- ★ It was first discovered in the year 2016 and then named the ‘Los Angeles Online Film Critics Society’.

GSMA Government Leadership Awards 2023

- ★ India was declared the winner at a ceremony organised by the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona.
- ★ Global System for Mobile Communications – The Global System for Mobile Association (GSMA) has presented the Government Leadership Award 2023 to India for implementing best practices in telecom policy and regulation.
- ★ The Global Mobile Communications Systems Association (GSMA), which represents over 750 mobile operators and 400 companies in the telecom ecosystem, recognizes one country every year.
- ★ Following India's 'Digital India' vision, the government came out with structural and procedural reforms in September 2021.
- ★ With nearly 1 lakh locations in 387 districts, India's 5G roll-out is one of the fastest in the world.

Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Akademi Awards

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu has presented the Sangeet Natak Akademi awards and fellowships for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- ★ On the occasion, eight eminent personalities were given Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships in the field of performing arts
- ★ A total of 128 artists from the field of music, dance, theatre, traditional, folk, and puppetry were given the Awards.
- ★ The Akademi also honoured 86 artistes with special one-time awards commemorating 75 years of India's Independence.
- ★ The Akademi Awards carries purse money of ₹1.00 lakh, a Tamrapatra and an Angavastram.

BAFTA Awards 2023

- ★ The winners of the 76th British Academy Film Awards- BAFTA Awards have been announced in London's Royal Festival Hall.
- ★ Austin Butler wins BAFTA Awards 2023 for Best Actor and Cate Blanchett for Best Actress.
- ★ 'All Quiet on the Western Front' has won a maximum of seven awards, that includes Best Film and Director.
- ★ It is a German anti-war drama which is based on the 1928 novel by Erich Maria Remarque.
- ★ Best Film not in the English Language was awarded to All Quiet on the Western Front.
- ★ Best Director was awarded to Edward Berger for All Quiet on the Western Front.

PEN America Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature

- ★ Vinod Kumar Shukla has won the PEN America award for lifetime achievement in literature, one of the most coveted literary prizes worldwide.
- ★ He won after decades of composing acclaimed novels like Naukar Ki Kameez (1979) and poetry collections like Sab Kuch Hona Bacha Rahega (1992).

- ★ Shukla, whose works incorporate magic-realist elements and have won the Sahitya Akademi award and the Atta Galatta–Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize.
- ★ Since 1963, the PEN America Literary Awards have honored many of the most outstanding voices in literature across diverse genres, including fiction, poetry, science writing, essays, sports writing, biography, children’s literature and drama.

Porter Prize 2023

- ★ Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare receives Porter Prize 2023.
- ★ The award was announced at ‘The India Dialogue’ organized by the Institute for Competitiveness (IFC) Stanford University’s US Asia Technology Management Center (USATMC).
- ★ The theme of the conference was ‘The Indian Economy 2023: Innovation, Competitiveness and Social Progress’.
- ★ The award recognizes the strategy, approach adopted by the GoI in the management of COVID-19 and the involvement of various stakeholders in the industry, especially the ASHA workers, for making PPE kits.
- ★ Porter Prize is named after economist, researcher, author, consultant, speaker, and teacher Michael E. Porter.

Norwegian Prize

- ★ Ukrainian rights group Truth Hounds, which documents war crimes in the Ukraine conflict awarded Norway’s Sakharov Freedom Award. The Sakharov Freedom Award was established in 1980 with the support of Soviet scientist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov.
- ★ The prize has been awarded to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee human rights organization Truth Hounds for “documenting war crimes and possible crimes against humanity.
- ★ Truth Hounds is a Ukrainian rights group founded during the Maidan Revolution that led to the fall of pro-Russian former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.
- ★ The award is regularly awarded to human rights defenders from the former Soviet Union.

2023 Pritzker Prize

- ★ British architect Sir David Chipperfield has won the 2023 Pritzker Architecture Prize.
- ★ He is a civic architect and urban planner with an extensive work plan of projects built across 3 continents.
- ★ David Chipperfield is the 52nd winner of the award, established in 1979.
- ★ The 45th Pritzker Prize ceremony honoring David Chipperfield will be held in Athens, Greece in May 2023.
- ★ It is the highest international honor for architects.
- ★ The prize was designed to honor architects for the work they built.

National Photography Awards ceremony

- ★ Supra Das awarded with Lifetime Achievement award at the 8th National Photography Award ceremony.
- ★ A total of 13 photographers have received National Photography awards in various categories in New Delhi.
- ★ Senior photojournalist Shipra Das was honoured with Lifetime Achievement award.
- ★ The winner of the Lifetime Achievement award was given a cash prize of ₹3,00,000.
- ★ The winners of Professional Photographer of the Year and Amateur Photographer of the Year category were given cash prize of ₹1,00,000 and ₹75,000 respectively.
- ★ The theme of the award competition was: Cultural heritage of India (Professional category) and Life and Water (Amateur category).

Oscar Award 2023

- ★ The song 'Naatu Naatu' from the Indian film RRR has won the Oscar in the Best Original Song category at the 95th Oscar Awards.
- ★ RRR is the first Indian film to be nominated for Academy Awards in the last two decades, while 'Naatu Naatu' was the first Indian song to be nominated for an Oscar.
- ★ Music Director MM Keeravani received the award.
- ★ This Telugu song is sung by Kaal Bhairav and Rahul Sipligunj. 'Naatu-naatu' means 'to dance'.
- ★ Another Indian entry at the Academy Awards, 'The Elephant Whispers' won the Oscar in the Best Documentary Short Film category.
- ★ This 41-minute short documentary film by filmmakers Kartiki Gonsalves and Guneet Monga explores the bond between Raghu, an orphaned baby elephant, and his caretakers.

Vyas Samman 2022

- ★ Noted Hindi writer Dr Gyan Chaturvedi's 2018 satirical novel, Pagalkhana, has been selected for the 32nd Vyas Samman, 2022.
- ★ Instituted by the KK Birla Foundation in 1991, the annual Vyas Samman is given to an outstanding Hindi literary work by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years.
- ★ It carries an award money of ₹4 lakh.
- ★ Having started his writing career in 1970s, Dr Chaturvedi received India's fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri in 2015.
- ★ He has also won the Madhya Pradesh government's Sharad Joshi Samman for outstanding achievement in the field of satire and essay, besides the Delhi Academy Award and the Indu Sharma International Katha Samman.

BS Banker of the Year 2022

- ★ Sashidhar Jagdishan, Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of HDFC Bank, has been chosen as the Business Standard Banker of the Year 2022, as the lender continued its

strong performance under his leadership while successfully navigating through technology-related challenges.

- ★ An eminent five-member jury, chaired by former Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Deputy Governor S S Mundra, picked the CEO of the largest private sector bank of the country as the winner.
- ★ Jagdishan's journey in HDFC Bank started in 1996 as a Manager in the finance function.

The International 'Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2023

- ★ The Ministry of Tourism has won the Golden and Silver Star in 'TV/Cinema Commercials International and Country International' Category.
- ★ The Promotional films/television commercials that received the award were part of the Ministry of Tourism Post Covid Promotional Global Campaign.
- ★ The Ministry of tourism has developed the new Incredible India brand films for welcoming foreign tourists to India after the pandemic.
- ★ Shri Arvind Singh, Secretary (Tourism) Government of India received the award.
- ★ The Golden City Gate Tourism Multi-media Award is given annually in the sectors of Tourism and Hospitality.
- ★ The award ceremony takes place at ITB Berlin.

President Draupadi Murmu Awarded the President's Color

- ★ On 16 March 2023, President Draupadi Murmu presented the 'President's Colour' to INS Dronacharya at Kochi.
- ★ He also visited India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant at the Cochin Shipyard.
- ★ The President's Color is the most prestigious decoration awarded by the President to a unit for outstanding service to the nation.
- ★ The highest military honour is an award given to military units for exceptional dedication and bravery in service.

'Governor of the Year' Award at Central Banking Awards 2023

- ★ Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das has been honoured with the 'Governor of the Year 2023 Award' by the international publication Central Banking.
- ★ Mr Das has been heading the central bank since December 2018.
- ★ He has been awarded for successfully navigating the financial markets through various crises, including the pandemic and inflation caused by the war in Ukraine.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is the central bank of India and was established on April 1, 1935.
- ★ It is responsible for regulating India's monetary policy and managing the country's currency and foreign exchange reserves.

Saraswathi Samman

- ★ Noted Tamil writer Sivasankari has been conferred with the prestigious Saraswati Samman for the year 2022.
- ★ The award is for his book ‘Surya Vamsam’, a memoir published in Tamil in 2019.
- ★ Sivasankari is a prolific writer who has made significant contributions to Tamil literature, and the award is a recognition of his talent and dedication.
- ★ Sivasankari’s recognition with the Saraswati Samman will help bring greater visibility to Tamil literature and inspire new generations of writers in the language.
- ★ It is given annually to an outstanding literary work written in any Indian language and published during the last 10 years.
- ★ The award carries a cash prize of ₹15 lakhs, a citation and a plaque.

Sangita Kalanidhi Award 2023 by Music Academy

- ★ Renowned Carnatic vocalist and Padma Shri awardee Bombay Jayashree has been selected for the Sangita Kalanidhi award for 2023 by the Music Academy.
- ★ Jayashree is one of the foremost Carnatic musicians of today, trained initially by his parents and later by TR Balamani and violinist Lalgudi G. Jayaraman.
- ★ Apart from Carnatic music, Jayashree is also trained in Veena, classical dance and Hindustani music.
- ★ She is known for her melodious and meditative style of singing.
- ★ The Nritya Kalanidhi Award for dance has been given to Vasanthlaxmi Narasimhachari. She has specialized in Bharatnatyam and Kuchipudi.
- ★ It is considered the highest honor in the field of Carnatic music.

Chameli Devi Jain Award for 2022

- ★ The News Minute Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief Dhanya Rajendran has been named the 2022 recipient of the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Women media persons.
- ★ The award, named after freedom fighter Chameli Devi Jain was instituted in 1982 by The Media Foundation and seeks to honour extraordinary Indian women journalists.
- ★ Chameli Devi Jain awardees include some of the best known and respected names in Indian journalism.
- ★ They have pioneered and popularised a new journalism in terms of themes and values – such as social development, politics, equity, gender justice, health, war and conflict, and consumer values.

Bengaluru Wins First-Ever Partnership for Healthy Cities Award

- ★ Capital of Karnataka, Bengaluru has received Partnership for Healthy Cities award at a summit in London for effective implementation of smoke-free laws effectively.
- ★ Bengaluru has also received a cash prize of \$ 1,50,000.

- ★ The global summit brought together officials from more than 50 countries to discuss public health concerns.
- ★ As per BBMP Chief Commissioner, Bengaluru has been applauded for its efforts to curb public smoking.
- ★ Bengaluru's effort has resulted in a reduction of public-place smoking from 18.2% in 2017 to 13.3% in 2021.
- ★ The number of display signs of no-smoking in Bengaluru have also increased from 23.1% in 2017 to 75% in 2021.

Pritzker Architecture Prize

- ★ British architect and urban planner Sir David Chipperfield has won the 2023 Pritzker Architecture Prize.
- ★ The Pritzker Architecture Prize is the highest international honour for architects.
- ★ The prize was designed to honour architects for their complete body of built work.
- ★ The Prize was founded in 1979 by Jay A. Pritzker and is funded by the Pritzker family and sponsored by the Hyatt Foundation.
- ★ Sir David Chipperfield was involved in famous projects like the 2012 Architecture Venice Biennale, The Neues Museum in Berlin and Procuratie Vecchie in Venice's iconic St Mark's Square.

Abel Prize 2023

- ★ Luis Caffarelli of Argentina has been awarded the 2023 Abel Prize.
- ★ Caffarelli has been awarded the prize for his contributions to the field of nonlinear partial equations and free-boundary problems in mathematics.
- ★ Caffarelli was born and raised in Buenos Aires, Argentina, making him the first Abel Prize laureate from South America.
- ★ Currently, he is a professor at the University of Texas, Austin.
- ★ It is named after Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel (1802-29), who in his short life made pioneering contributions in a multitude of fields.
- ★ The award carries a monetary prize of 7.5 million kroner (about \$720,000) and a glass plaque designed by Norwegian artist Henrik Haugen.
- ★ The prize is awarded by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

Literary Award

- ★ The Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) honoured Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a special literary award for his trilogy - Unfinished Memoirs, The Prison Diaries and The New China 1952.

- ★ The award was presented at the ceremony to Bangladeshi writers and researchers Ramendu Majumdar and Mofidul Haque by eminent Punjabi novelist and Founder President of FOSWAL Ajit Kaur.
- ★ FOSWAL was established in 1987 as a non-profit organisation with the objective of promoting regional cooperation and cultural exchange among SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries through literature and the arts.
- ★ The award was given to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for his outstanding literary excellence, as he is a towering figure of national emancipation of the oppressed people of the world.

Kerala's Highest Civilian Honour- Kerala Jyoti

- ★ MT Vasudevan Nair was awarded the 'Kerala Jyoti', the highest civilian honour in Kerala.
- ★ Actor Mammooty, former Civil Service Officer T Madhava Menon, and writer Omcheri NN Pillai shared the second highest award "Kerala Prabha".
- ★ The Governor of Kerala, Arif Mohammad Khan presented the inaugural edition of the 'Kerala Puraskarangal' awards.
- ★ The Kerala Puraskarangal is a civilian award second only to the prestigious Padma Awards conferred by the Government of India.
- ★ The award is given to individuals who have made exceptional contributions in various fields such as literature, art, culture, science, social work and sports.
- ★ There are three categories of the award: Kerala Jyothi, Kerala Prabha and Kerala Shree, with Kerala Jyothi being the highest honour.
- ★ The objective of these awards is to recognize the contribution of outstanding individuals from Kerala and to inspire others to strive for excellence in their respective fields.

Wildlife Conservation Award 2023

- ★ Wildlife conservationist Aliya Mir was awarded Wildlife Conservation Award by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.
- ★ The award makes her the first woman from the Union Territory to receive it in recognition of her conservation efforts in the area.
- ★ Alia Mir is also the first woman in Kashmir to work for Wildlife SOS, a part of the Wildlife Rescue Team.
- ★ Alia Mir's Wildlife Rescue Helpline, which she started in 2021, works closely with the Jammu and Kashmir Wildlife Protection Department to rescue snakes and other wild animals.
- ★ Wildlife SOS aims at rescuing and rehabilitating endangered wildlife as well as preserving India's natural heritage.

Children's Champion Award

- ★ The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights conferred the Assam-based Tapoban NGO with the Children's Champion Award 2023.
- ★ The award was presented in the Health and Nutrition category.

- ★ Kumud Kalita, Founder-President of Tapoban and a political science teacher at a junior college of the school, received the award from Justice S Muralidhar, Chief Justice of Odisha High Court in New Delhi.
- ★ This NGO focuses on supporting children with special needs and autism.
- ★ The Children's Champion Award recognizes individuals and organisations for their significant contribution to the welfare of children in areas such as education, justice, health, nutrition, sports and creative arts.
- ★ Tapoban has been recognized in the Health and Nutrition category for its remarkable contribution to the welfare of children with special needs and children with autism.

'Lifetime Achievement Award' by University of Texas

- ★ Jindal Steel and Power Chairman Naveen Jindal conferred the Lifetime Achievement Award by the University of Texas.
- ★ Jindal, an alumnus of UT Dallas 1992 batch, received the award for his outstanding achievements in industry, politics and academia.
- ★ Jindal is the second person after Nobel laureate Aziz Sansar to receive this prestigious award from the University of Texas, Dallas.
- ★ As a student at UT Dallas, Jindal served as both Vice President and President of the student government and was honoured with the Student Leader of the Year award and also received the university's Distinguished Alumnus Award in 2010.
- ★ The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented by the University of Texas (Dallas) to individuals who have made significant contributions in a variety of fields over a distinguished career of at least 25 years.

President Biden Awards 2021 National Humanities Medals

- ★ US President Joe Biden presented the 2021 National Humanities Medals, in conjunction with the National Medals of Arts.
- ★ Indian-American Vera Mindy Chokalingam, professionally known as Mindy Kaling will award the 2021 National Humanities Medal among others.
- ★ The National Medal of Arts is the highest award given to artists, arts patrons, and groups by the US government and honors exemplary individuals and organisations that have advanced the arts in America and offered inspiration to others through their distinguished achievement, support, or patronage.
- ★ Mindy Kaling is an Emmy-nominated writer, producer, New York Times best-selling author, director, and actor.
- ★ She has also co-created and co-written the popular Netflix show Never Have I Ever, the series about a first-generation Indian American teenager.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Mr Aramane Giridhar gets Extension as Defence Secretary

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the extension in service of Mr Aramane Giridhar as Defense Secretary until October 2024.
- ★ Giridhar, a 1988-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) Officer of the Andhra Pradesh cadre.
- ★ He took over as the Defence Secretary on 01 November 2022.
- ★ He was to retire in June after completing 60 years.

Managing Director of Jaguar Land Rover India

- ★ Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has appointed Mr Rajan Amba as Managing Director (MD) of Jaguar Land Rover India, from 01 March 2023.
- ★ He succeeds Rohit Suri, who is due to retire on 31 March 2023.
- ★ Mr Rajan is presently the Vice-President of Sales, Marketing and Customer Care at Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles.
- ★ Jaguar Land Rover Automotive PLC is the holding company of Jaguar Land Rover Limited, and is a British multinational automobile manufacturer which produces luxury vehicles and sport utility vehicles.

First Indian to be Nominated as FIBA Asia President

- ★ In a first-of-its-kind nomination, an Indian Dr K Govindaraj has been nominated as FIBA (Fédération Internationale de Basketball) Asia President.
- ★ He is currently President of the Basketball Federation of India and member of the Karnataka Legislative Council (KLC).
- ★ In the 63-year-old history of FIBA Asia, this is the first time it will be headed by an Indian.
- ★ The decision was taken unanimously by the 44 federations under FIBA Asia.
- ★ Govindaraj will replace Qatar's Sheikh Saud Ali Al Thani, who was serving his 4th five-year term as head of FIBA Asia since 2002.

New President of Nigeria

- ★ Nigerian electoral officials announced on 01 March 2023 that the ruling party's candidate in the Presidential election, Bola Tinubu, has been elected as the country's new President.
- ★ Bola Tinubu has been associated with the 'All Progressive Congress Party' from which he has been winning elections.
- ★ The other two opposition candidates have demanded re-election.
- ★ Main opponents Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi are likely to challenge the decision again in court. However, his suit was dismissed.

Secretary General of FICCI

- ★ Former bureaucrat Mr Shailesh Pathak has been appointed as the new Secretary General of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) with effect from 01 March 2023.
- ★ He Succeeds Mr Dilip Chenoy, who stepped down as Secretary General of FICCI in October 2022.
- ★ The FICCI is a non-governmental trade association and advocacy group based in India.

Vice Chief of Army Staff

- ★ Lt. General. M.V. Suchindra Kumar took over as Vice Chief of the Army Staff.
- ★ Prior to taking over, Lt Gen Suchindra Kumar was the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) at the Army Headquarters.
- ★ In his recent responsibilities, he has experience in various departments like Intelligence, Operations, Force Structuring, Operational Logistics and Tech Infusion.

NASA Appoints Dr Nicola Fox

- ★ The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has appointed a longtime solar scientist who heads its heliophysics division, Dr Nicola Fox to become the S. Space Agency's Science Chief – the first woman named to serve in the role.
- ★ This will be the first time that a woman has led the space agency's science division.
- ★ Fox will succeed Mr Thomas Zurbuchen, a Swiss-American astrophysicist who had led the directorate since 2016.
- ★ In 2018, she was appointed as the head of the agency's Heliophysics Division.
- ★ She was the lead scientist for the Parker Solar Probe mission studying the sun.

New President of Vietnam

- ★ Vo Van Thuong, a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), was elected as the country's new President by the National Assembly of Vietnam.
- ★ Thuong's election came after the sudden resignation of the previous President, Nguyen Xuan Phuc.
- ★ Thuong began his political career in 1993.
- ★ In 2003, Thuong became Secretary of the Communist Youth Union of Ho Chi Minh City.
- ★ Thuong was elected as a member of the SPV Central Committee for the third time in 2021 and became a member of the Politburo for the second time.

Principal Director General of Press Information Bureau

- ★ Senior Indian Information Service (IIS) Officer Rajesh Malhotra has been appointed as the Principal Director General of the Press Information Bureau (PIB).
- ★ He will replace Satyendra Prakash, who took charge as principal DG of PIB in August 2022.

- ★ Malhotra has over 32 years of experience in planning and implementing media and communication arrangements for various Ministries and Departments of the Central Government.
- ★ He was associated with the Election Commission as in-charge of media and communication for 21 years (1996-2017).
- ★ He is an Indian Information Service (IIS) Officer of the 1989 batch and has been working in the Ministry of Finance since January 2018.

Chairperson of India's Power Regulator CERC

- ★ The government has appointed Mr. Jishnu Barua, former Assam Chief Secretary, as chairperson of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC).
- ★ Union Power Minister Shri RK Singh administered the oath of office and secrecy to Jishnu Baruah.
- ★ Mr. Barua will succeed Mr. PK Pujari, whose extended tenure in the Commission got over in June 2022.
- ★ CERC was initially constituted under the Ministry of Power's Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, of 1998.
- ★ Earlier, he was the Additional Chief Secretary of Assam looking after various departments of the state from August 2017 to October 2020.
- ★ He held the charge of Chairperson of Assam Power Distribution Company Ltd.

New Chief Financial Officer of Karnataka Bank

- ★ Karnataka Bank Ltd has appointed Mr Abhishek Sankar Bagchi as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the bank on a contract basis.
- ★ He replaced Mr Muralidhar Krishna Rao, whose tenure was completed on 01 March 2023.
- ★ Mr Bagchi is a Chartered Accountant and has a Global Diploma in International Financial Reporting (IFRS).
- ★ He has over 18 years of work experience in RBI reporting, strategic planning, fund management, financial reporting, financial planning and control, taxation and budgeting.

Chief Minister of Nagaland

- ★ Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) of Nagaland leader Shri Neiphiu Rio was sworn in as the Chief Minister (CM) of Nagaland for the 5th time in Kohima, Nagaland.
- ★ Mr Taditui Rangkau Zeliang and Mr Yanthungo Patton also took oath as Deputy Chief Ministers of Nagaland.
- ★ The NDPP – Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance won a thumping majority of 37 seats in the 60 Assembly Constituencies.
- ★ This is the second consecutive term for NDPP – BJP alliance in the government in Nagaland.

Chief Minister of Meghalaya

- ★ National People's Party (NPP) Chief Shri Conrad K Sagma took oath as the CM of Meghalaya for a second consecutive term in presence of PM Shri Narendra Modi.
- ★ Prestone Tynsong and Sniawbhalang Dhar, both from the NPP, took oaths as Deputy Chief Ministers.
- ★ The NPP-BJP alliance, with 45 MLAs, will form the next government in Meghalaya.
- ★ With 26 assembly seats, NPP became the single-largest party to win the 2023 polls.
- ★ He was also Minister of Finance, Power and Tourism, Government of Meghalaya from 2008 to 2009.

MD and CEO of Tech Mahindra

- ★ Tech Mahindra, India's sixth largest IT services player appointed Mohit Joshi as MD and CEO.
- ★ The Board of Directors has approved his appointment for a period of five years from 20 December 2023 to 19 December 2028.
- ★ Joshi is currently serving as the Infosys Chairman.
- ★ He has over two decades of experience in the enterprise technology software and consulting sector.
- ★ He has worked with the world's largest corporations driving digital transformation and building thriving businesses.

Prime Minister of China

- ★ Li Qiang was appointed as the new Premier or Prime Minister of China by the Chinese Parliament.
- ★ Li Keqiang, who had held the position for the past ten years, was replaced by Li Qiang.
- ★ Li Qiang's nomination was approved at the annual meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC), the official body that adopts the resolutions of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

President of Nepal

- ★ Nepali Congress senior leader, Mr Ram Chandra Poudel has been elected as the 3rd President of Nepal.
- ★ He will replace Ms Bidya Devi Bhandari, whose tenure end on March 2023.
- ★ In the election, Mr Poudel defeated Mr Subash Chandra Nembang.
- ★ The term of the President of Nepal is 5 years from the date of the election.
- ★ This was the third Presidential election in Nepal since it became a republic in 2008.

Managing Directors of LIC

- ★ The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) announced the appointment of Tablesh Pandey and M Jagannath as Managing Directors of the corporation.

- ★ Tablesh Pandey will take over from 01 April 2023 and M Jagannath will take over from 13 March 2023.
- ★ M Jagannath joined LIC as a Direct Recruitment Officer in 1988 and has rich experience in Marketing and has held various important assignments and successfully led large teams.
- ★ He has worked as Senior Divisional Manager in-charge of Ernakulam, Dharwad and Bangalore I Divisions.
- ★ Tablesh Pandey is currently the Executive Director of the LIC.

India's Ambassador of 'She Changes Climate'

- ★ Climate entrepreneur Shreya Ghodawat appointed as India's ambassador for 'She Changes Climate'.
- ★ In honour of International Women's Day, a global non-profit organisation launched a special initiative called 'Embrace Equity'.
- ★ The initiative aims to amplify women's voices about the effects of climate change.
- ★ The campaign promotes the role of women in accelerating climate change.
- ★ According to UN Women, more than 150 countries have laws that discriminate against women.

Head for Commercial Banking in India

- ★ Mr Bhanu Vohra has been named by Citi as Head of Commercial Banking in India.
- ★ He replaced Tushar Vikram.
- ★ Mr Vohra will be responsible for the Citi Commercial Bank (CCB) business in India, which addresses the banking and financial services needs of emerging large corporates and mid-market enterprises through Citi's global footprint, international capabilities, and innovative solutions.
- ★ Vohra, a chartered accountant, joined Citi in 2000.

CEO of Silicon Valley Bank by the FDIC

- ★ Tim Mayopoulos, has been selected by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) as the CEO of Silicon Valley Bank.
- ★ Prior to joining StartupBlend, Mayopoulos was CEO of mortgage financier Fannie Mae for more than six years.

MD and CEO of Pramerica Life Insurance

- ★ Haryana based Pramerica Life Insurance Limited has appointed Mr Pankaj Gupta as Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- ★ The appointment has been approved by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the Board of Pramerica Life Insurance.
- ★ He will be responsible for driving strategic growth led transformation to bring Pramerica Life amongst the leading life Insurance companies in India.
- ★ Pankaj succeeds Ms Kalpana Sampat, who was the previous MD and CEO.

- ★ Gupta joins Pramerica Life Insurance from HDFC Life, where he was the Group Head – Distribution Strategy and Alliances and was part of HDFC Life’s top Leadership team.

Third Vice President of Nepal

- ★ Ram Sahai Prasad Yadav has been elected as the third Vice President of Nepal and is the leader of the Janata Samajwadi Party.
- ★ In the voting, Yadav defeated Astalakshmi Shakya of CPN (UML) and Mamta Jha of Janmat Party.
- ★ Yadav received support from the ruling coalition, including the Nepali Congress, CPN (Maoist Centre) and CPN (Unified Socialist).
- ★ According to the Constitution of Nepal, the Vice President can perform the duties of the President during the absence of the President.
- ★ The term of the Vice President is five years from the date of his election.

Luxor Signs Virat Kohli as its New Brand Ambassador

- ★ Stationery manufacturer Luxor Writing Instruments Pvt Ltd has appointed renowned cricketer Virat Kohli as its brand ambassador.
- ★ Kohli will represent Luxor’s stationery products and help the company increase its appeal among young writers, thereby enhancing its position as the leading writing instrument provider in the country.
- ★ It is aimed specifically at establishing Luxor as a leading stationery brand in India and increasing the appeal of Luxor’s stationery brand among the youth market.
- ★ Indian stationery brand Luxor has partnered with Schneider Pens of Germany to introduce a premium range of creative writing instruments in India.

CMD of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)

- ★ Lalit Kumar Gupta has been appointed as the new Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).
- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Gupta as the CMD of CCI.
- ★ CCI is a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Textiles.
- ★ Gupta’s tenure as CMD will be for five years or till his superannuation or until further orders, whichever comes first.
- ★ He is currently holding the position of Director (Finance) in Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).

‘Order of Australia’ for Bolstering Bilateral Ties

- ★ Indian industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata has been appointed as an Honorary Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO), for distinguished service to Australia-India bilateral relations, particularly trade, investment and philanthropy.
- ★ Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O’Farrell said that the Governor General of Australia announced his appointment.

- ★ Ratan Tata is the Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, former Chairman of the Tata Group and one of the world's richest entrepreneurs.
- ★ Ratan Tata has been a strong and influential supporter of deeper ties between Australia and India, including advocating for an India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement.

Chairman of Bharat Petroleum Corporation

- ★ G Krishnakumar has been appointed as the Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), a 'Maharatna' and Fortune Global 500 company.
- ★ He was earlier an Executive Director in the company and succeeds Arun Kumar Singh, who retires as Chairman in October 2022.
- ★ BPCL was earlier known as Bharat Refineries Limited and was formed after the Government of India acquired Burmah Shell on January 24, 1976.
- ★ BPCL was the first refinery to process Bombay High, a recently discovered indigenous crude.
- ★ Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) is a state-owned oil and gas company in India that was founded in 1952 and is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Chairman and Managing Director of BPCL

- ★ Mr G Krishnakumar has taken over as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL).
- ★ He will hold the position of Chairman and Managing Director till April 2025 or until any further notice.
- ★ Currently, he is serving as Executive Director of BPCL.
- ★ He replaces Mr Arun Kumar Singh, who retired as Chairman in October 2022.

Managing Director and CEO of Invest India

- ★ The board of Invest India has appointed Manmeet K Nanda as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the investment promotion and facilitation body under the Ministry of Commerce.
- ★ Nanda replaces Deepak Bagla.
- ★ According to the commerce ministry, the board in its meeting approved the appointment of Nanda, a 2000 batch IAS Officer of West Bengal cadre, as the new MD and CEO.
- ★ It is a non-profit enterprise under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

AHF Athletes Ambassador

- ★ National women's hockey team midfielder Salima Tete has appointed the AHF Athletes Ambassador from India for a term of two years.
- ★ Tete accepted the certificate and the position during the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Congress in Mungyeong, Korea.

- ★ Tete, who led the Indian women's junior hockey team to a fourth-place finish at the 2021 FIH Women's Junior World Cup in Potchefstroom, South Africa, is among four players from Asia to be appointed for the position.

Independent Directors of NDTV

- ★ UK Sinha and Dipali Goenka have been appointed Independent Directors of NDTV for a period of two years effective from March.
- ★ The appointment is based on the recommendations of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, and subject to the approval of shareholders and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- ★ UK Sinha has also been designated as Non-Executive Chairperson of NDTV.
- ★ UK Sinha, a former bureaucrat, served as the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) between 2011 and 2017.
- ★ Deepali Goenka is the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Welspun India Limited.

New President of BRICS New Development Bank

- ★ Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has been elected as the new President of the New Development Bank (NDB), also known as the BRICS Bank.
- ★ She replaced Marcus Troyjo as the President of NDB.
- ★ Rousseff is an economist who served as the President of Brazil for two consecutive terms from January 2011 to August 2016.
- ★ During her presidency, Rousseff prioritised social policies, including poverty reduction and increased access to education and healthcare.
- ★ The NDB has so far approved \$23 billion in loans for projects including renewable energy and transportation infrastructure in its member countries.

Director General of IAEA

- ★ The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reappointed Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi as Director General (DG) for a second four-year term in office beginning in early December 2023.
- ★ His second term starts on 3 December, 2023 and runs until 2 December 2027.
- ★ He is the sixth Director General since the IAEA was established in 1957.
- ★ He took up his first term of office on 2 December 2019, following the General Conference's approval of his appointment by the Board.

President Appoints 3 New Chief Justices for High Courts

- ★ President of India Droupadi Murmu has approved the appointment of 3 new Chief Justices (CJ) for the High Courts (HC) of Allahabad, Patna and Chhattisgarh.
- ★ Justice Pritinker Diwaker, Judge of the Allahabad High Court (HC), has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Allahabad HC succeeding Justice Rajesh Bindal.

- ★ Justice Ramesh Sinha, Senior Judge of the Allahabad HC, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (UP) has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Chhattisgarh HC succeeding Justice Goutam Bhaduri.
- ★ Justice K Vinod Chandran, Senior Judge of the Kerala High Court (HC), has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Patna HC succeeding Sanjay Karol.
- ★ The Chief Justice and Judges of the High Courts are to be appointed by the President under clause (1) of Article 217 of the Constitution.

Vice-President of UAE

- ★ The President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, has appointed Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, his brother, as the Vice President of the country.
- ★ The appointment is approved by the UAE Federal Supreme Council.
- ★ Sheikh Mansour has been active in UAE politics since 2004, when he was appointed as Minister of Presidential Affairs.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

A New Book Authored by R. Kaushik and R. Sridhar

- ★ A book titled 'COACHING BEYOND: My Days with the Indian Cricket Team' authored by R. Kaushik and R. Sridhar.
- ★ The book primarily reflects on R. Sridhar's seven-year coaching tenure with the Indian cricket team as its fielding coach
- ★ The book is not technical but anecdotal, providing an insider's account of the rise and rise of Indian cricket
- ★ The book covers Virat Kohli's journey, Rishabh Pant's development and the team's progression towards the number one Test ranking.
- ★ Kaushik has been a cricket writer for more than three decades.

DEFENCE

Exercise Shinyuu Maitri

- ★ The Indian Air Force (IAF) along with the Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) participated in Exercise Shinyuu Maitri.
- ★ It was organised from 01 March to 02 March 2023.
- ★ This air exercise was organised along with the Indo-Japanese joint military exercise Dharma Guardian.

- ★ An Indian Air Force contingent with a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft participated in Exercise SHINYU Maitri 23.
- ★ The first phase of the exercise involved discussion on transport operations and tactical manoeuvres, followed by the second phase of flying exercises by C-17 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force and C-2 transport aircraft of the Air Self-Defense Force of Japan.

India to Get Civil Aviation Research Centre by the End of 2023

- ★ The Civil Aviation Research Organisation, (CARO), a facility with advanced simulators being established in Hyderabad, will become fully operational by the end of 2023.
- ★ It will have labs to analyse cyber security threats and facilitate aviation data management.
- ★ CARO, which is being established on a 20-acre plot within the Begumpet airport at a cost of ₹13 crore, will offer solutions in key areas in the civilian aviation sector in India.
- ★ A research facility is functioning in a limited way at Begumpet airport with employees of the Airports Authority of India (AAI).
- ★ The objective is to promote in-house and collaborative research to cater AAI's needs through the establishment of a world-class research infrastructure with advanced simulators and laboratory facilities.

Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with French Navy

- ★ Indian Navy's indigenously built Guided Missile Frigate, INS Sahyadri participated in the Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with French Navy (FN) ships in the Arabian Sea.
- ★ French Navy (FN) ships FS Dixmude, a Mistral class amphibious assault ship, and FS La Fayette, a La Fayette class frigate participated in the exercise.
- ★ The exercise featured a wide spectrum of development at sea which included cross deck landings, boarding exercises and seamanship development.
- ★ INS Sahyadri is equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors capable of detecting and neutralizing air, surface and sub-surface threats.

Indo-France Joint Military Exercise – Frinjex-2023

- ★ The maiden Joint Military Exercise FRINJEX-23 between Indian Army and French Army will be conducted at Pangode Military Station in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- ★ For the first time, armies of both countries are engaging in this format with each contingent comprising a Company Group.
- ★ It is to enhance interoperability, coordination and cooperation between both forces at tactical level.
- ★ The theme for the exercise is based on 'Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations in a Contested Environment'.
- ★ The Joint exercise will further cement defence cooperation with France which is a crucial aspect of the overall Indo-France strategic partnership.

Exercise ‘La Perouse’

- ★ The third edition of the multilateral exercise ‘La Perouse’ was held from 13 March to 14 March 2023 in the Indian Ocean region.
- ★ It saw the participation of personnel, ships and integral helicopters from the Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Indian Navy, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force, Royal Navy and United States Navy.
- ★ Indian Navy’s indigenously built guided missile frigate INS Sahyadri and fleet tanker INS Jyoti participated in the exercise.
- ★ The exercise involved complex and advanced naval operations, including surface warfare, anti-air warfare, air defense exercises, cross-deck landings and tactical maneuvers.
- ★ It aims to enhance maritime domain awareness and optimize maritime coordination among the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific region.

Exercise Chetak Chaukas

- ★ Indian Army’s Chetak Corps conducted ‘Exercise Chetak Chaukas’ with all stakeholders to strengthen Rear Area Security.
- ★ The exercise was undertaken to ensure planning, getting ready, getting to know everyone involved, and updating databases to ensure better security in the rear protection area.
- ★ Earlier, the Indian Army’s Desert Corps carried out tactical floatation to validate operational parameters under an all-arms combat simulation.
- ★ This was carried out besides coordinating and refining numerous Battle Drills.

Exercise ‘Sea Dragon 23’

- ★ Indian Navy’s long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft P8I will participate in the third edition of the coordinated multilateral anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise ‘Sea Dragon 23’.
- ★ The exercise, scheduled for 15 March 15 – 30 March, hosted by the US Navy, will emphasize coordinated anti-submarine warfare among participating nations.
- ★ The exercise will have representation from P8A of the US Navy as well as P8I of the Indian Navy, P1 of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force, CP 140 of the Royal Canadian Air Force and P3C of the Republic of Korea Navy (RoKN).
- ★ The P8I aircraft of the Indian Navy arrived at Guam, US on 14 March.
- ★ The objective of the exercise is to achieve a high degree of synergy and coordination between the friendly navies.
- ★ It is an annual US-led multinational exercise.

Joint India Singapore Exercise ‘Bold Kurukshetra’

- ★ The Singapore Army and Indian Army participated in the 13th edition of Exercise ‘Bold Kurukshetra’, a bilateral exercise at Jodhpur Military Station, India.
- ★ Organized by the Indian Army, soldiers from the 42nd Battalion, Singapore Armored Regiment and the Armored Brigade of the Indian Army participated in the exercise.

- ★ The exercise is conducted within the scope of joint military training and exercise between the Singapore Army and the Indian Army.
- ★ This exercise enhances cooperation between the two armies.

Ministry of Defence Signs ₹934 Crore Contract

- ★ The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract for refit of the INS Sindhukirti (S61) submarine at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP) at an overall cost of ₹934 crore.
- ★ INS Sindhukirti (S61) is the 7th Sindhughosh-class diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy.
- ★ It was built at the Admiralty Shipyard and Sevmash in the Soviet Union.
- ★ Sindhukirti is the 3rd Kilo Class Diesel Electric Submarine.
- ★ It was commissioned on 09 December 1989 in the Soviet Union.

Bangladesh Commissions its First Submarine Base

- ★ Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the first submarine base of Bangladesh 'BNS Sheikh Hasina' at Pekua in Cox's Bazar.
- ★ This new submarine base will help the Navy to enhance its operational capability to secure the vast maritime resources.
- ★ The government of Bangladesh is working on 'Forces Goal 2030' to transform its military force into a modern organization appropriate for the times.
- ★ Ships passing through the Bay of Bengal can also take help from this base.

INS Sujata Visits Port Maputo, Mozambique

- ★ INS Sujatha, a ship based at Southern Naval Command, Kochi visited Port Maputo, Mozambique as a part of overseas deployment.
- ★ About 40 personnel from the Mozambican Navy visited the ship for cross deck training, which included a tour of the training facilities, briefing on diving, training on VBSS and light weapons, visual communication and maintenance of machinery and on board sanitation.
- ★ Several other activities such as joint morning yoga sessions, football matches were conducted between the personnel of both the navies.
- ★ The visit of INS Sujata to Maputo, Mozambique further enhanced mutual cooperation and bilateral relations between the two navies.

Africa-India Military Exercise AFINDEX-23

- ★ India and 23 African nations began a nine-day mega military exercise Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX) in Pune.
- ★ The aim of the exercise is to expand the participant's overall military cooperation.
- ★ Several new generation equipment made in India are being used in the exercise to give a feel of India's efficacy to the soldiers of the participating countries.

- ★ The theme of the exercise is 'humanitarian mine action and peacekeeping operations'.
- ★ The objectives of the exercise are to continue to build upon the initiatives taken to strengthen India-Africa relations, with a focus on enhancing peace and security.

Maritime Exercise 'Konkan'

- ★ The annual bilateral maritime exercise 'Konkan' between the Indian Navy and UK's Royal Navy was held off the Konkan coast in the Arabian Sea.
- ★ The joint exercise by both the navies demonstrated operational readiness, enhanced interoperability and improved capability to conduct joint operations.
- ★ INS Trishul, a Guided Missile Frigate, and HMS Lancaster, a Type 23 Guided Missile Frigate, participated in 'Konkan 2023' and conducted several maritime exercises to enhance interoperability and imbibe best practices.
- ★ The exercise covered all domains of maritime operations, air, surface and subsurface.

Indian Army and Air Force Conduct 'Vayu Prahar' Exercise

- ★ The Indian Army and Air Force conducted a 96-hour multi-domain air and land exercise named 'Vayu Prahar' in the eastern sector.
- ★ The exercise took place in the second week of March amid the ongoing standoff between India and China on the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- ★ Its main objective was to draw up plans that could coordinate multi-domain operations and enhance the combat capabilities of the Indian Army and Air Force in the eastern sector.
- ★ The exercise involved the use of various combat assets including fighter jets, transport aircraft, helicopters and ground forces.
- ★ The exercise was conducted to test the readiness and interoperability of the Indian Army and Air Force in a joint operational environment.
- ★ Exercise Vayu Prahar is a joint military exercise conducted by the Indian Army and Air Force and aims to enhance coordination and rehearsal between various agencies for rapid mobilisation, transport and deployment of forces.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

IIT Madras Partners with GIC

- ★ The IIT Madras partnered with the General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) to develop a urine-based tuberculosis diagnosis or screening.
- ★ The envisaged product is anticipated to be faster and far more affordable than the existing point-of-care diagnostic kits available for various diseases such as blood glucose monitors.
- ★ The know-how and the relevant technologies will be made available to start-ups or diagnostic kit manufacturers.

- ★ IIT Madras has already developed and patented the technologies for fiber optic sensor probe fabrication and optoelectronic readout devices.

ISRO Drops 12-Year-Old Satellite Megha Tropiques

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) recently carried out a controlled descent of its 12-year-old low earth orbit satellite Megha Tropiques-1 (MT-1) into the Pacific Ocean.
- ★ ISRO has been steadily reducing the distance of the satellite from Earth since August, 2022.
- ★ For this, he was spending about 120 kg of fuel present in the satellite.
- ★ The booster of the satellite was turned on twice before reaching the earth.
- ★ This process is called de-boost. The satellite started burning rapidly as soon as it entered the Earth's atmosphere and was completely destroyed by the time it reached the sea.
- ★ This satellite was launched in October 2011 by ISRO in collaboration with the French space agency CNES.

SpaceX Falcon 9 Rocket Launches 40 OneWeb Internet Satellites

- ★ A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched 40 broadband satellites of United Kingdom (UK)-based company OneWeb from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida, United States of America (USA).
- ★ With this, OneWeb 17, the total number of satellites in this network to 582.
- ★ It was the 13th launch and landing for this particular booster
- ★ It was carried out to facilitate OneWeb's goal of constructing a constellation of over 600 satellites in low earth orbit (LEO).
- ★ Most of OneWeb's satellites have launched atop Russian-built Soyuz rockets operated by the French company Arianespace.

Chinese Tech Giant Baidu Unveils ChatGPT Rival Ernie Bot

- ★ Chinese tech company Baidu has launched its own Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered chatbot, Ernie Bot, based on its deep learning model Ernie short for 'enhanced representation through knowledge integration'.
- ★ The first version of Ernie Bot was developed in 2019.
- ★ Ernie Bot can perform various tasks, such as mathematical calculations, speaking in Chinese dialects, and generating videos and images with text prompts.
- ★ ChatGPT is made by the Microsoft-backed OpenAI, while Google and a host of ambitious startups are also developing their own so-called large language models.

ISRO Launches Heaviest Rocket LVM-3

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched India's largest Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3) rocket (OneWeb India-2 Mission with 36 satellites) on board from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

- ★ The LVM-III will deploy 36 satellites of the UK-based Network Access Associated Ltd (OneWeb) to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- ★ The OneWeb Group Company has inked a contract with ISRO's commercial arm New Space India Ltd to launch 72 satellites into LEO.
- ★ The first satellite deployment collaboration between the two organisations took place in October 2022 with ISRO launching 36 satellites of OneWeb.
- ★ OneWeb is a global communication network powered from space, enabling connectivity for governments and businesses.

Device to Detect Adulteration in Milk

- ★ Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) Researchers have developed a three-dimensional (3D) paper-based portable device that can detect adulteration in milk within 30 seconds.
- ★ This new technology can be used at home and only one milliliter of liquid sample is required to test for adulteration.
- ★ The device can detect various commonly used adulterant agents such as detergent, soap, hydrogen peroxide, urea, starch, salt, and sodium-hydrogen-carbonate.
- ★ The traditional methods to test the purity of milk which are expensive and time consuming, this new technology is cost effective.
- ★ This new technology can also be used to test other liquids such as water, fresh juices and milkshakes.
- ★ Only one milliliter sample of any liquid will be sufficient to test for adulteration.

World's First 3D Printed Rocket 'Terran 1'

- ★ The world's first 3D-printed rocket Terran 1 launched successfully on its third attempt, but failed to achieve orbit during second-stage separation.
- ★ It was launched from Complex 16 at Canaveral's US Space Force Station.
- ★ Despite sustained efforts, it failed to achieve orbit during second-stage separation & it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean.
- ★ Terran 1's engines are powered by liquid oxygen and liquid natural gas.
- ★ It is built by California aerospace startup Relativity Space.
- ★ 85% of its mass is 3D printed with metal alloys, including the engines.
- ★ It is made with the world's largest 3D metal printers.

IMPORTANT DAYS

National Science Day

- ★ National Science Day is celebrated every year on February 28.

- ★ It is celebrated every year to mark the discovery of the 'Raman effect'.
- ★ The National Science Day 2023 Theme is 'Global Science for Global Wellbeing'
- ★ Sukumar Chandra Sirkar (1898-1983) is one who invented science day.
- ★ The National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) requested the Central Government to designate 28 February as National Science Day (NSD) in 1986.

Zero Discrimination Day

- ★ Zero discrimination day 2023 is celebrated every year on 01 March.
- ★ On Zero Discrimination, under the theme 'Save lives: Decriminalise', UNAIDS is highlighting how the decriminalisation of key populations and people living with HIV saves lives and helps advance the end of the AIDS pandemic.
- ★ Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated and observed on 01 March 2014.
- ★ Zero Discrimination Day was launched by UNAIDS. UNAIDS is the organization that conducts programs on HIV/AIDS awareness and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

World Wildlife Day

- ★ World Wildlife Day 2023 is celebrated every year on 03 March 2023.
- ★ World Wildlife Day 2023 theme is 'Partnerships for wildlife conservation'.
- ★ This aims to draw attention to the conservation of some of the most severely endangered species of Wild animals and plants.
- ★ It commemorates the day of the signature of the Convention on International Trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 03 March at its 68th session the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

World Hearing Day

- ★ World Hearing Day is announced to be celebrated on 03 March 2023
- ★ World Hearing Day 2023 Theme is 'Ear and hearing care for all! Let's make it a reality'.
- ★ On World Hearing Day 2023, WHO will focus on the importance of safe listening as a means of maintaining good hearing across the life course.
- ★ It is possible to have good hearing across the life course through ear and hearing care.

National Safety Day

- ★ National Safety Day is celebrated every year on 04 March.
- ★ The 4th of March 2023 marks the 51st National Safety Day.
- ★ National Safety Day is a national event observed all over India for making people understand the importance of safety and we all want ourselves and our family members to remain safe.

- ★ National Safety Day 2023 Theme is 'Nurture young minds – Develop safety culture'.
- ★ In 1965, a decision was taken to set up national and state-level Safety Councils by the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Standing Labour Committee's session approved this in February 1966.

International Women's Day

- ★ International Women's Day is celebrated every year on 08 March.
- ★ The theme for the year 2023 is 'DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality'.
- ★ The theme aims to recognize women and girls who are contributing to the advancement of technology and digital education.
- ★ The theme of the International Women's Day 2023 campaign is: Embrace Equity or #EmbraceEquity.
- ★ International Women's Day was first officially celebrated by the United Nations in 1975 during the International Women's Year.

CISF Raising Day

- ★ The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Raising Day is observed every year on 10 March. In the year 2023, the 54th Raising Day of CISF is celebrated.
- ★ Its main objective is to strengthen national security and for this it is working continuously.
- ★ It was established in 1969 by the Indian Parliament under the CISF Act 1968.
- ★ CISF functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ★ The CISF is tasked with providing security to India's important government infrastructure projects and industrial buildings.

International Day of Action for Rivers

- ★ International Day of Action for Rivers is celebrated every year on 14 March to save the existence of rivers and to make people aware about it.
- ★ The day is dedicated to saving, celebrating, and creating awareness about the importance of rivers.
- ★ The day tries to focus attention on the unequal access to clean water and pollution caused by human activities.
- ★ This year the 26th International Day of Action for Rivers is being celebrated.
- ★ The theme for the year 2023 is 'Rights of Rivers'.
- ★ The first International Day of Action for Rivers was observed in March 1997.

World Consumer Rights Day

- ★ World Consumer Rights Day is celebrated every year on 15 March.
- ★ The day aims to raise awareness of consumer rights and needs globally.

- ★ The theme for World Consumer Rights Day 2023 is 'Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions'.
- ★ This theme focuses on the importance of the clean energy transition in empowering consumers to make informed decisions about their energy consumption and its impact on the environment.
- ★ President John F. Kennedy played an important role in the history of World Consumer Rights Day.

National Immunisation Day

- ★ National Immunization Day is celebrated every year on 16 March.
- ★ The objective is to raise awareness about polio eradication worldwide.
- ★ India has set a target of vaccinating more than 324 million children through MR vaccination campaigns to eliminate measles and rubella.
- ★ Immunisation is an important aspect of public health that provides immunity to the body against pathogens that may cause diseases in the future.
- ★ National Immunization Day was first observed in 1995 when the Pulse Polio Immunization Program was launched to eradicate polio from India.

World Sleep Day

- ★ World Sleep Day 2023 is observed on the 17 March 2023.
- ★ The World Sleep Day theme 2023 is 'Quality Sleep, Sound Mind, Happy World'.
- ★ It is organized by the World Sleep Day Committee of the World Sleep Society (founded by WASM and WSF) and aims to lessen the burden of sleep problems on society through better prevention and management of sleep disorders.
- ★ World Sleep Day was founded by the World Sleep Day Committee of the World Sleep Day Society in 2008.
- ★ The first World Sleep Day was held on 14 March 2008.

World Oral Health Day

- ★ World Oral Health Day is observed every year on 20 March.
- ★ It is to raise awareness about the importance of oral health.
- ★ It aims to encourage and sensitise individuals to adopt good oral hygiene practices, take care of their teeth and learn how to prevent dental problems.
- ★ The theme of 2023 is 'Be Proud of Your Mouth'.
- ★ According to a WHO Global Oral Health report, 514 million children in the world suffer from caries in primary teeth and about 75% of the population suffers from permanent tooth decay.

International Day of Happiness

- ★ International Day of Happiness is celebrated every year on 20 March.
- ★ It aims to emphasise the importance of happiness and the overall well-being of individuals.

- ★ The theme for International Day of Happiness 2023 is 'Be Mindful, Be Grateful, Be Kind'.
- ★ The International Day of Happiness event had its first celebration in 2013 and has since served as a means to acknowledge the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world.

World Poetry Day

- ★ World Poetry Day is observed every year on 21 March.
- ★ It is to honour the expression of language through poetry, which unites people through shared humanity and values.
- ★ The theme for World Poetry Day 2023 is 'Always be a poet, even in prose'.
- ★ The day aims to promote linguistic diversity through poetic expression and expand the possibility of endangered languages being heard.
- ★ The day promotes reading, writing, and teaching poetry, as well as other forms of expression like music, dance, and painting.
- ★ Poetry is such a medium of expression that evokes feelings and emotions more than any other genre of literature.

International Day of Forests

- ★ International Day of Forests or World Forestry Day is celebrated every year on 21 March.
- ★ It is to raise awareness about the importance of forests, woodlands and trees in our lives.
- ★ The day highlights the value, importance and contribution of forests to balance the life cycle on earth and addresses issues such as deforestation.
- ★ The theme for the International Day of Forests in 2023 is 'Forests and Health'.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests during its 61st session on 20 December 2006.
- ★ Its objective was to promote awareness on the conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in the context of poverty alleviation and global warming mitigation.
- ★ The decision was taken to underline the importance of forests in achieving development goals.

World Down Syndrome Day

- ★ World Down Syndrome Day is observed every year on 21 March.
- ★ It is to raise awareness and show support for individuals with Down syndrome.
- ★ The main goal of World Down Syndrome Day is to promote equal treatment and opportunities for persons with disabilities, including Down syndrome.
- ★ This year's theme is "With Us, Not For Us", emphasising the importance of treating individuals with Down syndrome fairly and inclusively.
- ★ World Down Syndrome Day was first observed in 2006 through a global campaign led by the Brazilian Federation of Associations of Down Syndrome.

World Water Day

- ★ World Water Day is celebrated every year on 22 March.
- ★ It is an international event observed annually on March 22nd every year all over the world highlighting the importance of freshwater.
- ★ United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution by which 22 March of each year was declared World Day for Water, to be observed starting in 1993.
- ★ For instance, the International Year of Cooperation in the Water Sphere 2013, and the current International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028.

World Meteorological Day

- ★ World Meteorological Day is celebrated every year on 23 March.
- ★ The day is celebrated as the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and it concentrates on the behaviour of Earth's atmosphere.
- ★ In 1873, The First Weather Organization was formed and the International Meteorological association is formed to exchange information about weather across national borders.
- ★ On 23 March 1953, the International Meteorological Organization becomes the World Meteorological Organization.
- ★ On 23 March 1961, the First World Meteorological Day is observed on the anniversary of the organization's creation.

World Tuberculosis (TB) Day

- ★ World Tuberculosis Day is observed every year on 24 March.
- ★ It is designed to build public awareness about the global epidemic of tuberculosis and efforts to eliminate the disease.
- ★ The World TB Day 2023 theme is 'Yes! We can end TB!'.
- ★ This theme emphasises on encouraging high-level leadership, faster uptake of new WHO recommendations, increased investments and adoption of innovations to combat the Tuberculosis epidemic.
- ★ On 24 March 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB).

World Theatre Day

- ★ World Theatre Day is celebrated every year on 27 March.
- ★ It is an international day observed annually all over the world on the 27th of March every year.
- ★ The theme for World Theatre Day 2023 is 'Theatre and a Culture of Peace'.
- ★ World Theatre Day celebrates the importance of theatre arts as it continues to move, entertain, teach and change us.

- ★ In 1962, World Theatre Day is celebrated by ITI centers, ITI Cooperating Members, theatre professionals and organizations, theatre academies and theatre lovers all over the world on March 27.

International Day of Zero Waste

- ★ The United Nations General Assembly has announced that March 30 will be observed as the International Day of Zero Waste every year from 2023.
- ★ The day aims to encourage sustainable consumption and production practices and help achieve the goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- ★ Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri organised the “Swachhotsav - 2023: Rally for Garbage Free Cities” in New Delhi.
- ★ The theme of International Zero Waste Day 2023 – ‘Achieving sustainable and environmentally sound practices to reduce and manage waste’.
- ★ The International Day of Zero Waste provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the negative effects of waste on the environment, including landfills, pollution and resource depletion.

OBITUTARY NEWS

France’s Record World Cup Goalscorer, Just Fontaine

- ★ The French football great who scored a record 13 goals in a single edition of the 1958 World Cup, Just Fontaine, has passed away. He was at the age of 89.
- ★ He scored 30 goals in 21 internationals for France between 1953 and 1960,
- ★ In 1958, he was instrumental in Les Bleus reaching the semi-finals in Sweden.
- ★ His exploits at the 1958 World Cup earned him 3rd place in the Ballon d’Or that year.
- ★ In March 2004, Pelé named him one of the 125 Greatest Living Footballers at a FIFA Awards Ceremony.

Former CJI Aziz Mushabber Ahmadi

- ★ Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Aziz Mushabber Ahmadi passed away. He was at the age of 90.
- ★ He was appointed as the Judge of the Supreme Court of India in December 1988.
- ★ He was appointed as the 26th Chief Justice of India (1994-1997).

Veteran Actor and Director Satish Kaushik

- ★ Veteran Bollywood Actor-Writer-Director Satish Kaushik passed away. He was at the age of 67.
- ★ Kaushik was born in Mahendragarh, Haryana on 13 April 1956.
- ★ He acted in more than 100 films.

- ★ He started his career in Bollywood with the film Masoom in 1983.
- ★ He also won the Filmfare Best Comedian Award in 1990 for Ram Lakhan and for Saajan Chale Sasural in 1997.

Renowned Bengali Litterateur Sasthipada Chattopadhyay

- ★ Renowned Bengali novelist and short story writer Sasthipada Chattopadhyay passed away at the age of 82 in Howrah, West Bengal.
- ★ He is well known in Bengali literature for the series stories of ‘Pandav Goenda’ (five detectives).
- ★ He created two more detective series – ‘Detective Ambar Chatterjee’ and ‘Goenda Tatar’.
- ★ He was awarded Bal Sahitya Puraskar in 2017 by the Sahitya Akademi for his contribution to children’s literature in Bengali
- ★ The West Bengal government in 2017 honoured him with the ‘Bangla Akademi Award’ for his contribution to children’s literature.

British Writer and Historian Patrick French

- ★ Award-winning British author, historian and academic Patrick French, passed away in London, United Kingdom (UK). He passed away at the age of 57.
- ★ He was appointed the inaugural Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Ahmedabad University in July 2017.
- ★ He was the author of several books including: Young husband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer (1994), a biography of Francis Young husband; The World Is What It Is (2008), an authorised biography of Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul that won the National Book Critics Circle Award in the United States of America; and India: A Portrait (2011).
- ★ He was also a journalist, writing for publications such as The Guardian, The Times and The New York Review of Books.

Nobel Prize-Winning Japanese Writer Kenzaburo Oe

- ★ Kenzaburo Oe, a giant of Japanese writing and winner of the Nobel Prize in literature, has passed away. He was at the age of 88.
- ★ He is one of Japan’s most celebrated and controversial authors, Ōe’s novels, short stories and essays placed him at the confluence of the personal and the political.
- ★ He was involved with pacifist and anti-nuclear campaigns.
- ★ Pacifist means someone who opposes war or violence as a means of settling disputes.
- ★ Oe won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1994, becoming the second Japanese author to receive the honour after Kawabata Yasunari.

Air Force Veteran Wing Commander Jag Mohan Nath

- ★ Wing Commander Jag Mohan Nath (retd), the Indian Air Force veteran who flew numerous reconnaissance sorties over Tibet and Pakistan in his Canberra aircraft in the 1962 and 1965 wars, passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- ★ He was part of the No. 106 Strategic Recce Squadron, whose primary aim was to provide aerial photography and surveillance.
- ★ Wing Commander Nath retired in 1970 and later joined Air India as a commercial pilot.
- ★ He was first awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC).

Gordon Moore Passed Away

- ★ Intel co-founder and pioneer in the microprocessor industry, Gordon Moore, has passed away in Hawaii. He was at the age of 94.
- ★ Gordon Moore was an American engineer and entrepreneur.
- ★ He co-founded Intel Corporation, one of the world's largest semiconductor chip makers.
- ★ Moore has made significant contributions to the development of many important technologies, including the integrated circuit and the semiconductor industry.
- ★ He has received numerous awards and honours for his work, including the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, and has been inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

Renowned Writer, Director and Ad Filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar

- ★ Renowned writer, director and film maker, Pradeep Sarkar passed away in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was at the age of 67.
- ★ He began his career with Vinod Chopra Productions, the production company of director and producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra.
- ★ He produced the critically-acclaimed Parineeta, which won the acclaimed National Film Award in the Best Debut Film of a Director category.
- ★ His famous Bollywood movies included 'Parineeta', Laga Chunari Mein Daag', Mardaani and Helicopter Eela.
- ★ Pradeep Sarkar received the Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director at the 53rd National Film Awards 2006 for his film Parineeta.

