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MARCH – 2024

NATIONAL NEWS

“SWAYAM Plus Platform” Launched By Central Government

- ★ The center has collaborated with leading industry players to launch the “SWAYAM Plus Platform”, which is aimed at offering employability and professional development-focused programmes to its learners.
- ★ This is an expansion of the existing SWAYAM initiative, which aims to identify and include courses that align with industry needs and enhance learners’ employability.
- ★ SWAYAM is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform that provides educational opportunities by bringing the best teaching and learning resources to everyone.
- ★ The main focus is on creating a system that benefits everyone involved in professional and career development, including learners, course providers, industry, academia, and strategic partners.
- ★ This involves establishing a mechanism that recognizes high-quality certifications and courses offered by the best industry and academia partners and provide credit for them.
- ★ The goal is to reach a large number of learners across the country, with a particular emphasis on those in tier 2 and 3 towns and rural areas. Customized employment courses will be provided, with options to learn in vernacular languages.

Government Approves Establishment of International Big Cat Alliance

- ★ The Union Cabinet has approved the establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) on 29 February 2024.
- ★ The headquarters of the alliance will be in India. It will receive a one-time budgetary support of ₹150 crore for five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28.
- ★ The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for formation of Big Cat Alliance under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The Big Cat Alliance will be a multi-country, multi-agency coalition.
- ★ It will bring together 96 big cat countries, countries with an interest in big cat conservation, conservation partners and scientific organizations.
- ★ The vision involves establishing a network as well as a system of business groups and corporates willing to contribute to the work of big cats.
- ★ Its aim is to secure the future of big cats and the landscapes in which they thrive.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi had envisioned this during his speech on the occasion of Global Tiger Day in the year 2019.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan Launched Project ODISERV

- ★ Union Minister of Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, launched Project ODISERV in Sambalpur to prepare young graduates of Odisha for employment opportunities in the financial services sector.
- ★ Project ODISERV is the first skills training program by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Bajaj Finserv Ltd.
- ★ This program was started at Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur, Odisha.
- ★ The goal is to give knowledge and skills to young college students, especially first-generation college students. Bajaj Finserv's Certificate Program for Banking Finance & Insurance (CPBFI) will be provided.
- ★ In this project, some youth from small towns and cities will get 100 hours of training for jobs in the financial services industry.
- ★ The CPBFI programme has already been launched in 30 colleges, enrolled 1100 students and delivered 25,000 hours of training in two months.
- ★ The NSDC and Bajaj Finserv partnership aims to introduce the CPBFI programme in 22 states across India, covering over 400 colleges.
- ★ The partnership aims to build the capabilities of 20,000 candidates through the CPBFI programme.
- ★ The program's courses are updated regularly to include the newest trends, best practices, and technology in finance, banking, and insurance.

UP Emerged as the First State to Issue Five Crore Ayushman Cards

- ★ Uttar Pradesh has become the first state to issue 5 crore Ayushman cards. Cards are issued under the Centre's flagship scheme Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.
- ★ The Uttar Pradesh Government has issued 50,017,920 Ayushman cards and provided benefits to 74,382,304 individuals as per a press release. 3,716 hospitals in the State are covered under this scheme.
- ★ A total of 3,481,252 health claims filed under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. Out of which 3,275,737 claims have been settled on a rate of 92.48 percent in the State.
- ★ Ayushman Bharat is a Government-led healthcare scheme launched on September 23, 2018, based on the recommendations of the National Health Policy 2017.
- ★ The scheme aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and has two main components: the PM-JAY program and Health and Wellness Centers.
- ★ The scheme is designed to provide coverage for over 10 crore impoverished and vulnerable families, which is approximately 50 crore individuals.
- ★ It offers up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year specifically for secondary and tertiary hospitalization care.

Two-day Regional Conference on PESA Act

- ★ A regional conference focused on the Strengthening of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, also known as the PESA Act, is set to occur on the 4th and 5th March in Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- ★ The Panchayati Raj, in collaboration with the Department of Panchayati Raj of Jharkhand, is organizing the conference. Vivek Bharadwaj, Secretary of the Central Ministry, will inaugurate the event.
- ★ The Regional Conference on PESA will bring together State Departments of Panchayati Raj, Tribal Development, Forest, Revenue, and Excise from Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Telangana.
- ★ It aims to assess the progress made in implementing PESA and promote a common understanding of its impact at the grassroots level.
- ★ The purpose of the PESA Act, which was established back in 1996, was to extend the provisions outlined in Part IX of the Constitution that pertain to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas.
- ★ It is important to note that Part IX encompasses Articles 243-243ZT, which specifically address municipalities and co-operative societies.

REC and UNISED Signed an Agreement

- ★ REC Limited has partnered with the Unit of Science and Educational Development (UNISED) to aid in the education of approximately 75,500 children in the Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ REC Limited is a prominent Non-Banking Finance Company and Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power.
- ★ Through its Corporate Social Responsibility arm REC Foundation, REC has committed ₹9.91 crores to this noble cause.
- ★ UNISED is dedicated to reform education through innovative learning systems, boasting a nationwide presence.
- ★ As part of this partnership, UNISED will implement solar energy-operated smart classes and establish joyful learning resource labs in government schools throughout the Siddharthnagar district.
- ★ The initiative aims to provide students with access to modern educational tools and resources, empowering them academically and creatively.
- ★ REC Foundation has also recently provided financial support for the education of 12,500 children of ex-servicemen.
- ★ For this REC contributed ₹15 Crores to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund.

Mission LiFE World Wildlife Day

- ★ On 3rd March 2024, the WWF EIACP PC-RP, under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, celebrated World Wildlife Day at Okhla Bird Sanctuary (OBS).
- ★ The sanctuary is known for its rich biodiversity and it is one of the places where Mission LiFE is focused.

- ★ The celebration was aimed at recognizing the unique roles and contributions of wildlife to people and the planet.
- ★ This year's theme was Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation.
- ★ The day serves as a significant platform for fostering intergenerational exchange and promoting youth empowerment through art, conversation, and presentations.
- ★ It also provides opportunities for advancing the cause of sustainable development and digital wildlife conservation.
- ★ The focus was on exploring the digital innovations available now, the intersectional discrepancies faced, and how digital connectivity could evolve for all people and the planet.
- ★ Mission LiFE is an India-led global mass movement aimed at encouraging individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Inaugurates Greenfield Projects

- ★ Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers Dr Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated the Greenfield Projects under the Production Linked Incentive Scheme-PLI Scheme for Bulk Drugs and Medical Devices at a function in New Delhi.
- ★ Under it, a total of 51 plants were inaugurated out of which 22 are for bulk drugs and 39 are related to the manufacturing of various kinds of medical devices.
- ★ In these plants, the bulk drugs being produced include Levofloxacin, Ofloxacin, Telmistran, Vitamin B6 and Diclofenac Sodium among others.
- ★ While the medical devices that are being manufactured include CT Scan and MRI, Cath Lab and Ultrasonography, Oxygen Concentrators, Intensive Care Ventilators, Dialysis Machines and Stents.
- ★ Implementing the PLI scheme worth 30 thousand crore rupees for setting up bulk drug parks under which 3 bulk drug parks and 4 medical devices parks are being set up in Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Chapchar Kut Festival Celebrated Across Mizoram

- ★ Mizoram's biggest festival Chapchar Kut celebrated.
- ★ On the occasion, thousands of people gathered at the Assam Rifles Ground-Lammual in Aizawl.
- ★ The festival showcased the traditional and cultural richness of the Mizo community through the performance of songs and cultural dances.
- ★ This festival is celebrated every year on the first Friday of the month of March.
- ★ At the beginning of the year, Chapchar Kut is celebrated to thank God after the completion of the most difficult task of jhum cultivation – clearing the forest.
- ★ Chief Minister Lalduhoma stated that the age-old tradition of rendering selfless service to others – “Mizo Tlawmngaihna” – is a cornerstone of Mizo society.
- ★ Chapchar Kut has been celebrated since ancient times and in the olden days, it was celebrated for days and weeks.

GI Tag Given To Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi and Banglar Muslin

- ★ Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi (Silver Filigree) and Banglar Muslin have been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai.
- ★ The renowned Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi (Silver Filigree) has long been linked to exquisite artistry and opulent styling in classical jewellery.
- ★ According to the historical records submitted with the GI filing, it is believed that Tarakasi work was introduced to Cuttack from Persia via Indonesia approximately 500 years ago through maritime trade.
- ★ Banglar muslin is a traditional handloom craft from Bengal that is very popular.
- ★ This exquisite muslin is made from cotton, and the threads used to weave it maintain high tensile strength at counts above 300 counts and up to 600 counts.
- ★ This makes it stronger than any other cotton product available.
- ★ A geographical indication (GI) is a label used on products that come from a specific geographic region and possess qualities or reputation due to that region.

Prime Minister Modi Unveils Many Development Initiatives in Telangana

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation multiple development projects worth over 7,200 crore rupees in Telangana from Sangareddy.
- ★ These projects encompass sectors like road, rail, petroleum, aviation and natural gas.
- ★ The Prime Minister inaugurated the Indian Oil Paradip-Hyderabad Product Pipeline which will carry petroleum products in a cheaper and environmentally sustainable way.
- ★ Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, and Union Minister, G. Kishan Reddy were present on the occasion among others.
- ★ Mr Modi recalled laying the foundation stones and dedicating multiple development projects to the nation worth about 56,000 crore rupees from Adilabad in energy, climate and infrastructure sectors.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Introduces Monthly ₹1,500 Aid for Women

- ★ Himachal Pradesh (HP) Chief Minister (CM) Sukhvinder Sukhu announced a monthly aid of ₹1,500 for women aged 18 to 60 from the next financial year, fulfilling a Congress party 'guarantee' promised before the state Assembly elections.
- ★ The initiative is called the "Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi Yojna", and the State Government plans to allocate ₹800 crore annually for this scheme.
- ★ The financial support aims to benefit over 5 lakh women in the specified age group.
- ★ With this announcement, five out of the 10 poll promises made by the Congress party have been fulfilled by the Himachal Pradesh Government.
- ★ The move is in line with the party's commitment to address key socio-economic issues.
- ★ CM Sukhvinder Sukhu highlighted the restoration of the old pension scheme, benefiting 1.36 lakh state employees.

Delhi Finance Minister Announces Monthly Assistance Scheme of ₹1000

- ★ Delhi Finance Minister Atishi announced the introduction of the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana', which will provide a monthly assistance of ₹1,000 to women above the age of 18 starting from the fiscal year 2024-25.
- ★ The budget for the financial year 2024-25 in the Delhi Assembly was presented by Atishi, with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore.
- ★ Over 50 lakh women are expected to benefit from this scheme, empowering them to meet their needs independently without relying on others.
- ★ The Government has allocated ₹2,000 crore for the implementation of this initiative.
- ★ To qualify for the scheme, a woman must be a registered voter in Delhi, not be receiving benefits from any other government scheme, and not be an income taxpayer.
- ★ According to the final electoral roll published in January, 2024 Delhi has 67,30,371 female voters, indicating the significant potential reach of the scheme.

Ashwini Vaishnav Launches NITI Aayog's 'NITI For States' Platform

- ★ Minister Ashwini Vaishnav launched 'Policy for States Platform' at Rang Bhawan Auditorium, New Delhi.
- ★ NITI Aayog's 'NITI for States' platform is a cross-sectoral knowledge platform. Ashwini Vaishnav is currently the Union Minister for Communications, Railways and Electronics and Information Technology.
- ★ It is designed to create digital public infrastructure (DPI) for policy and good governance.
- ★ Before the launch of this platform, Ashwini Vaishnav also launched the 'Viksit Bharat Strategy Room' in NITI Aayog.
- ★ This would enable rich visibility and engagement with insights, information and knowledge to enable personalized decision making.
- ★ The 'Policy for States Platform' will provide robust, adaptive and actionable knowledge to facilitate the digital transformation of governance for government officials.
- ★ It would benefit District Collectors by providing access to innovative best practices in different States and Union Territories.
- ★ It will also benefit advanced level functionaries like block-level functionaries.

NIGEL Signed Agreement with GUVNL

- ★ NLC India Limited (NLCIL) has established a new subsidiary named NLC India Green Energy Limited (NIGEL) with the sole purpose of carrying out future Renewable Energy Projects.
- ★ NIGEL has recently signed a Power Purchase Agreement with Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (GUVNL) for a 600 MW Solar Power Project.
- ★ This project is a significant step towards NLCIL's commitment to renewable energy and will help the company to leverage its expertise in the field.
- ★ NLCIL has won a tender to develop a 600 MW Solar Power Project in the GSECL Khavda Solar Park through a competitive bidding process.

- ★ In line with its policy of developing renewable energy projects through its wholly owned subsidiary (WoS), NIGEL has been entrusted with the project development.

Kerala Launches the Country's First Government-Owned OTT Platform

- ★ Kerala launched India's first government-owned OTT platform 'CSpace' on 7th March 2024.
- ★ Its objective is to provide meaningful information to the people and take advantage of the vast opportunities of the sector.
- ★ Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan launched the OTT platform at Kairali Theater. Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cheriaan is presiding over it.
- ★ CSpace has been fundamentally created to address the growing imbalance and diverse challenges in the OTT sector in terms of content selection and dissemination.
- ★ The Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC) oversees the management of CSpace. KSFDC is a state owned company.
- ★ It is entrusted with the task of promoting the Malayalam cinema industry on behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Government of Kerala.
- ★ Shaji N Karun serves as the current Film Director and Chairman of the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC).

India's First Underwater Metro in Kolkata, West Bengal

- ★ India's first underwater metro service was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ★ The Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section is the first metro tunnel in India to pass under a significant river.
- ★ This is situated beneath the Hooghly River, which divides Kolkata and Howrah.
- ★ It has the country's deepest metro station, the Howrah Metro station. In April 2023, a trial journey was completed, marking a significant milestone for the Kolkata Metro.
- ★ The tunnel is situated 13 meters below the riverbed and 33 meters below the surface level.
- ★ It comprises four stations - Esplanade, Mahakaran, Howrah, and Howrah Maidan - and can be traversed in just 45 seconds.
- ★ The Kolkata Metro Rail Corporation established the metro, which was constructed by Afcons Infrastructure.
- ★ The 4.8-km stretch of the East-West Metro from Howrah Maidan to Esplanade, which cost ₹4,965 crore, is a testament to engineering ingenuity and a historic advancement in India's metro infrastructure.

Government Approves Targeted Subsidy of ₹300 to PMUY Consumers

- ★ The Union Cabinet has extended the subsidy to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) till the financial year 2024-25.
- ★ Approval has been given to continue the targeted subsidy of ₹300 per 14.2 kg cylinder to be provided for up to 12 refills for a year.

- ★ There are more than 10.27 crore PMUY beneficiaries as of March 1, 2024.
- ★ PM Modi has announced a discount of ₹100 per cylinder in the country on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2024.
- ★ The total expenditure for the fiscal year 2024-25 will amount to ₹12,000 crore. The subsidy is deposited directly into the bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries.
- ★ The main objective of the Ujjwala scheme is to promote the use of clean fuel across India which can be accomplished by distributing free LPG connections.
- ★ One of the objectives of implementing the scheme is to promote women empowerment. Women's health can also be protected.

Prime Minister Modi Unveils Projects Worth ₹6,400 Crores in Srinagar

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled various developmental projects worth more than 6400 crore rupees at Bakshi stadium in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ During his day-long visit to the Kashmir valley, the Prime Minister participated in the 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Jammu Kashmir'
- ★ Earlier, the Prime Minister launched the ₹5,000 crore worth programme – the 'Holistic Agriculture Development Programme' - for boosting agri-economy in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ He also launched multiple projects related to the tourism sector worth more than ₹1,400 crore under Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) scheme, including the project for 'Integrated Development of Hazratbal Shrine', Srinagar.

Keyi Panyor Designated as Arunachal Pradesh's 26th District

- ★ Keyi Panyor became the 26th district of Arunachal Pradesh by carving out the areas from Lower Subansiri.
- ★ The new district, which was demanded by the people of the Nyishi community for a long time, will have its headquarters at Ter Gapin-Sam Sarth.
- ★ The programme was attended by Union Minister for Earth Sciences Kiren Rijiju, Deputy CM Chowna Mein, and MPs Tapir Gao and Nabam Rebia, among others.
- ★ On February 8, 2024 the state assembly passed the Arunachal Pradesh (Re-Organization of Districts) (Amendment) Bill, 2024, paving the way for the creation of two new districts – Keyi Panyor and Bichom.
- ★ The 27th district, Bichom, is scheduled to be inaugurated.
- ★ Bichom district with headquarters at Napangphung has been carved out from East Kameng and West Kameng districts.

Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman Campaign held in Bikaner

- ★ The Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman Campaign Event held in Bikaner, Rajasthan, on 9 March to commemorate India's 75th year as a Republic.

- ★ The event has the honor of hosting several eminent personalities and public figures to further emphasize the goals and objectives of the 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara campaign.
- ★ The event is being organized in Bikaner, Rajasthan, with the aim of setting an example for other states and union territories to follow.
- ★ The event provides an opportunity for citizens to become more involved in our democratic journey, and learn about their rights and responsibilities.
- ★ The Indian Government is launching a program called "Nyaya Sahayak" in 500 Aspirational blocks.
- ★ Nayaya Sahayaks will act as community-based messengers to spread the word and provide door-to-door information. These messengers help people register legal cases and access legal advice.

PM Modi to Launch 112 National Highway Projects

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gurugram in Haryana.
- ★ During his visit, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 112 National Highway projects for different States worth around one lakh crore rupees.
- ★ These Projects will significantly contribute towards the growth of the National Highway network and help in boosting the socio-economic growth across the country.
- ★ The Prime Minister will inaugurate the 19-kilometre-long Haryana section of the 8-lane Dwarka Expressway which has been built at a cost of around four thousand one hundred crore rupees.
- ★ It will provide direct connectivity to the IGI Airport in Delhi and Gurugram Bypass.

PM Launched Mahtari Vandan Yojana in Chhattisgarh

- ★ Promoting women empowerment in Chhattisgarh, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched Mahtari Vandana Yojana and distributed the first installment under the scheme.
- ★ The scheme is basically launched in Chhattisgarh with the aim to provide financial assistance to eligible married women of the state with ₹ 1000 per month as monthly DBT.
- ★ Economic empowerment of women would help them to assure financial security, promote gender equality and strengthen the decisive role of women in the family.
- ★ The scheme has the provision to provide benefits to all eligible married women of the state who are citizens of Chattisgarh along with those who are above 21 years of age as of January 1, 2024.
- ★ Widows, divorced, and deserted women can also be eligible for this scheme. Approximately 70 lakh women will be benefited from the scheme.
- ★ Under the Mahtari Vandan Yojana, more than 70 lakh DA sisters in Chhattisgarh were given a ransom of ₹ 1,000 every month.

Ashwini Vaishnaw Launches India's Fastest and Indigenously Designed Router

- ★ Union Minister for Communication, Electronics, IT and Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw launched India's fastest and indigenously developed Multiprotocol Label Switching router in Bengaluru.
- ★ This will bolster India's digital infrastructure and support the demand for high-speed data processing and transmission.

- ★ An indigenous router of 2.4 Terabits Per Second speed, has been developed in India.
- ★ The development of the indigenous and secured router is an important step in the Digital India initiative.
- ★ The Minister pointed out that India is now laying the foundation for hi-tech manufacturing with lots of innovation, hardware, and software with large design capabilities.
- ★ Nivetti Systems of Bengaluru developed the high-speed router in collaboration with the Department of Telecom and CDOT.

Bengaluru's First Driverless Metro Train

- ★ The Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) is embarking on a significant milestone with the introduction of driverless trains equipped with cutting-edge technology.
- ★ As the first of its kind in Bengaluru, these trains represent a leap forward in urban transportation infrastructure.
- ★ The driverless metro trains are equipped with CBTC technology, enabling seamless communication between trains and control systems.
- ★ The trains boast full automation, including tasks such as door operations and train movement, under Enhanced Supervision Capability from the Operations Control Centre (OCC).
- ★ In addition to automation, the trains feature advanced safety protocols to ensure passenger well-being and operational efficiency.
- ★ The train coaches are manufactured by CRRC Nanjing Puzhen Co Ltd, in collaboration with Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd., as part of the Make In India Initiative.
- ★ These trains mark the first integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technology for track monitoring and safety enhancement.

The First Government Homeopathic College in Northern India

- ★ Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, announced the establishment of North India's first Government Homeopathic College in the Jasrota area of Kathua district, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- ★ The project is centrally funded at ₹80 crore, signifying a significant investment in healthcare and education infrastructure development in the region.
- ★ The college will cover an area of over 8 acres, with provisions for further expansion.
- ★ It will include a hospital complex, a college, an administrative block, and separate hostels for male and female students.
- ★ The institution is being built in alignment with the Modi Government's healthcare approach, which aims to synergize allopathic with Ayush streams of medicine, including Homeopathy, Ayurveda, and naturopathy.
- ★ The college aims to provide cost-effective treatment options to patients and cater to the growing demand for Homeopathy in the region.

Kerala School Introduces Iris

- ★ A school in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala has unveiled a groundbreaking innovation in education with the introduction of India's first Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) teacher robot named 'Iris'.
- ★ Developed in collaboration with Makerlabs Edutech, Iris aims to transform traditional teaching methods through personalised learning experiences for students.
- ★ Iris has been deployed at KTCT Higher Secondary School, Thiruvananthapuram, marking a significant advancement in educational technology within the region.
- ★ Built under the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) project initiated by NITI Aayog, this AI teacher robot, Iris, boasts a range of features aimed at revolutionising traditional teaching methods.
- ★ The robot can teach subjects from nursery to Class 12.
- ★ The robot currently speaks three languages.
- ★ Iris is created by Maker Labs, further demonstrating India's capacity for innovation in the field of educational technology.

PM Modi Dedicates RVNL Marathwada Rail Coach Factory

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 12 March 2024 through a video conference in Ahmedabad, Gujarat dedicated to the nation the Marathwada Rail Coach Factory at Latur, Maharashtra which will manufacture Vande Bharat train set.
- ★ The Prime Minister also inaugurated various projects in Maharashtra.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi also inaugurated five Jan Aushadi Kendras (for affordable and quality generic medicines) at the Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (Mumbai), Manmad (Nashik), Pimpri, Solapur and Nagbhir (Chandrapur).
- ★ The PM also inaugurated a wagon repair workshop at Badnera and Vande Bharat chair car maintenance-cum-workshop depot in Pune.
- ★ The Marathwada Rail Coach Factory at Latur in Maharashtra is a project of the Government of India-owned public sector company Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL).
- ★ The Marathwada Rail Coach Factory specialises in building self-propelled rail coaches for the Indian Railways.
- ★ The RVNL has set up a joint venture with a Russian Transmashholding (TMH) company to produce, supply and maintain 120 Vande Bharat Express trains.
- ★ The 16-car Vande Bharat train will be produced at the Marathwada Rail Coach Factory in Latur.

PM Modi Launches First Auto In-Plant Railway Siding

- ★ Automobile Maruti Suzuki has launched India's first in-plant railway siding project at its Hansalpur plant in Gujarat.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated it on 12 March 2024 through video conferencing.
- ★ Suzuki Motor Gujarat Private Limited is a subsidiary of Maruti Suzuki India Limited. Maruti has invested a total of more than ₹300 crore on this.

- ★ This project has been developed at a cost of ₹976 crore.
- ★ It has been developed under the Centre's PM Gati Shakti Mission in partnership with the Government of Gujarat, Indian Railways and MSIL.
- ★ The objective of this scheme under 'Gati Shakti' programme is to reduce carbon emissions.
- ★ The sliding railway has the capacity to handle 3,00,000 cars per year. It currently has a parking capacity of 800 cars which can be expanded to 3,000 cars.

Kerala Leads Nation in Highest Passport Penetration among Women

- ★ Kerala has the highest number of total passport holders in the country, reaching 98.92 lakh, which includes both males and females.
- ★ Women from the southern State hold the highest number of passports issued in the country till 2023, followed by Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Gujarat.
- ★ Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of male passport holders, with a count of 70.58 lakh.
- ★ The rise in female passport holders reflects a growing trend of Kerala's youth, particularly female students, pursuing higher education abroad.
- ★ This aligns with the findings of a 2023 survey on "Youth Student Migration from Kerala", which revealed an increasing number of women from Kerala opting for overseas education opportunities.

Maharashtra Introduces 4th Women's Policy for Comprehensive Development

- ★ The state of Maharashtra has introduced its 4th women's policy, aimed at fostering the holistic development of women.
- ★ The newly announced fourth policy aims to promote gender equality and establish a society where women and other gender communities do not face struggles for their identity and rights.
- ★ Maharashtra has become the first state in India to introduce a women's policy, showcasing its commitment to women's development and empowerment.
- ★ The new policy encompasses various facets of women's empowerment, including health, nutrition, education, skills development, women's safety, prevention of violence against women, gender equality, and economic and social empowerment.
- ★ Maharashtra takes the lead as the first state in India to introduce a comprehensive women's policy, demonstrating its commitment to advancing women's rights and well-being.

PM Launched PM-SURAJ Portal

- ★ The Prime Minister launched the PM-SURAJ portal 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' national portal and also sanctioned credit support to one lakh entrepreneurs of disadvantaged sections.
- ★ PM-SURAJ is a nationwide initiative aimed at uplifting and empowering the most marginalised or backward segments of society.
- ★ The initiative is a transformative step towards prioritising the underprivileged, reflecting Prime Minister Modi's commitment.

- ★ Through the PM-SURAJ national portal, credit support will be provided to eligible individuals across the country.
- ★ This support will be facilitated through banks, NBFC-MFIs and other organisations.
- ★ Under the National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) the Prime Minister also distributed Ayushman health cards and PPE kits to sewer and septic tank workers.
- ★ This initiative shows another step towards safeguarding and assuring the health and safety of frontline workers who work in challenging conditions.
- ★ It should be noted that the programme had the participation of about 300,000 beneficiaries from disadvantaged groups in over 500 districts across the country, who were part of various government schemes.

SC Ordered Election Commission to Publish Data on Electoral Bond

- ★ The Election Commission of India on its official website on March 14 published the electoral bonds data as ordered by the Supreme Court.
- ★ In the data on electoral bonds, the only information available about donors is the name of their company or individual.
- ★ In the data released, 1,260 companies and individuals purchased electoral bonds worth ₹12,769 crore. The top 20 companies accounted for nearly half of the total amount donated.
- ★ Ms SN Mohanty is the top individual donor with a total donation of ₹45 crore. Lakshmi Niwas Mittal follows with a donation of ₹35 crore.
- ★ The Electoral Bonds Scheme was made in 2017 and implemented in 2018. It allows individuals and groups to give money to registered political parties without disclosing their identities.
- ★ The Electoral Bonds are Promissory Notes that don't have the names of the buyer or payee. They come in five denominations: ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1,00,000, ₹10,00,000, and ₹1,00,00,000.0
- ★ The Electoral Bond is valid for 15 days from the date of issuance. If it's deposited at the bank after the validity period, no payment will be made to any payee Political Party.

First State to Buy Land in Kashmir for Tourism

- ★ Maharashtra has decided to purchase 2.5 acres of land in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ Maharashtra is the first state to purchase land in Jammu and Kashmir. The Shinde Government of Maharashtra will build a guest house – Rajya Bhawan on this land for its tourists visiting Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ The State Building will be constructed at a cost of ₹8.16 crore.
- ★ Maharashtra Bhawan will provide accommodation and other facilities to tourists and officials of the state visiting Jammu and Kashmir.
- ★ Jammu and Kashmir Government has given approval to Maharashtra Government to take land in exchange of ₹8.16 crore. This will mark the first state building in the valley.

GI Tag to Traditional Majuli Masks in Assam

- ★ The traditional Majuli masks in Assam were given a Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Centre.
- ★ Majuli manuscript painting also got the GI label.
- ★ Majuli, the largest river island in the world and the seat of Assam's neo-Vaishnavite tradition, has been home to the art of mask-making since the 16th century.
- ★ The handmade masks are traditionally used to depict characters in bhaonas, or theatrical performances with devotional messages under the neo-Vaishnavite tradition, introduced by the 15th-16th century reformer saint Srimanta Sankardeva.
- ★ The masks can depict gods, goddesses, demons, animals and birds — Ravana, Garuda, Narasimha, Hanuman, Varaha Surpanakha all feature among the masks.
- ★ The masks are made of bamboo, clay, dung, cloth, cotton, wood and other materials available in the riverine surroundings of their makers.

Tamil Nadu to Join PM SHRI Scheme of the Central Government

- ★ The Tamil Nadu Government has decided to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Education to implement the PM SHRI Schools (PM Schools for Rising India) scheme in the state.
- ★ The MoU will be signed by the State Government before the commencement of the 2024-25 academic seasons.
- ★ The Government of India launched the PM SHRI Schools (PM Schools for Rising India) after the Union Cabinet approved it on 7 September 2022.
- ★ Under the scheme, over 14,500 existing schools will be selected as PM SHRI Schools (PM Schools for Rising India). The Central Government, State Government, union territories, and local bodies are eligible for the PM Shri Schools scheme.
- ★ The scheme's total budget is ₹27360 crore. The Central Government's share is ₹18128 crore.
- ★ These schools will showcase all the aspects of the National Education Policy 2020 and emerge as exemplar schools over a period of time.

Ahmednagar Officially Renamed as 'Ahilyanagar' in Maharashtra

- ★ The Maharashtra Cabinet formally approved the renaming of Ahmednagar district to 'Ahilyanagar' after the 18th century Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar.
- ★ The decision to rename the district had already been announced by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in May last year on the 298th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar, who had established Maheshwar (in Madhya Pradesh) as the seat of the Holkar dynasty.
- ★ The renaming of Ahmednagar follows the Mahayuti Government's decision to rename Aurangabad district as 'Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar' and Osmanabad as 'Dharashiv'.
- ★ The demand for renaming Ahmednagar was started by BJP leader and MLC Gopichand Padalkar, an influential leader of the Dhangar (shepherd) community.
- ★ Meanwhile, the State Cabinet has also decided to rename 8 railway stations in Mumbai.

India's First Oil Palm Processing Unit

- ★ India's first integrated oil palm processing unit in Arunachal Pradesh started operation by one of India's largest oil palm development companies, 3F Oil Palm.
- ★ A new factory has been established in the Lower Dibang Valley district of India's northeast state.
- ★ This factory is part of Mission Palm Oil and is India's first oil palm factory under NMEO-OP.
- ★ The Government's focus on Mission Palm Oil, with a special focus on the Northeast, aims to achieve self-reliance in edible oils and empower farmers to boost their income. The demand for edible oils is increasing and palm oil has become essential in ensuring the nation's food security.
- ★ The commencement of operations of the country's first oil palm processing unit aligns with encouraging domestic oil seed production.
- ★ The Northeast region has enormous potential for palm oil production, and the Government plans to invest 1100 crores in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh by 2030, creating jobs for 1,700 people.
- ★ The Indian Government launched the National Mission for Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) in August 2021.

Global Spirituality Conference

- ★ The one-of-a-kind Global Spirituality Conference ever organised in India came to an end on 17 March 2024 in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- ★ The four-day conference, held from 14-17 March 2024, brought together spiritual leaders from all faiths at the world's largest meditation centre, Kanha Shanti Vanam, Hyderabad.
- ★ The Union Ministry of Culture, in association with the Heartfulness Institute, organised the Global Spirituality Conference with the help of other organisations like The Art of Living Foundation, Ramakrishna Mission, The Mata Amritanandamayi Math, Parmarth Niketan, Archbishop of Hyderabad and others.
- ★ The Theme of the Global Spirituality Conference was 'Inner Peace to World Peace'.
- ★ The theme highlights the conference's aim is to explore the evolution of consciousness and its impact on social harmony and sustainable development while creating a new trajectory for our global existence.

World Telecom Standardization Assembly Delhi 2024 (WTSA 2024)

- ★ India will be hosting the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA 2024) from 15-24 October 2024, preceded by the Global Standards Symposium (GSS 2024) on 14 October 2024.
- ★ The eighth edition of the IMC, co-hosted by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and COAI, will be held from October 15 to 24.
- ★ It will be held concurrently with the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA 2024), preceded by the Global Standards Symposium (GSS 2024) on October 14, 2024, in New Delhi.
- ★ The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a specialised United Nations agency for information and communication technologies of which India is a part, conducts the WTSA every four years to plan its standardization programme.

- ★ Ashwini Vaishnaw also released new guidelines for Spectrum Regulatory Sandbox and Wireless Test Zones
- ★ Introduced by the DoT, the guidelines will enable the development of technology for using and improving the efficiency of greenfield spectrum bands.

Rajasthan Government Initiates Free Seed Kits Program

- ★ The Rajasthan Government has taken the initiative to distribute free seeds of millets and coarse grains to farmers to enhance millet production in the state.
- ★ The Government plans to provide free mini kits of various seeds to farmers, including maize, pearl millet (bajra), mustard, moong, sorghum (jowar), and moth seeds.
- ★ The distribution of free seed kits is set to begin in the next financial year.
- ★ The distribution is aimed at benefiting approximately 1.2 million farmers with maize seeds, 800,000 farmers with pearl millet (bajra) seeds, 700,000 farmers with mustard seeds, 400,000 farmers with moong seeds, and 100,000 farmers with sorghum (jowar) and moth seeds.
- ★ Rajasthan holds a significant share, accounting for 26% of the total millet production in the country.
- ★ The Government initiated the Rajasthan Millet Promotion Mission in the fiscal year 2022-23.
- ★ A provision of ₹40 crore was made to establish 100 primary processing units by farmers, entrepreneurs, and voluntary organizations.
- ★ The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi has been increased from ₹6,000 to ₹8,000 per year per farmer.

IT Ministry, NIXI Launch BhashaNet Portal on Universal Acceptance Day

- ★ National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology unveiled the BhashaNet portal on 21 March 2024.
- ★ 'BhashaNet Portal' was unveiled in Delhi for the upcoming Universal Acceptance Day (UA Day). It was organized at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi.
- ★ The theme of the event organized in Delhi is, "BhashaNet: Impetus Towards Universal Acceptance".
- ★ This theme highlights NIXI's dedication to ensuring that individuals, regardless of language or script, can fully participate in the digital world.
- ★ This is the second event organized between NIXI and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

UP Police Launches Digital Platform 'Trinetra' App 2.0

- ★ Uttar Pradesh Police has launched the state-of-the-art digital platform Trinetra App 2.0 to help in the investigation and crackdown on criminals.
- ★ Trinetra App 2.0 has been designed to help in crime prevention and investigation in the state.
- ★ Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions company Staqu Technologies has launched AI powered Crime GPT Trinetra 2.0. This tool works in collaboration with the UP Government and the Special Task Force.

- ★ The purpose of this Crime GPT launch is to strengthen security. This will help the UP Police to crackdown on criminals.
- ★ Crime GPT Trinetra 2.0 uses both written and audio input to extract criminal databases. Then it prepares results based on that. If information is to be obtained about a criminal's crime committed in the last two years, a written or audio message query is entered.
- ★ By connecting to the database, the programme gets the required programmes quickly. This includes things like criminal gang analysis, voice recognition, facial recognition and many more.

NCC and NPCIL Signed MoU for Peaceful Nuclear Power Awareness Programs

- ★ National Cadet Corps (NCC) and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) signed MoU to enhance peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- ★ NCC and NPCIL together will organize various awareness programs across the country.
- ★ NPCIL will educate NCC cadets in this initiative.
- ★ Thereafter will provide resource persons for regional engagement with NCC during camps and various activities.
- ★ This MoU will provide an opportunity to the cadets to visit various NPCIL facilities across the country.
- ★ This will provide first-hand experience on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, its technical and technological aspects.

Madrasa Education Act 2004 Unconstitutional by Allahabad High Court

- ★ The Allahabad High Court's Lucknow bench has declared the UP Board of Madarsa Education Act of 2004 as unconstitutional.
- ★ A court in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh has directed the State Government to provide regular school education to students enrolled in madarasas.
- ★ The court wants these students to be accommodated in primary, high school, and intermediate education boards of the state.
- ★ The ruling came in response to a plea filed by a lawyer who had challenged the constitutionality of a law passed by the State Government.
- ★ The law allowed madrasas to provide education in Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Islamic studies, Tibb Logic, philosophy and other branches of learning without recognition by the state's education boards.
- ★ The court found the law to be unconstitutional as it violated the principle of secularism, which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, as well as articles 14, 15, and 21-A.

Election Commission Launches Saksham App

- ★ The Election Commission has launched the Saksham App to facilitate easier voting for Persons with Disabilities and to avail facilities at Polling Stations.
- ★ The Election Commission has always focused on Accessible Voting every time as it has the motto of no voter is left behind.

- ★ The Election Commission has announced that voters above 85 years of age and Persons with Disabilities with 40 percent benchmark disability can vote from home.
- ★ Volunteers and wheelchairs will be available at every polling station.
- ★ The poll body also arranges transport facilities for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly.

IGNCA Released Two Literary Works

- ★ Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, IGNCA released two literary works aimed at deepening the understanding of India-Japan cultural connections.
- ★ The books namely Siddham Calligraphy of Sanskrit Hieronyms and Sanskrit Manuscripts from Japan, Volume I were released by Member Secretary of IGNCA Sachchidanand Joshi, Advisor (Japan) in Ministry of External Affairs Ashok Chawla and First Secretary at Japanese Embassy Takashi Kobayashi among others in New Delhi.
- ★ Member Secretary of IGNCA said these two books will go a long way to the exploration of India-Japan's deep-rooted cultural relations.
- ★ Kobayashi said these books will certainly redefine the relations between both the countries as they are well-connected through Buddhism.

DGCA Imposes ₹80 Lakh Penalty on Air India for Violating FDTL Rules

- ★ The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has imposed a financial penalty of 80 lakh rupees on Air India Limited for violation of regulations about Flight Duty Time Limitations, FDTL and Fatigue Management System, FMS of the flight crew.
- ★ DGCA conducted a spot audit of Air India Limited in January 2024 to verify the regulatory compliance by the operator in respect for FDTL and FMS regulations.
- ★ During the audit, the evidences were collected and fleet-wise random reports were analyzed.
- ★ The analysis of reports and evidences revealed that Air India Limited operated flights with both flight crew aged above 60 years flying together in a few instances, which is a violation of Aircraft Rules.
- ★ The operator was also found deficient in providing adequate weekly rest, adequate rest before and after ultra-long range, ULR flights and adequate rest on layover to flight crew, which violates the extant provisions of the Civil Aviation Requirements pertaining to FDTL.
- ★ A show cause notice was issued to Air India Limited on 1st March for submitting a response to the observed violations.
- ★ The operator submitted its response to the show cause notice which was not found satisfactory.

Prime Minister has inaugurated Start-up Mahakumbh at Bharat Mandapam

- ★ The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Start-up Mahakumbh at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- ★ He also took a walkthrough of the exhibition showcased on the occasion.
- ★ Prime Minister highlighted the importance of Start-up Mahakumbh and emphasized the country's roadmap of working to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

- ★ India is the third largest startup ecosystem with 1.25 lakh startups involving 12 lakh youth who are directly linked with them.
- ★ This startup event aims at connecting startups with a spectrum of inventors including venture capitalists, investors and potential corporate partners.
- ★ DPIIT Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, there are over one lakh Startups in the country as of now, which were only 300 when the Startup India initiative was launched in 2016.
- ★ Over 50 per cent of Startups are from tier-2 and tier-3 cities.
- ★ DPIIT has recently launched Bharat Startup Ecosystem Registry collaborating data from all the stakeholders to create synergy between Startups in terms of productive economic activities.

Government Notifies Bonus for PLI and RPLI Schemes for FY25

- ★ The Centre has approved a simple reversionary bonus for the Postal Life Insurance Scheme and Rural Postal Life Insurance Scheme for fiscal year 2024-25.
- ★ There is no change in the rate.
- ★ According to a notification, under the Postal Life Insurance Scheme, rate of bonus will be ₹76 per thousand of sum assured for whole life assurance (WLA).
- ★ Similarly, for endowment assurance (EA) (including joint life and children policies), it will be ₹52 per thousand of sum assured.
- ★ Anticipated endowment assurance (AEA) will fetch ₹48 per thousand of sum assured.
- ★ In the case of convertible whole life assurance (CWLA), whole life bonus rate would be applicable, but on conversion, endowment assurance bonus rate will be applicable.
- ★ Rate of terminal bonus will be ₹20 per sum assured of ₹10,000, subject to maximum of ₹1,000 for WLA and EA policies with term of 20 years or more.
- ★ Postal Life Insurance (PLI), the oldest in the country, was introduced on February 1, 1884 as a welfare scheme for the benefit of postal employees and later extended to the employees of Telegraph Department in 1888.
- ★ Rural Postal Life Insurance (RPLI) was introduced on March 24, 1995 for rural people on recommendations of the Official Committee for Reforms in the Insurance Sector headed by ex-RBI Governor RN Malhotra.
- ★ The prime objective of the scheme is to provide insurance coverage to the rural public in general and to benefit weaker sections and women workers of rural areas in particular and also to spread insurance awareness among the rural population.

India to use Atomic Clock

- ★ The Government of India is deploying several atomic clocks across the country to ensure that all devices, such as smartphones, digital watches, laptops, etc., are truly based on the Indian standard time.
- ★ At present, most software operating modules, such as Windows and Android, rely on US-based Network Time Protocol servers.

- ★ The Government wants all the software operating modules used in India to be synchronised with the Indian atomic clocks.
- ★ Only four countries namely the United States of America, The United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea have developed their atomic clocks.
- ★ The atomic clock was invented in 1955 by Louise Essen, a physicist at the United Kingdom Physical National Laboratory.
- ★ Atomic clocks are considered more stable than quartz crystal clocks. The most advanced atomic clock loses one second every 300 billion years.
- ★ There are two types of atomic clocks: caesium and hydrogen maser atomic clocks.
- ★ The Council of Industrial and Scientific Research (CSIR)-National Physical Laboratories (NPL) New Delhi is the country's official timekeeper and maintains the Indian Standard Time. It maintains five caesium atomic clocks and two Hydrogen maser clocks.

Tata Signs Agreement with HPCL for Charging Station

- ★ TPEM and HPCL have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up electric vehicle (EV) charging stations across the country.
- ★ This agreement has been signed with Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Limited (TPEM) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) on 27 March 2024.
- ★ It will help in setting up EV charging stations at their petrol pumps across the country.
- ★ In the first phase, the target is to install 5,000 chargers at HPCL pumps by December 2024.
- ★ There are around 21,500 HPCL petrol pumps in India.
- ★ This public sector undertaking (PSU) will collect information on charger usage to improve customer experience.
- ★ TPEM will help select charger locations based on driving insights from over 1.2 lakh Tata EVs on the roads.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India and Mauritius Inaugurated Developmental Projects

- ★ The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Prime Minister of Mauritius, H.E. Mr Pravind Jugnauth, jointly inaugurated a new Airstrip and St. James Jetty, along with six community development projects, on Agalega Island in Mauritius.
- ★ The inauguration of these projects is a testament to the strong and long-standing development partnership between India and Mauritius.
- ★ It is expected to improve connectivity between mainland Mauritius and Agalega, strengthen maritime security, and promote socio-economic development.
- ★ The inauguration of the projects is a significant event as it follows the recent launch of UPI and RuPay Card services in Mauritius by the two leaders on February 12, 2024.

- ★ Mauritius has become the first nation to adopt the 'Jan Aushadhi Scheme' which allows the sourcing of around 250 high-quality medicines from the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India, providing benefits to the people of Mauritius at large.
- ★ This has given further momentum to the partnership between the two countries.
- ★ Mauritius is an important partner of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy'. It is also a special partner under Vision SAGAR.
- ★ Both nations share common priorities as members of the Global South.
- ★ The relationship between the two countries has seen unprecedented momentum in the last ten years, with new heights of mutual co-operation being achieved.
- ★ India has extended a credit line of 1,000 million US dollars along with 400 million US dollars worth of assistance to the people of Mauritius.
- ★ India has been fortunate to contribute to the development of metro rail lines, community development projects, social housing, ENT Hospital, Civil Service College, and sports complex infrastructures in Mauritius.

FATF Delists UAE, Uganda, Barbados, and Gibraltar from Watchlist

- ★ Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) in its plenary meeting in February, 2024 removed the United Arab Emirates (UAE) successfully from the watchdog's grey list.
- ★ Barbados, Gibraltar and Uganda will also be removed from the FATF's grey list.
- ★ Kenya and Namibia have been added to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) greylist.
- ★ The two African states are now under increased monitoring by the organisation for their inadequate measures against money laundering and terrorism financing.
- ★ The UAE has been diligently working over the past two years to strengthen its Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) framework to address deficiencies identified by FATF and implement recommended measures.
- ★ The removal of the UAE from the grey list could enhance confidence in the country and attract more foreign investment.
- ★ It may also lead to increased trade between India and the UAE.
- ★ The UAE came under closer scrutiny in 2022 due to concerns raised by FATF regarding money laundering and terrorist financing risks involving banks, precious metals, stones, and property.

France is the First Country to Give Constitutional Right to an Abortion

- ★ France made history by becoming the first country to guarantee a woman's right to an abortion in its constitution.
- ★ The amendment was passed by lawmakers from both houses of parliament in an overwhelming 780-72 vote, and was met with a standing ovation.
- ★ The amendment to Article 34 of the constitution ensures that women in France have the freedom to choose to have an abortion.

Sweden Joins NATO as 32nd Member

- ★ Sweden has become the 32nd member of NATO after completing the official process in Washington on the night of 7 March 2024.
- ★ By joining NATO, Sweden is now able to get security under the 5th Article of NATO.
- ★ Sweden now enjoys protection under Article 5 of NATO which is the ultimate guarantee of the freedom and security of NATO allies.
- ★ Article 5 of NATO is considered the most important. Under this article, an attack on any NATO country is seen as an attack on the other member countries.
- ★ The Swedish flag is expected to be raised over the Brussels headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance on March 11.

India, And Indonesia's Central Banks Signed Agreement

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank Indonesia (BI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies – the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) for cross-border transactions.
- ★ The MoU on establishing a framework for co-operation in the area of cross-border transactions in local currencies between India and Indonesia aims to promote the use of INR and IDR bilaterally.
- ★ The MoU covers all current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries.
- ★ This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-IDR foreign exchange market.
- ★ The use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions.

India-EFTA Signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement

- ★ On March 10th, 2024, India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA).
- ★ EFTA was established in 1960, is an Intergovernmental Organization. Its purpose is to promote free trade and economic integration to benefit its four member states.
- ★ India has been working on a TEPA with the EFTA countries, which include Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein.
- ★ The Trade Agreement between India and four developed nations, known as TEPA, is a significant step forward for the country's economic growth.
- ★ This ambitious agreement marks the first time India has signed an FTA with such a prominent economic bloc in Europe.
- ★ The agreement is expected to provide a much-needed boost to the Make in India initiative and enable the talented young workforce to explore new opportunities.
- ★ The EFTA has made a commitment to promote investments in India.

- ★ The aim is to increase the stock of foreign direct investments by USD 100 billion in the next 15 years. The investments will create one million direct jobs in India.

Panama Becomes 97th Member to ratify the International Solar Alliance

- ★ Panama has officially ratified the International Solar Alliance (ISA), marking its entry as the 97th member nation.
- ★ Panama's commitment to sustainable energy was underscored as Ambassador Yasiel Burillo presented the Instrument of Ratification to Joint Secretary (Economic Diplomacy) Abhishekifs during a meeting in New Delhi.
- ★ This formal act solidifies Panama's pledge to collaborate within the framework of the ISA, joining other nations in the pursuit of harnessing solar energy for a greener future.
- ★ Joint Secretary (ED & MER), MEA Abhishek Singh expressed gratitude for Panama's commitment, highlighting the importance of international collaboration in advancing renewable energy solutions.

World's First 3D Printed Mosque

- ★ Saudi Woman constructed World's first 3D Printed Mosque.
- ★ The 60,000 square feet mosque was built in a very different manner compared to conventional construction, with a lot of focus on the building design.
- ★ The mosque's construction helped establish Saudi Arabia as a hub for a sustainable and tech-driven future, as 3D printing technology is more efficient and reduces wastage.
- ★ This technology is also being used to replace conventional construction approaches, as shown in the US, where an entire neighborhood is now being built with 3D printing.
- ★ The use of 3D printing in construction offers numerous benefits, including faster project completion times.
- ★ By utilizing resources with precision, 3D printers reduce waste and contribute to a more sustainable industry.
- ★ Additionally, 3D printing technology can reduce health and safety hazards, minimizing the risk of injuries and fatalities. When building concrete structures, 3D printing provides a higher level of accuracy compared to traditional methods.
- ★ This technology also offers architects and designers a higher level of design freedom, making intricate designs more cost-effective and less labor-intensive.

Cabinet Approved IGFA between India and United Arab Emirates

- ★ The Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its Ex-post facto approval to the Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement (IGFA) signed on 13th February 2024.
- ★ The agreement was signed during the High-Level visit between the Indian Government and the Government of the United Arab Emirates.
- ★ The agreement aims to strengthen bilateral relations and enhance co-operation between the two countries in the Ports, Maritime, and Logistics sectors.

- ★ The IGFA outlines areas of co-operation between the two countries, with the objective of exploring joint investment opportunities and collaborations for the development of the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).
- ★ The Agreement provides a detailed framework for co-operation between the two countries, based on mutually agreed principles, guidelines, and agreements that align with the relevant rules and regulations of the countries' jurisdiction.

Pokhara Declared as Nepal's New Tourism Capital

- ★ On March 17, during a ceremony at Barahi Ghat, the Government of Nepal officially declared Pokhara as the country's tourism capital.
- ★ The event was presided over by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and was marked by musical performances by celebrated artists, symbolising the region's cultural richness.
- ★ The city is renowned for its natural beauty and serene ambience, as it is situated on the shores of Phewa Lake with the majestic Annapurna mountain range serving as a stunning backdrop.
- ★ Pokhara is also a gateway to popular trekking routes like the Annapurna Circuit and the Jomsom Trek, while cultural attractions such as the Bindhyabasini Temple and the World Peace Pagoda offer a glimpse into the region's rich heritage.
- ★ Pokhara was elevated to tourism capital of Nepal after meeting rigorous criteria set by the authorities.

WWF's Earth Hour Will be Observed on 23 March

- ★ Earth Hour is an annual global event observed on the last Saturday of March to raise awareness about climate change and promote energy conservation. This year, it is scheduled to be observed on March 23 from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm (IST).
- ★ The event, initiated and organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), urges people worldwide to turn off lights and electrical appliances for an hour.
- ★ For its 18th edition, people from 190 countries and territories are expected to participate by switching off non-essential lights.
- ★ WWF-India also organized 13 cyclothons nationwide, which attracted over 2,000 participants.
- ★ In 2007, Earth Hour emerged as a grassroots movement in Sydney, Australia, initiated by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Australia and its partners.
- ★ The concept was to encourage individuals to switch off lights for an hour to show support for climate action.
- ★ Earth Hour is more than just an hour of saving electricity; it's a powerful message to the world. By participating, individuals demonstrate their concern for the environment and their willingness to take action.
- ★ This event provides an opportunity to show solidarity with others who share a commitment to sustainability and protecting the planet for future generations.

3rd Summit for Democracy Being Hosted by South Korea

- ★ South Korea hosted the 3rd Summit for Democracy in Seoul from 18-20 March 2024 in a hybrid format.
- ★ The Summit for Democracy was started by American President Joe Biden in 2021 to address the emerging challenges to democracy from authoritarianism and defend and promote human rights.
- ★ The Summit was opened by South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was joined by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
- ★ The 3rd summit mainly focussed on threats to democracy from digital sources, including misinformation, deep fakes, and artificial intelligence.
- ★ The theme of the third Summit for Democracy 2024 was "Democracy for Future Generations".

ITU Names India Co-Chair of Digital Innovation Board

- ★ The meeting of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) was held in Geneva.
- ★ India was represented by Dr. Neeraj Mittal, Secretary of the Indian Department of Telecommunications.
- ★ It was organized from March 18-20, 2024. In this meeting, ITU has elected India co-Chairman of the Digital Innovation Board.
- ★ India has the opportunity to lead the Digital Innovation Board under the co-Chairmanship of Dr. Neeraj Mittal.
- ★ Dr. Mittal invited the Japanese Government to participate in the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly (WTSA) 2024 and India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024.

Amul Launches its First International Business in the US

- ★ Iconic Indian brand Amul will start its first international operation in the United States of America by manufacturing its product there.
- ★ The Amul brand is owned by Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF). The tagline of Amul is "The Taste of India".
- ★ According to Jayen Mehta, Managing Director Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), Amul will launch its fresh milk product in the United States of America in partnership with the Michigan Milk Producers Association.
- ★ Amul is owned by Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF). It is India's largest food product marketing organisation based in Gujarat. It is the apex marketing body of Dairy co-operatives of Gujarat.
- ★ In 1965 the Government of India set up the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) with the basic objective of replicating the successful Amul co-operative model.
- ★ Dr. Verghese Kurien was made the Chairman of the NDDB with the mandate to replicate the successful Amul model across the country.

New Delhi Hosts 4th Shanghai Co-operation Organisation Startup Forum

- ★ The 4th edition of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Startup Forum was organized in New Delhi.
- ★ The initiative focused on broadening startup interactions among the SCO Member States, fostering an environment conducive to innovation, promoting job creation, and inspiring young talent to develop innovative solutions.
- ★ The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation Startup Forum is a platform for the stakeholders from the startup ecosystems from all SCO Member States to interact and collaborate.
- ★ It aims to create multilateral co-operation and engagement for startups among the SCO Member States.
- ★ It will empower the local startup ecosystems in the Member States.
- ★ Going forward, India will host the second meeting of the SWG in November 2024 and SCO Startup Forum 5.0 in January 2025.
- ★ The first Meeting of the SCO Special Working Group on Startups and Innovation (SWG), permanently chaired by India, was organised on the theme 'Growing from Roots' in 2023.
- ★ 25 representatives from the 9 SCO Member States participated in the meeting and presented their respective startup ecosystems and prospective areas of collaboration related to the agriculture and animal husbandry sectors covered in the theme.

Saudi Arabia will participate in Miss Universe Pageant for First Time

- ★ Saudi Arabia has decided to participate in the Miss Universe pageant for the first time on 26 March 2024 as a historic event.
- ★ The move is an important move by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud to shed the image of Saudi Arabia as a conservative country.
- ★ This year the Miss Universe pageant will be organized in Mexico.
- ★ 27-year-old model Rumi Alqahtani announced that she will be the first participant from the country in the international competition. She will represent Saudi Arabia at the Miss Universe pageant.

Emergency Declared in Maryland after Francis Scott Bridge Collapse

- ★ Following the collapse of the 'Francis Scott' Bridge in Baltimore, Maryland (USA), Maryland Governor Wes Moore declared a state of emergency. The 'Francis Scott' Bridge was constructed in 1977.
- ★ The 'Francis Scott' Bridge in Baltimore collapsed late at night on March 25 after colliding with a large ship tie.
- ★ The ship that collided with the Francis Scott Bridge in Baltimore was a container ship, the DALI. The container ship Dali is approximately 300 meters (984 ft) long. Its width is approximately 48 meters (157 ft).
- ★ Traffic has been disrupted due to the collapse of this bridge. The bridge was a vital link to the Baltimore Beltway. This bridge was of 4 lanes.

BANKING, FINANCE & ECONOMICS

RBI Promotes Financial Literacy for Securing Individuals' Financial Future

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been propagating financial literacy in various forms, recognizing its crucial role in securing individuals' financial future.
- ★ By promoting financial literacy, RBI aims to empower people with knowledge of basic financial concepts and enable them to make well-informed decisions, understand the importance of saving and investing, and navigate the digital financial landscape with confidence.
- ★ The competition is open to all postgraduate students (excluding doctoral and postdoctoral students) currently enrolled in recognized educational institutions.
- ★ RBI has established two museums aimed at educating the public about money, banking, and monetary history, thereby increasing awareness.
- ★ The RBI's Public Awareness Campaign 'RBI Kehta Hai' plays a significant role in educating the public about banking facilities and services. It focuses on informing individuals about their rights and responsibilities among other relevant topics.

NABARD Proposes Setting up Meat and Egg Processing Units in Gujarat

- ★ In the State Focus Paper for the financial year 2024-25, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has recommended establishing meat and egg processing units in Gujarat to produce value-added products like chicken samosa, patties, and momos.
- ★ The focus paper was formally unveiled at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- ★ The paper indicates that Gujarat's total meat production has remained stagnant at 0.35 lakh kilograms for the last two years (2021-22 and 2022-23). Egg production in Gujarat witnessed a marginal decline of 3.6% in 2022-23.
- ★ The state produced 18,789 lakh eggs during this period.
- ★ Gujarat has 12.84 lakh desi fowl from backyard poultry and 55.67 lakh improved fowl from commercial poultry farms.
- ★ The State Focus Paper projects an 18% growth in the credit potential for the priority sector in Gujarat for the year 2024-25.

Amazon Pay to Operate as Payment Aggregator

- ★ Amazon Pay, the financial technology division of e-commerce giant Amazon, has secured the esteemed payment aggregator (PA) license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), marking a significant milestone in its operations.
- ★ The regulatory approval permits the payments platform to function as a payment aggregator, empowering it to facilitate e-commerce transactions through its application.
- ★ The fintech firm joins a list of companies that the central bank has granted authorisation to operate as payment aggregators (PA) in 2023.

- ★ In addition to the PA license, Amazon Pay already holds a Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI) license, enabling it to operate its wallet services, including Amazon Pay balance: Money, as outlined in RBI documentation.
- ★ PAs act as intermediaries between the merchant and the customer in payment transactions.
- ★ They play a crucial role in streamlining the payment process for merchants, eliminating the need for them to create separate payment integration systems.

IndusInd Bank Collaborates with Uttar Pradesh Government

- ★ IndusInd Bank and Bharat Financial Inclusion Limited (100% subsidiary of IndusInd Bank) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Government of Uttar Pradesh.
- ★ The aim is to focus on livestock healthcare management and welfare in the Western Uttar Pradesh region through their social initiative, Bharat Sanjeevani Program.
- ★ Through this association, IndusInd Bank and Bharat Financial Inclusion Limited (100% subsidiary of IndusInd Bank) will extend comprehensive operational support for the newly established Cow Sanctuary in Muzaffarnagar and a doorstep tele-medicine and mobile veterinary service under the CSR umbrella – Sattvam.
- ★ Bharat Sanjeevani Program, a CSR program by IndusInd Bank and Bharat Financial Inclusion Limited (100% subsidiary of IndusInd Bank), aims to aid the Cow Sanctuary in Muzaffarnagar, a landmark initiative by the Government of India.
- ★ The sanctuary is dedicated to providing care for 5,000 destitute cattle initially, and will be expanded in a phase-wise manner.

Review Meeting of the Performance of the NaBFID

- ★ Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the meeting to review the performance of the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) in New Delhi.
- ★ NaBFID started its operations with a small team of deputed officials from 12 institutions, both public and private sector.
- ★ It got operationalised with the disbursement of its first loan in December 2022.
- ★ To date, NaBFID has made total sanctions of more than ₹86,804 crore, with projects spread across the country and in diversified sub-sectors of infrastructure, such as Roads, Renewable Power, Ports, Railways, Water and Sanitation, City Gas Distribution, etc.
- ★ Out of the ₹86,804 crore, 50% has been sanctioned with long tenure for 50 to 20 years.
- ★ NaBFID will sanction over ₹3 lakh crore by March 2026.
- ★ NaBFID has collaborated with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to offer Transaction Advisory Services for developing a robust pipeline of investment-ready PPP projects in the infrastructure sector across India.

Jana Small Finance Bank Collaborates with Dvara Money

- ★ Jana Small Finance Bank (Jana SFB) entered into a partnership with Dvara Money (DM) to combine DM's innovative Spark Money platform with the technological capabilities of Jana SFB.

- ★ A significant element of this partnership is the Third Party Application Providers (TPAP) capabilities.
- ★ TPAP will enable the integration of a full-stack UPI solution into the Spark Money platform.
- ★ This integration will allow customers to connect their savings accounts for payments, facilitating seamless digital transactions.
- ★ The solution will also enable UPI functionalities like Aadhar OTP-based onboarding and credit on UPI to Dvara's existing offerings.

RBI Enhances Framework for Fintech Sandbox

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised its 'Enabling Framework for Regulatory Sandbox', extending the timelines for various stages of the sandbox process and permitting applicants to establish in-principle partnerships before applying for the sandbox.
- ★ The revisions stem from insights gathered over the past four and a half years from running four cohorts and feedback received from fintechs, banking partners, and other stakeholders.
- ★ The Regulatory Sandbox (RS) operates through different cohorts, each concentrating on areas such as financial inclusion, payments, lending, and digital Know Your Customer (KYC).
- ★ The updated framework mandates sandbox entities to adhere to the provisions outlined in the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023.
- ★ RBI has elongated the timelines for various stages of the sandbox process to nine months from the previous seven months.
- ★ Additionally, entities are now permitted to establish in-principle partnership arrangements with stakeholders during the sandbox application phase.
- ★ Participants in the RS can evaluate the viability of their products without necessitating a broader and costlier roll-out, especially if the product shows potential for success.

Goldman Sachs Issues Double Downgrades for SBI and ICICI Bank

- ★ The global investment banking firm, Goldman Sachs, has downgraded State Bank of India (SBI) and ICICI Bank, signalling the end of the "Goldilocks period" for banks.
- ★ The report highlights 5% to 2% reduction in earnings estimates across the coverage universe for FY25E/26E, with the aggregate Profit after Tax (PAT) falling below consensus by 2%/1% for FY25/26.
- ★ Goldman Sachs notes a challenging near-term outlook for the financial sector, indicating the conclusion of the Goldilocks period characterized by strong growth and visible profitability.
- ★ SBI has been downgraded to Neutral from Buy, with a projected 4% downside, while ICICI Bank sees a 3% upside with a downgrade to Neutral.
- ★ Yes Bank faces a significant downgrade, transitioning to Sell from Neutral, with an anticipated 37% downside.
- ★ Bajaj Finance receives an upgrade to Neutral from Sell, with a modest 2% upside, while HDFC Bank retains a Buy recommendation with a potential 33% upside.

- ★ The report provides a nuanced analysis of State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) banks, private banks, and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), offering recommendations based on their specific market positions.

State Bank of India Achieves Landmark of 500 Million Customers

- ★ The State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest public sector lender, announced that it has crossed the significant milestone of having over 50 crore customers, marking a monumental achievement for the bank.
- ★ SBI made the announcement through its social media channels, highlighting the milestone and the significance it holds for the bank.
- ★ Upon reaching this milestone, Dinesh Khara, the Chairman of SBI, expressed gratitude to the bank's customers for their trust and support.
- ★ In addition to the customer milestone, SBI surpassed IT giant Infosys to become the 5th most valued firm in the country by market valuation.
- ★ SBI's ascent in market valuation placed it among the top 10 most valued firms in India.
- ★ The rankings included Reliance Industries at the top, followed by Tata Consultancy Services, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, SBI, Infosys, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever, and ITC.

Government Establishes Panel Led by T.V. Somanathan

- ★ The Government of India has formed an expert committee headed by Finance Secretary T.V. Somanathan to make its recommendations to bring out uniform Know Your Customer (KYC) norms.
- ★ The committee comprises members from various ministries and regulatory bodies, reflecting a collaborative effort to address KYC standardization.
- ★ The formation of the committee follows discussions at the Finance Stability and Development Council (FSDC) meeting on February 21, highlighting the imperative to simplify and digitize the KYC process in the financial sector.
- ★ The Government launched CKYCR in 2016 to streamline KYC processes across financial assets.
- ★ The CKYCR is a centralised repository of KYC records of customers in the financial sector with uniform KYC norms and inter-usability of the KYC records.
- ★ The Government authorised the Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest of India (CERSAI) to perform the functions of the CKYCR.
- ★ This centralised registry receives, stores, safeguards and retrieves the KYC records of a customer in a digitally secure electronic format.
- ★ Once the information is registered, customers will receive a 14-digit KYC Identification Number that can be used at any financial institution registered with CERSAI.

RBI Took Action against IIFL Finance

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred IIFL Finance from distributing gold loans.

- ★ The regulator has taken this strict step after serious flaws were found in the testing and verification of gold purity.
- ★ This instruction of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is related only to the gold loan business of IIFL Finance. IIFL Finance, a leading financial services provider, offers a wide range of loans and mortgages.
- ★ According to the RBI, this step has been taken after some concerns came to light in lending against gold during regulatory supervision.
- ★ The RBI has directed IIFL to stop sanctioning or disbursing gold loans or securitization or sale of any of its gold loans with immediate effect.
- ★ These restrictions will be reviewed upon completion of a special audit by RBI and the company's satisfactory satisfaction of the special audit findings and RBI inspection findings.

Vadodara Municipal Corporation Launches First Certified Green Municipal Bond

- ★ The Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) issued Asia's first certified Green Municipal Bond for sustainable water infrastructure worth ₹100 crore, aimed at fostering sustainable urban development, aligned with the Paris Agreement, to enhance liquid wastewater management infrastructure.
- ★ The bond was open for bidding on the Electronic Bidding Platform (EBP) of the Bombay Stock Exchange.
- ★ VMC mobilized ₹100 crore against its contribution of ₹620.6 crore for 47 projects valued at ₹1220.53 crore approved under the AMRUT 2.0 Scheme.
- ★ The Green Municipal Bond has been certified by Climate Bond Initiative based on a report by DNV Business Assurance India Private Limited against VMC's Green Finance Framework.
- ★ The bond is scheduled to be listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange on 6th March 2024.
- ★ The Climate Bonds Initiative is a global not-for-profit organisation working to mobilise global capital for climate action.

IRDAI Introduced Collateral Requirements for Reinsurance Transactions

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) intend to introduce collaterals for reinsurance transactions with Cross Border Reinsurers (CBRs).
- ★ The proposed guidelines outlined in an exposure draft will apply to all reinsurance placements with CBRs by cedants or insurers from India, for reinsurance programs from the financial year 2025-26 onwards.
- ★ IRDAI has observed an increase in premiums collected by CBRs from the Indian reinsurance market and recognizes the importance of protecting the interests of Indian reinsurers.
- ★ CBRs have been garnering a significant amount of premiums from India, contributing to the expansion of their share in the Indian reinsurance market.
- ★ The collateral offered will be either in the form of an irrevocable Letter of Credit (LC) from the CBR or premium or funds withheld by the ceding insurer.
- ★ The LC shall be issued through any IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) in GIFT IFSC or a scheduled commercial bank regulated by the Reserve Bank of India.

- ★ For CBRs with an A- or above rating from Standard and Poor's or equivalent, the minimum collateral required will be 80% of the aggregate of outstanding claims liabilities and IBNR reserves.
- ★ For CBRs below an A- rating, the minimum collateral requirement will be 100%.

RBI Governor Declares India's Share of Global Digital Payments Volume at 46%

- ★ During the Digital Payments Awareness Week on March 4, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das revealed that digital transactions in India have experienced a remarkable 90-fold increase over 12 years.
- ★ Retail digital payments in India surged from 162 crore transactions in the financial year 2012-13 to over 14,726 crore transactions in 2023-24 (till February 2024).
- ★ India accounts for nearly 46% of the world's digital transactions, based on 2022 data.
- ★ UPI has emerged as a prominent fast payment system.
- ★ The share of UPI in digital payments has reached close to 80% in 2023.

Interoperable Internet Banking Payment System in 2024

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is working to allow interoperability for internet banking transactions which is expected to be operational in 2024 and will facilitate quicker settlement of funds for merchants.
- ★ The move is aimed at addressing delays in the actual receipt of payments by merchants and is a part of the regulator's payment vision 2025.
- ★ The RBI has approved implementing such a system for NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL).
- ★ The new system will facilitate quicker settlement of funds for merchants.
- ★ Presently, internet banking transactions processed through payment aggregators (PAs) lack interoperability.
- ★ Each bank is required to integrate separately with different PAs of various online merchants.
- ★ Payment aggregators serve as intermediaries facilitating digital payments between consumers and merchants.

Flipkart Partners with Axis Bank

- ★ E-commerce platform Flipkart has ventured into the digital payments sector by launching its own unified payments interface (UPI) handle, @fkaxis, in collaboration with Axis Bank.
- ★ Alongside the UPI handle, Flipkart introduced the initiative 'India's Most Rewarding UPI', aimed at providing unique and rewarding UPI experiences for users.
- ★ Currently accessible to Android users through the Flipkart app, the UPI handle allows users to register for a new UPI ID for seamless fund transfers and in-app payments.
- ★ This marks Flipkart's second financial technology (fintech) offering in collaboration with Axis Bank.
- ★ Flipkart UPI offers convenient and zero-cost solutions along with a smooth onboarding process.

- ★ Additionally, Flipkart offers one-click and quick payments for mobile recharge and bill payment within the app.
- ★ Flipkart also provides the Flipkart Axis Bank Credit Card.

Moody Increases India's GDP Growth Forecast From 6.1% to 6.8%

- ★ Global rating agency Moody's has increased India's GDP growth forecast from 6.1% to 6.8% in March 2024.
- ★ Moody's has increased India's GDP growth forecast for the 2024 calendar year on the basis of India's strong economic data.
- ★ Rating agency Moody's has estimated India's GDP growth for 2025 at 6.4%.
- ★ This upgrade of Moody's for India comes on the basis of stronger than expected economic data for 2023.
- ★ At the same time, after the December quarter figures, Barclays has increased its forecast for India for 2023-24 by 110 basis points to 7.8%.

Reserve Bank of India's UDGAM Portal for Unclaimed Deposits

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) informed that 30 banks are facilitating people to search their unclaimed deposits/accounts through Unclaimed Deposits-Gateway to Access information (UDGAM) portal, and the remaining banks are in the process of getting on-boarded.
- ★ UDGAM is an online portal developed by RBI.
- ★ It facilitates the registered users to search unclaimed deposits/accounts across multiple banks in one place in a centralised manner.
- ★ All unclaimed deposits/accounts that are part of the Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund of RBI can be searched in the UDGAM portal.
- ★ The total value of unclaimed deposits stood at ₹42,270 crore as of March 2023.
- ★ The balance in savings or current accounts not operated for 10 years and term deposits not claimed for 10 years from the date of maturity are classified by banks as unclaimed deposits.
- ★ These amounts are transferred to the depositor education and awareness (DEA) fund maintained by RBI.

Reserve Bank of India's Gold Reserves Surged by 8.7 Trillion

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased its gold reserves in January.
- ★ RBI's gold acquisition in January amounted to 8.7 metric tons, marking the highest monthly purchase in a year and a half.
- ★ As of January's end, RBI's gold reserves reached an unprecedented level of 812.3 metric tons.
- ★ In 2023, RBI's net gold purchases were substantially lower at 16.2 metric tons compared to previous years, where annual net purchases averaged 47 metric tons from 2018 to 2022.
- ★ Despite the reduced purchase in 2023, RBI ranked as the 6th largest purchaser of gold among central banks for the year, as per reported data.

NPCI Partners with Nepal's Fonepay for Cross-Border Merchant Payments

- ★ NPCI International Payments (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has agreed with Nepal-based payment network Fonepay Payment Service, for cross-border Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions between India.
- ★ IT is to facilitate QR-code-based person-to-merchant (P2M) UPI transactions between individuals and merchants across the borders of India and Nepal.
- ★ Indian consumers will have the capability to execute instant, secure, and convenient UPI payments at various business establishments in Nepal, utilizing the Fonepay Network.
- ★ Fonepay, a Payment System Operator (PSO) and a subsidiary of the F1Soft Group, operates an interoperable network and mobile platforms that facilitate inter-bank person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions.
- ★ This collaboration with Fonepay follows NPCI International's recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing with Eurobank S.A. of Greece, aiming to enhance cross-border payments between Greece and India through UPI rails.

RBI and Bank Indonesia Signed MoU

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank Indonesia (BI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Mumbai for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies through the Indian Rupee (INR) and the Indonesian Rupiah (IDR) for cross-border transactions.
- ★ The MoU was signed by the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India Mr. Shaktikanta Das and the Governor of Bank Indonesia Perry Warjiyo.
- ★ This collaboration marks a key milestone in strengthening bilateral co-operation between RBI and BI.
- ★ The MoU aims to establish a framework for co-operation in the area of cross-border transactions in local currencies between India and Indonesia, aims to promote the use of INR and IDR.
- ★ The framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-IDR foreign exchange market.
- ★ The use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions.

SEBI Releases Guidelines for Small and Medium REITs

- ★ The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has issued regulations to amend the REIT Regulations 2014, establishing guidelines for the creation of Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trusts, or SM REITs.
- ★ Aim is to regulate the fractional ownership industry and safeguard investor interests, incorporating both commercial and residential properties within the new framework.
- ★ Under the new framework, SM REITs can raise funds starting from ₹50 crore by issuing units to a minimum of 200 investors.
- ★ The funds will be utilised for acquiring and managing real estate assets and generating income for investors.

- ★ Ownership of these assets will be structured through schemes operating under special purpose vehicles (SPVs), with a net worth requirement of ₹20 crore for the Investment Manager.
- ★ The minimum subscription amount for an SM REIT's initial offering is ₹10 lakh per investor, offering a more accessible entry point compared to the current norm.
- ★ The Investment Manager is mandated to retain a minimum of 5% of outstanding units for two years post-listing, a reduction from the initially proposed 15%.

Bajaj Allianz General Introduces 'Insurance Samjho'

- ★ Leading private general insurer Bajaj Allianz General Insurance launched "Insurance Samjho", a Gen AI-powered bot designed to simplify insurance complexities for customers.
- ★ Aim is to address the dissatisfaction of policyholders during claim settlement arising due to lack of understanding, intricate details and fine print of the insurance policy.
- ★ "Insurance Samjho" offers a user-friendly interface with intuitive AI capabilities to break down complex insurance terms into simple, conversational language.
- ★ The bot serves as a virtual assistant, allowing customers to ask questions about their coverage, exclusions, procedures, or seek clarity on specific medical conditions.
- ★ The bot operates similarly to Chat GPT, where customers can ask questions and seek clarification on various aspects of their policies based on uploaded documents.
- ★ The bot provides clear, concise answers in a conversational style, ensuring transparency and easy comprehension.

PFRDA Chairman Unveils Mobile App

- ★ Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) Chairperson Deepak Mohanty has launched a user-friendly web application developed by Zerodha Broking Limited, designed to simplify access to the National Pension System (NPS) for subscribers.
- ★ This new initiative is part of a broader strategy to increase the NPS's reach and streamline its management.
- ★ The application aims to provide a seamless experience for users, allowing them to easily manage their NPS accounts.
- ★ PS is available to non-resident Indians (NRIs), making it a versatile option for a wide range of individuals.
- ★ By leveraging technology, such as the web application developed by Zerodha Broking Limited, the NPS aims to attract more subscribers, particularly among the tech-savvy younger generation.

Bank of Baroda Introduces Special Offers for Female Account Holders

- ★ On the occasion of International Women's Day, Bank of Baroda has announced attractive offers and benefits for its women account holders on the opening of either a bob Mahila Shakti Savings Account or a bob Women Power Current Account – accounts designed specifically for women.
- ★ This offer is applicable for accounts opened till June 30, 2024 and loan facilities availed till December 31, 2024.

- ★ Aim is to empower women financially by providing them with tailored financial products and attractive benefits.
- ★ Up to 25 basis points interest rate concession on retail loans, with concessions varying based on the type of loan (e.g., 0.25 per cent on two-wheeler loans, 0.15 per cent on education loans, 0.10 per cent on auto loans, home loans, and mortgage loans).
- ★ Complete waiver of processing charges on retail loans, including personal loans.
- ★ 50% discount on annual safe deposit locker charges.

ADB and India Signed 181 Million Dollars Loan for Ahmedabad

- ★ The Government of India has signed a loan agreement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for a total of USD 181 million.
- ★ The loan is given to finance the construction of infrastructure and services aimed at improving urban livability and mobility in the peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad city.
- ★ The project is expected to benefit several groups, including the urban poor, women, and migrant workers. It will provide them with better urban services and governance.
- ★ Specifically, the project will involve the construction of 166 km of water distribution networks, 126 km of climate-resilient stormwater drainage, 300 km of sewerage systems, and four sewage treatment plants.
- ★ ADB's support will strengthen the capacity of the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority and urban local bodies in technology-based urban planning, climate change, and disaster-resilient infrastructure.
- ★ This includes promoting environmental and social safeguards, gender equality, and social inclusion.
- ★ The project will also help in land development plans and town planning schemes while building government agencies' capacity in financial planning, revenue enhancement, and infrastructure asset operations.

L&T Finance Secures \$125 Million Financing Agreement with JICA

- ★ Non-banking financial company (NBFC) L&T Finance Holdings Limited (LTFH) had signed a financing pact with Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) for \$125 million to support financing in rural and peri-urban areas [located between the outer limits of urban and rural environment] in India, particularly women borrowers.
- ★ In November 2023, L&T Finance had sourced a \$125 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and as part of the co-financing agreement, an additional \$125 million loan is now being raised from JICA.
- ★ At least 40% of the proceeds will be allocated for women borrowers, while the rest will be allocated to support farmers, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), as well as loans to purchase new two-wheeler vehicles including electric two-wheelers.
- ★ The project is strategically aligned with the goals of the Ministry of Rural Development as it focuses on lending in rural and peri-urban areas of lagging Indian states.

IndusInd Bank Introduces India's First Contactless Payment Wearable 'Indus Paywear'

- ★ IndusInd Bank announced the launch of its contactless payments wearables, 'Indus PayWear', India's first All-in-One tokenizable wearables for both debit and credit cards exclusively on Mastercard, with the offering to be extended to other card networks shortly.
- ★ Aim is to revolutionise the payment experience by enabling users to tokenize their IndusInd Bank credit or debit cards onto a chip-enabled wearable device.
- ★ This feature enhances convenience and security by eliminating the need for physical cards or payment apps.
- ★ Indus PayWear allows users to conduct tap-and-pay transactions at any contactless Point-of-Sale (PoS) terminal globally, ensuring secure and efficient purchases without the requirement of physical cards or payment apps.
- ★ The Indus PayWear range comprises three options: a ring, a watch clasp, and stickers, catering to diverse customer preferences.
- ★ These wearables are priced affordably, with costs ranging from 499 to ₹2,999.
- ★ The wearable devices are supported by a dedicated mobile application, enabling users to easily set up their cards on the wearable device and switch between cards seamlessly using the app.
- ★ Indus PayWear prioritises security with advanced tokenisation technology, replacing actual card details with unique 'tokens' for every transaction.

ADB to Provide \$23 Million Loan for the Fintech Sector

- ★ The Asian Development Bank will provide a \$ 23 million loan to the Government of India to set up an International Fintech Institute at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT-City) in Gujarat.
- ★ The loan aims to promote holistic growth of the fintech ecosystem in India by setting up an International Fintech Institute at the GIFT-City in Gujarat.
- ★ The International Fintech Institute will be established in partnership with globally reputed institutes and universities.
- ★ It will offer industry-mandated fintech training programmes that meet international standards.
- ★ The institute will strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting startups through incubation and acceleration services.
- ★ The institute will collaborate with industry and venture capital funds to support the growth of fintech startups in the country.
- ★ These interventions are expected to boost employment opportunities, increase workforce competitiveness and enhance productivity in the field of new and green technologies.

RBI Fines Bank of India and Bandhan Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fined the public sector bank Bank of India and the private sector Bandhan Bank for non-compliance with regulatory norms.
- ★ The Banking Regulation Act of 1949 makes RBI the regulator of the banks in India.

- ★ RBI has the power to make rules and regulations to promote a sound banking system in India and safeguard the interests of the depositors.
- ★ The Bank of India was fined ₹1.4 crore for not complying with the RBI's provisions regarding 'interest rate on deposits', 'customer service in banks', and 'interest rate on advances' and contravening the Credit Information Companies Rules, 2006.
- ★ The Bandhan Bank was fined ₹29.55 lakh for non-compliance with certain directions.

RBI Directs Federal Bank and SIB to Halt Issuance of New Co-Branded Credit Cards

- ★ Following the directions by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), private sector lenders Federal Bank and South Indian Bank stopped issuing co-branded credit cards to new customers on account of regulatory deficiencies.
- ★ Both banks are taking steps to ensure compliance with the RBI's directives.
- ★ South Indian Bank stated that it will refrain from onboarding new customers for its co-branded credit cards until full compliance is achieved with the RBI's Master Direction on Credit Card and Debit Card issuance.
- ★ Despite the halt in new issuances, both banks have affirmed their commitment to servicing existing customers who hold co-branded credit cards. Marketing and advertising materials for co-branded cards should prominently display the name of the card issuer, in accordance with the RBI's guidelines.
- ★ Federal Bank, in response to the RBI's communication, has halted the issuance of new co-branded credit cards to address regulatory concerns. The bank is working to rectify these areas of concern.
- ★ South Indian Bank offers a co-branded credit card in partnership with State Bank of India (SBI), available in two variants: SimplySAVE and
- ★ Federal Bank offers 3 co-branded credit cards: Federal Onecard, Federal Scapia, and Federal FI.

Rating Agency Fitch Projects India's Growth At 7% in FY 2024-25

- ★ Global ratings agency Fitch revised India's GDP growth forecast to 7% for the financial year 2024-25.
- ★ Agency Fitch expects the economy to continue its strong expansion.
- ★ Fitch rating agency said in its March Outlook report that India's real GDP could grow at 7% for FY2025. It has increased by 0.5%.
- ★ The Indian Government has also recently raised its FY24 GDP growth forecast to 7.6% from 7.3% earlier.
- ★ Fitch anticipates that domestic demand, especially investment, will be the primary growth driver in India, supported by ongoing business and consumer confidence.

Bank of Baroda Introduces Green Term Deposit Scheme

- ★ Bank of Baroda (BoB), one of India's leading public sector banks, has announced the launch of the Bob Earth Green Term Deposit Scheme.

- ★ The aim is to raise deposits that will be used to finance eligible environment-friendly projects and sectors, fostering India's transition to a green and sustainable economy.
- ★ The Bob Earth Green Term Deposits offer depositors the opportunity to earn attractive interest rates on a range of tenors and participate in India's transition to a green and sustainable economy.
- ★ The bank offers interest rates up to 7.15% p.a. Eligible investors include the general public, resident Indians, NRIs, and high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) for the BOB Earth Green Term Deposit scheme.
- ★ The scheme offers customers the dual benefits of stable financial returns and contribution to a greener planet.
- ★ Under the bob Earth Green Term Deposit Scheme, the Bank of Baroda has introduced some innovative tenures that act as a reminder of the planet's Climate and Sustainability goals.
- ★ Tenure of 1.5 years – signifying the aim to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial level.
- ★ Tenure 1717 days – doubly emphasizing the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Paytm to Partner with 4 Banks for Unified Payments Interface Integration

- ★ The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has partnered with One97 Communications Limited (OCL), which runs Paytm brand and app, for its consumer Unified Payment Interface (UPI) payments.
- ★ Paytm's UPI was powered by Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) and since the RBI's action on the latter, the mobile payments company has been forced to seek bank partnerships to become a third-party application provider (TPAP), much like its larger competitors PhonePe and Google Pay.
- ★ Paytm had partnered with Axis Bank, Yes Bank and HDFC Bank for TPAP partnerships earlier.
- ★ The transition is expected to be seamless and gradual, with the "@paytm" handle being retained.
- ★ For most large UPI players, the regulatory body National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) insists that they should have at least 3 bank partners.
- ★ The bank partners in UPI are payment service providers (PSP), which connect the TPAP to the banking network.

India and Asian Development Bank Ink \$181 Million Loan

- ★ The Government of India (GoI) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$181 million loan to build quality infrastructure and services toward improving urban livability and mobility in the peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad city.
- ★ Aim is to make peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad livable, environmentally sustainable, and efficient with robust physical and social infrastructure, a vibrant economy, and a distinct identity as a preferred investment destination.
- ★ The project involves the construction of various infrastructure components.
- ★ The project aims to benefit the urban poor, women, and migrant workers by providing improved urban services and governance.

- ★ Additionally, the project will focus on building the capacity of government agencies in financial planning, revenue enhancement, and infrastructure asset operations.

Arya.Ag Collaborated With Shivalik Bank

- ★ Grain commerce platform Arya.ag has partnered with Shivalik Small Finance Bank to assist farmers, agro-processors, and micro-enterprises financially.
- ★ Through this partnership, Arya.ag acts as a business correspondent for the bank to facilitate over ₹200 crore in warehouse receipt financing in the current financial year.
- ★ The initiative will help expand the bank's reach, bringing essential funding to the agricultural ecosystem across India.

Max India's Subsidiary Collaborates with IIT D for Senior Citizen Care

- ★ Max India Limited's wholly owned subsidiary, Antara Assisted Care Services Limited, has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi) with an aim to develop offerings tailored specifically for the senior demographic.
- ★ The collaboration entails knowledge exchange, research consultancy, Entrepreneurial Development Programs (EDPs), and the sharing of laboratory resources.
- ★ The collaboration emphasizes the development of inclusive design solutions that promote safety, independence, cognition, and communication for the elderly population.
- ★ One of the projects under this collaboration involves designing a walking aid customized to the specific needs and preferences of seniors.

RBI Fines TMB and DCB Bank for Violation of Regulatory Norms

- ★ The banking sector regulator, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) fined the Indian private sector bank Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited (TMB) and the foreign bank DCB India for violating the RBI's regulatory norms.
- ★ The Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited was fined ₹1.38 crore.
- ★ According to the RBI, the Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited failed to benchmark the interest rate on certain floating rate loans to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to an external benchmark lending rate.
- ★ It also failed to price certain floating rate loans with reference to the actual benchmark rate applicable to those loans.
- ★ The DCB was fined ₹63.6 lakh.
- ★ According to the RBI, the DCB Bank failed to reset the interest rates at the prescribed periodicity in certain MCLR (Marginal Cost of Fund-based Lending Rates)-linked floating rate advances and benchmark the interest rate of certain floating-rate retail loans and floating-rate loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark lending rate.

RBI Organises Annual Conference of RBI Ombudsmen

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) organised the Annual Conference of the RBI Ombudsmen, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- ★ The theme of the conference was “Protecting the Consumers – Building Robust Systems and Procedures”.
- ★ Shri Shaktikanta Das, Governor of RBI, inaugurated the conference.
- ★ He highlighted the unique features of the Reserve Bank – Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021, focusing on aspects such as ‘deficiency in service’, centralization, and procedural justice.
- ★ Shri M Rajeshwar Rao and Shri Swaminathan J, Deputy Governors, Reserve Bank, in their addresses highlighted the Reserve Bank’s initiatives in the areas of consumer protection and redress of grievances.
- ★ The Conference included sessions on global perspective on alternate grievance redress and developing resilient systems in fraud prevention and detection.
- ★ The Conference concluded with an interactive session amongst the Ombudsman.
- ★ The Banking Ombudsman Scheme provides a swift and cost-effective platform for bank customers to address grievances related to specific services offered by banks.
- ★ It was established under Section 35 A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 1995.

Finance Ministry Introduces ₹90 Coin to Commemorate 90 Years of RBI

- ★ The Finance Ministry announced the release of a unique ₹90 denomination coin to mark the 90th anniversary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- ★ Crafted with 99.99% silver purity, the coin weighs approximately 40 grams and has a diameter of 44mm.
- ★ It features 200 serrations along the edge, symbolizing the historical significance and achievements of the RBI over nine decades.
- ★ The obverse side of the coin showcases the iconic RBI logo at the center, with the inscription “RBI@90” below, representing the institution’s enduring legacy and contribution to India’s financial stability.
- ★ The reverse side of the coin displays the Lion Capital of Ashoka Pillar, symbolizing India’s rich heritage and democratic values.
- ★ The national motto “Satyamev Jayate” (Truth Alone Triumphs) is inscribed in Devanagari script below the Ashoka Pillar.

Citibank Set to Introduce Digital Payments Product “Spring”

- ★ Citibank plans to launch its digital payments acceptance product ‘Spring by Citi’ in India in the second quarter of this year (April-June).
- ★ Currently available in about 24 countries, Spring by Citi processes business-to-business and direct-to-customer payments, and integrates with payment methods across geographies.
- ★ Citibank manages significant portions of electronic payment flows (4.3%), trade flows (8%), and Swift payments (25%) in India.
- ★ ‘Spring by Citi’ serves as a payment gateway and acquirer, allowing clients to enable multiple payment methods.

- ★ The proposed launch comes over a year after Citi exited retail banking in India by selling its business to Axis Bank.
- ★ It now focuses on large local companies, multinationals, financial institutions, and emerging and mid-sized firms.
- ★ Spring was developed by Citi's Treasury and Trade Solutions business, a segment that comprises payments, working-capital solutions, and liquidity management.
- ★ Santosh Dujari, head (Indian subcontinent), treasury and trade solutions.

Exim Bank Grants \$23 Million Line of Credit to Guyana for Aircraft Acquisition

- ★ The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) strategically targets the defence market of South America by extending a Line of Credit (LOC) of \$23.37 million (about ₹194 crore) to Guyana, South America.
- ★ Aim is to facilitate the procurement of two Dornier 228 aircraft from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), a Navratna defence PSU, by Guyana.
- ★ An agreement for the LOC was signed between Guyana's Senior Minister Responsible for Finance, Ashni K. Singh, and Exim Bank's Deputy General Manager, Sanjay Lamba, in the presence of High Commissioner of India to Guyana, Amit Telang.
- ★ Over the years, Guyana alone has received eleven LOCs of value aggregating \$143.04 million from the Exim Bank for capacity enhancement in sectors of defence, and others like the construction of a cricket stadium in Georgetown, for East Bank-East Coast Road linkage project, upgradation of three primary health centres, and installation of solar home lighting systems.
- ★ With the addition of this LOC, Exim Bank has a total of 292 LOCs in place, covering 62 countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, CIS, and Oceania.
- ★ The bank has credit commitments of approximately \$2.72 billion available for financing exports from India.

Bank of Japan Implements First Interest Rate Hike in 17 Years

- ★ Japan's central bank has made a significant policy shift by raising its benchmark interest rate for the first time in 17 years.
- ★ The central bank's move marks the end of a longstanding policy of negative interest rates aimed at stimulating the economy.
- ★ The short-term interest rate has been increased to a range of 0 to 0.1 per cent from its previous level of minus 0.1 per cent.
- ★ This rate hike is the first of its kind since February 2007, highlighting the rarity and significance of the event.
- ★ The central bank had set a 2 percent inflation target, signalling a desire to steer the economy away from deflationary pressures.
- ★ Despite being the world's fourth largest economy in nominal GDP terms, Japan recently slipped behind Germany.
- ★ The United States holds the top position, followed by China, which overtook Japan more than a decade ago.

Airtel Payments Bank Joins Noise and Mastercard to Launch Smartwatch

- ★ Airtel Payments Bank collaborated with smartwatch brand Noise and global technology company in the payments space Mastercard to launch the new smartwatch to redefine and make contactless payments accessible to a larger consumer base.
- ★ Users can purchase the new smartwatch at ₹2,999.
- ★ Customers who have a savings account with Airtel Payments Bank can buy this watch from the company's Thanks app.
- ★ A customer would be able to make payments between ₹1 to ₹25,000 per day using the smartwatch.
- ★ The smartwatch comes equipped with a 1.85-inch square dial and Bluetooth calling capability and boasts a battery life of up to 10 days.

SBI and Axis Bank Innovate Mobile Apps to Expand UPI Market Share

- ★ Leading banks, such as State Bank of India (SBI) and Axis Bank are looking to increase their Unified Payment Interface (UPI) market share by making innovations in their mobile application that can be used by both customers and non-customers.
- ★ Armed with third-party application provider licenses, these banks are aggressively entering the UPI space, which is currently dominated by PhonePe, Google Pay, etc.
- ★ SBI is set to launch an upgraded YONO 2.0 platform accessible to both customers and non-customers.
- ★ It will function as a marketplace offering banking services and products.
- ★ Banks require a third-party application provider (TPAP) license to cater to non-customers, prompting them to obtain such licenses to tap into this segment.
- ★ National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) data reveals that UPI transaction volumes exceeded 12 billion, with a transaction value surpassing ₹18 trillion in December.
- ★ Besides SBI, YES Bank, Axis Bank, and ICICI Bank are also targeting non-customers through their mobile applications, indicating a widespread trend in the banking sector.

HDFC Bank Collaborated TD Bank Group

- ★ HDFC Bank and TD Bank Group have announced an expanded pact to support Indian students planning to study in Canada.
- ★ With this agreement, TD and HDFC Bank have announced a new referral programme where HDFC Bank will refer students planning to study in Canada to TD's International Student GIC Program, which enables students to comply with the Government of Canada's Student Direct Stream (SDS) study permit pathway.
- ★ It is to facilitate the opening of accounts digitally for students and help them meet their study visa and living expense requirements in Canada.
- ★ TD has been HDFC Bank's main correspondent banking partner for Canadian dollar clearing since 2015.

- ★ In 2023, there were more than 425,000 Indian international students with active study permits in Canada.
- ★ TD is the 2nd largest Bank in Canada and 6th largest in North America by assets, and serves over 27.5 million customers around the globe.

Indian economy to Grow by 6.8% in 2024-25

- ★ S&P Global, released its report “Economic Outlook Asia-Pacific Q2 2024: APAC Bides its Time on Monetary Policy Easing” on 26 March 2024.
- ★ In its report, it raised India’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for 2024-25 (FY25) to 6.8 per cent.
- ★ Earlier, it had forecasted a growth rate of 6.4 per cent for the Indian economy. The latest forecast increased the Indian GDP growth rate by 40 basis points.
- ★ The Indian economy is expected to grow by 7% in 2025-26 and in 2026-27.
- ★ The National Statistical Office (NSO) expects the Indian economy to grow by 7.6% in 2023-24.
- ★ The Reserve Bank of India expects the economy to grow by 8% in 2023-24.

Life Insurance Corporation of India Named World’s Strongest Insurance Brand

- ★ According to the Brand Finance Insurance 100 2024 report, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is recognized as the world’s strongest insurance brand, with a steady brand value of \$9.8 billion, a brand strength index score of 88.3, and an associated AAA brand strength rating.
- ★ Cathay Life Insurance is the second strongest brand, with a 9% increase in brand value to \$4.9 billion, followed by NRMA Insurance, which saw an 82% rise in brand value to \$1.3 billion.
- ★ Meanwhile, Chinese insurance brands maintain dominance in the global rankings of most valuable insurance brands, with Ping An leading with a 4% increase in brand value to \$33.6 billion followed by China Life Insurance and CPIC retaining their 3rd and 5th positions, respectively.
- ★ Allianz from Germany and AXA from France are holding on to their 2nd and 4th positions in the top 5 rankings.
- ★ LIC achieved the highest first-year premium collection of ₹39,090 crore in the financial year 2023, while SBI Life Insurance and HDFC Life Insurance led the private sector with new business premium collections of ₹15,197 crore and ₹10,970 crore, respectively.
- ★ The Government also approved a 17% wage revision for LIC employees, effective from August 2022, benefiting over 110,000 employees.
- ★ LIC’s shares also reached an all-time high of ₹1,175, making it India’s most valuable public sector undertaking (PSU) company and reclaiming its status as the 5th most valuable Indian listed company, surpassing SBI in market valuation.

IRDAI has approved the Establishment of Bima Sugam

- ★ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has approved the establishment of Bima Sugam, an online insurance marketplace, aimed at simplifying the process of buying, selling, and servicing insurance policies, as well as settling claims.
- ★ Bima Sugam will serve as a single interface for customers, intermediaries, and agents, facilitating the buying and selling of insurance policies across insurers in various categories such as life, health, and non-life.
- ★ Bima Sugam functions as an e-commerce platform where insurance companies can offer their products, providing customers with a seamless end-to-end digital journey.
- ★ The platform eliminates paperwork by offering policies in electronic format, allowing customers to access all their policies (life, health, and non-life insurance) in one application or window.
- ★ Bima Sugam is expected to make insurance policies more affordable by reducing commissions paid to intermediaries, potentially leading to lower premiums for policyholders.
- ★ Bima Sugam offers a unified platform for policy issuance, claim settlement, and service requests, enhancing transparency and collaboration in the insurance sector.

Galaxy Health Gets IRDAI Approval to Launch Health Insurance Business

- ★ Galaxy Health and Allied Insurance Company has secured approval from the IRDAI to commence its health insurance business in the country.
- ★ This decision came during the 125th meeting of the regulator, marking a significant entry into the Indian insurance sector.
- ★ With this approval, the count of stand-alone health insurers (SAHIs) in India will rise to seven, adding to the existing six.
- ★ Galaxy is the second stand-alone health insurer to receive the nod from the IRDAI in 2024.
- ★ This is the sixth registration issued by the authority across various insurance segments within almost a year.

SPORTS

Khelo India University Games Men's Football Title

- ★ The University of Calicut lifted the championship trophy of Men's Football at the Khelo India University Games 2023 defeating the University of Kerala by 2:1.
- ★ The final match was held at Rajiv Gandhi Stadium, Mulapui in Aizawl.
- ★ In all, 8 Universities have participated in the competition which includes 3 teams from Kerala, 2 teams from Punjab, 2 teams from West Bengal and 1 team from Maharashtra.
- ★ Around 175 athletes with 25 support staff and 22 technical officials and 70 volunteers were involved in the competition.
- ★ The Mizoram Edition of the Khelo India University Games 2023 began on February 19th.

- ★ Football is now becoming a profession and expressed the hope that the young footballers who are participating in the games would dominate Indian Football in future.
- ★ Presentation of the cultural riches of the Mizo community and a Special Number from well-known singer Sangteii Khuptong marked the Closing ceremony.

India's First Female Pitch Curator

- ★ Jacintha Kalyan has become the trailblazing pioneer as the first female cricket pitch curator in our nation.
- ★ The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary, Jay Shah, extended warm praise to Jacintha Kalyan for her groundbreaking achievement as the first female pitch curator in Indian cricket history.
- ★ Kalyan is currently overseeing the pitch preparations for the Women's Premier League (WPL) in Bengaluru, marking a significant milestone for gender inclusivity in the sport.
- ★ Kalyan, hailing from an agricultural background, has been associated with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) for over three decades.

Asian Track Cycling Championship 2024

- ★ India ended its campaign by winning a total of 18 medals at the Asian Track Cycling Championships 2024.
- ★ This competition was organized from 21 to 26 February at Indira Gandhi Sports Complex, New Delhi.
- ★ 500 riders from 18 countries competed in New Delhi, including junior and para track cycling events.
- ★ This was the 43rd edition of the 'Asian Track Cycling Championships'.
- ★ The championship was also the final qualifying event for the Paris 2024 Olympics.
- ★ India's 20-member junior and para teams performed well and won 18 medals. There are nine gold, six silver and three bronze medals in total.
- ★ Malaysia topped the Asian Track Cycling Championships 2024 with 37 medals.
- ★ Japan got 24 medals and Korea got 23 medals and got second and third place respectively in this competition.

ICC World Test Championship

- ★ The Indian Men's Cricket Team has reached on top in the World Test Championship (WTC) standings, replacing New Zealand in the latest rankings issued.
- ★ The International Cricket Council (ICC) updated their WTC points table, in which India moved to the top of the points table, following Australia's victory over New Zealand in the Wellington Test.
- ★ India is currently leading the five-match test series against England 3-1, and a win in the final match of the series will further strengthen their position in the WTC points table.

- ★ The two-time ICC World Test Championship finalists are looking in great form in Test Cricket after they registered three consecutive victories against England in the ongoing series under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma.

Prague Masters Chess Match

- ★ Indian Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa defeated compatriot Vidit Gujrathi in the fifth round of Prague Masters Chess in the Czech Republic.
- ★ In the other match, D. Gukesh went down against the Czech Republic's David Navara.
- ★ Praggnanandhaa shares the fourth spot with Navara and Gukesh with four rounds to play.
- ★ In the Challengers section, Grandmaster R. Vaishali went down to Erwin L'Ami of Holland.
- ★ The Prague Chess Festival is taking place from February 27 to March 7 at the Don Giovanni Hotel.

Indian Shuttler B. Sai Praneeth Announces Retirement

- ★ Indian Shuttler B. Sai Praneeth has announced his retirement from international badminton.
- ★ The 31-year-old battled nagging injuries since the Olympic Games in Tokyo.
- ★ In his 24-year-long career, he won a World Championships bronze medal and represented India at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.
- ★ Following his retirement, Praneeth who has also won the 2017 Singapore Open, is set to begin a new innings as the head coach of the Triangle Badminton Academy in the US.
- ★ He joins in April month.

National Youth Parliament Festival 2024

- ★ Yatin Bhaskar Duggal from Haryana won the first prize in the National Youth Parliament Festival 2024, while Vaishna Pitchai from Tamil Nadu won the second prize, and Kanishka Sharma from Rajasthan won the third prize.
- ★ The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, through Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and National Service Scheme (NSS), has been conducting Youth Parliament events such as District Youth Parliament, State Youth Parliament, and National Youth Parliament.
- ★ These events aim to strengthen democracy, promote tolerance of differing views, and educate youths about parliamentary practices.
- ★ Youth Parliaments also promote awareness of the importance of active citizenship and encourage youth engagement and participation, while developing leadership qualities and enabling them to realize their full potential to contribute to nation-building.
- ★ National Youth Parliament 2024 is based on the 'Young Voices: Engage and Empower for Nation's Transformation' theme.

Khelo India Athletes Now Eligible For Government Jobs

- ★ The Khelo India athletes will now be eligible for government jobs.

- ★ In this regard, the Department of Personnel and Training and Sports Ministry have made progressive revisions to the eligibility criteria for sportspersons seeking government jobs
- ★ Union Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur, groundbreaking step now extends eligibility to medal winners from Youth, University, Para and Winters Games of Khelo India Games to be eligible for government jobs.
- ★ Through the changes in rules the games and events have also been clearly defined to ensure inclusivity across various sports.
- ★ The revised rules mark a significant stride in supporting athletes in making India a sporting superpower.

French Open Badminton Tournament

- ★ Indian pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have clinched their second French Open Men's doubles Badminton title.
- ★ The Indian top seed registered a straight games victory over Yang Po-han and Lee Jhe-huei of Taiwan in the final 21-11, 21-17.
- ★ Satwik and Chirag had earlier won the title in 2022.

Unique Talent Hunt Event KIRTI, Inaugurated in Chandigarh

- ★ The Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, inaugurated a unique talent hunt event called KIRTI in Chandigarh.
- ★ The initiative of the Union Sports Ministry in launching the Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme is first of its kind in India.
- ★ KIRTI is a nationwide programme under the Khelo India mission that aims to identify talented athletes between the ages of nine to 18 years, who are currently in school.
- ★ The programme will conduct 20 lakh assessments across the country throughout the year to identify talent through notified Talent Assessment Centres.
- ★ This scouting and training programme is the first of its kind in India and comes at a time when the country wants to reach the next level in global sports. KIRTI will use IT tools to identify talent from every corner of the country and provide a common platform to showcase their abilities.
- ★ The program will focus on ten sports disciplines currently part of the Khelo India initiative, namely, archery, athletics, boxing, football, hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling.

42nd Ranji Trophy Title

- ★ The Mumbai cricket team, led by Ajinkiya Rahane, defeated Vidarbha in the final of the Ranji Trophy to win their 42nd title.
- ★ On the fifth day of the five-day final, the Mumbai team defeated the Vidarbha team by 169 runs. The final was played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.
- ★ Musheer Khan of Mumbai was the Player of the Match, while Tanush Kotia of Mumbai was the Player of the Series.

- ★ The Mumbai team collected the trophy and a ₹5 crore winning prize, while the Vidarbha team received ₹3 crore prize money.

India's First Indoor Athletic Centre Inaugurated in Bhubaneswar

- ★ Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's first indoor athletics and aquatic centres at the Kalinga stadium in Bhubaneswar.
- ★ The Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone for a new indoor diving centre in the stadium complex.
- ★ According to the Chief Minister, the new indoor facilities will help athletes train throughout the year without fear of weather-related disturbances.
- ★ The newly developed India's first indoor athletics stadium has the facilities to host national and international athletic events.
- ★ The stadium, built at an estimated cost of ₹120 crore, can accommodate 120 athletes for full-time coaching.
- ★ It also has a classroom for studies, medical facilities, and a dedicated pantry for athletes.

Matthew Wade Retires From First-Class Cricket

- ★ Matthew Wade announced that he would retire from first-class cricket after the upcoming Sheffield Shield final.
- ★ However, Wade will continue to play ODIs and T20Is and will be available for selection in the white-ball formats.
- ★ Matthew Wade is currently the wicketkeeper-batsman of the Australian cricket team.
- ★ Matthew Wade started his cricket career in the year 2012. Matthew Wade is a left-handed batsman.
- ★ The Sheffield Shield final between Tasmania and Western Australia starts on 21 March 2024. This will be the last red-ball match of Matthew Wade's career.
- ★ Wade played 165 matches in first-class cricket. In these, he has scored 9183 runs at an average of 40.81.

National Icon for Disabled of ECI

- ★ Ms. Sheetal Devi was declared the National Disability Icon of the Election Commission of India.
- ★ Para archer and Arjuna Awardee Sheetal Devi has been declared National Icon in the Disability category (PWD).
- ★ The Election Commission, in collaboration with the BCCI, organized an exhibition cricket match between the IDCA team and the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) team.
- ★ The match was held at the Karnail Singh Stadium in New Delhi.
- ★ DDCA team won the match by 69 runs.
- ★ During this exhibition cricket match, Sheetal Devi was declared 'National Disability Icon'.

Indian Wells Tennis Masters Title

- ★ World number two ranked men's tennis player Carlos Alcaraz and world number one ranked women's tennis player Iga Swiatek won the Indian Wells 1000 men's and women's titles, respectively.
- ★ Carlos Alcaraz defeated Russian tennis player Daniil Medvedev in the final of the Indian Wells ATP Master 1000 title, which was played at Indian Wells in California, United States.
- ★ Carlos Alcaraz became the second player after Rafael Nadal to win five Master 1000 titles before turning 21.
- ★ Iga Swiatek of Poland defeated Maria Sakkari of Greece to win her second Indian Wells WTA title.

Formula 4 Race Organized for First Time in Srinagar, J&K

- ★ Formula-4 car racing event was organized for the first time in Srinagar. This car racing event was held on the banks of Dal Lake in Boulevard Road located on the Zabarwan Mountain Range.
- ★ This race took place on a 1.7 kilometer track from Lalit Ghat to Nehru Park.
- ★ The Formula-4 car racing event in Srinagar was organized by the Federation of Motor Clubs of India.
- ★ There is no world championship for FIA Formula-4 racing events but instead they are organized as regional events.
- ★ In comparison to Formula 1, Formula 3 and Formula 4 are low speed races. In this, the maximum speed of the car can be up to 210 kilometers per hour.
- ★ The minimum age to participate in the Formula-4 car racing event should be 15 years.
- ★ The event was organized to promote tourism under the auspices of the Tourism Department in collaboration with Formula-4 and Indian Racing League.
- ★ The race was organized with the aim of encouraging multi-career options for local youth.

Billiards Hall of Fame

- ★ India's great billiards player Pankaj Advani has been inducted into the 'Hall of Fame of the World Billiards Museum'.
- ★ Pankaj Advani has won 26 world titles in snooker and billiards combined. In which Pankaj has 18 billiards and 8 snooker world titles.
- ★ The 38-year-old cue star Pankaj has won 18 Billiards World Titles, 17 IBSF World Billiards Championships and one World Team Billiards Championship.
- ★ In snooker, Pankaj has won the IBSF World Snooker Championship three times.
- ★ He has won the IBSF World Six-Red Championship twice.
- ★ Pankaj has won the IBSF World Team Cup and IBSF World Team Championship once each.

WTT Feeder Beirut Table Tennis 2024 Title

- ★ Indian table tennis player G. Sathiyam beat fellow Indian Manav Vikash Thakkar in the final to win the men's singles title at the WTT Feeder Beirut 2024 table tennis tournament at the Al Kawthar Secondary School in Lebanon on 21 March 2024.
- ★ Diya Chitale and Manush Shah won the second title for India by winning the mixed doubles title.
- ★ World Table Tennis (WTT) was created by the International Table Tennis Federation in 2019 to create and manage professional men's and women's Table Tennis events worldwide.
- ★ The WTT organises a series of events for professional table tennis players around the year.

Chef De Mission for the Paris Olympics

- ★ Six-time women's boxing World Champion Mary Kom was appointed Chef de Mission of Indian contingent for the Paris Olympics, while veteran table tennis player and CWG champion Sharath Kamal will be the country's flag bearer at the Games.
- ★ The 41-year-old table tennis player symbolises "the unity and spirit of our contingent as they compete on the Olympic stage", the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said in a statement while making the announcement.
- ★ Mary Kom, bronze medallist at the 2012 London Olympics, will be assisted by luger Shiva Keshavan, who has been appointed the Deputy Chef de Mission.

Flag Bearer of Paris Olympic 2024

- ★ Two-time Commonwealth Games gold medalist and veteran Table Tennis player Sharath Kamal has been appointed to be the flag bearer of the Indian contingent at the Paris Summer Olympics 2024.
- ★ The 32nd Summer Olympics will be held in Paris, the capital of France, from 26 July to 11 August 2024.
- ★ Flag bearer is the first person who leads his country's contingent during the opening ceremony parade of the games.
- ★ In the Olympic Games also, the flag bearer is normally a distinguished player of the country who is/are given the honour to lead the country's contingent comprising athletes, supporting staff and other officials in the opening ceremony.

First Indian to have 12000 Runs in T20 Match

- ★ Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli has achieved another milestone in his career by becoming the first Indian cricketer to score 12,000 runs in T20 format.
- ★ The 12,000 runs include the runs he scored for RCB in the IPL and the now-defunct Champions League, for Delhi in domestic Twenty-over cricket and for India in T20 Internationals.
- ★ Rohit Sharma is the second highest Indian run-scorer in T20 cricket with a total of 11,156 runs.
- ★ The leading position in the list is held by former West Indies opener, Chris Gayle, who has scored a massive 14,562 runs in T20 cricket.
- ★ Kohli crossed the milestone in the seventh over of the CSK vs RCB IPL match.

FIFA Cancels Japan and North Korea World Cup Qualifier

- ★ Soccer's world governing body, FIFA, has cancelled a World Cup qualifier between Japan and North Korea which was scheduled to be played on 26 March in Pyongyang.
- ★ FIFA announced the decision on its website, saying it decided in the absence of an alternative venue confirmed by North Korea and the lack of space in the calendar to postpone this game.
- ★ The announcement followed a notification by the North that it could no longer host the match.
- ★ The Asian Football Confederation had said that the match would not take place as scheduled due to unforeseen circumstances.
- ★ North Korea appeared to be concerned about a rise in infectious diseases in Japan.

Indian Masters National Badminton Championship 2024

- ★ Maharashtra's Naheed Divecha has won two gold medals in the Indian Masters National Badminton Championship 2024 in Panchkula.
- ★ Divecha, a member of the Bombay Gymkhana and associated with Shuttle Craze Academy clinched the Women's 50 singles title by defeating Haryana's Sunita Singh Panwar in straight sets.
- ★ Later, the duo of Naheed Divecha and Kiran Mokade grabbed the Mixed Doubles 50 title with an impressive win over the top-seeded Karnataka pair of Prabakaran Subbaiyan and Jayashree Raghu in straight sets.

Australian Grand Prix

- ★ Carlos Sainz of Ferrari won Australian Grand Prix.
- ★ The race was filled with drama, including the first retirement in two years for Red Bull's reigning world champion Max Verstappen.
- ★ Lando Norris of McLaren claimed third place, earning his first podium of the season.
- ★ His teammate, Oscar Piastri, finished fourth. Sergio Perez, Verstappen's Red Bull teammate secured fifth place.

14th Senior Women's National Championship

- ★ Hockey Haryana beat hosts Hockey Maharashtra in the final to win the 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship.
- ★ The match was played at the Major Dhyanchand Hockey Stadium in Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra.
- ★ In the final, the two teams were tied at 1-1 at the end of the full-time. In the ensuing penalty shootout, Hockey Haryana defeated Maharashtra 3-0 to win the 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship for the third time.

Co-chair of the FIH Athlete Panel

- ★ Former Indian men's hockey team captain and its goalkeeper goalkeepers PR Sreejesh and Camila Caram of Chile have been appointed by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) as co-chairs of the FIH Athletes Committee.
- ★ This was announced by the International Hockey Federation (FIH) on 27 March 2024.
- ★ Camila Caram has been assigned co-chair and athlete committee representative on the executive board.
- ★ PR Sreejesh, former Indian men's hockey team captain, is the co-chair, and he will lead the planning and meetings along with Caram.
- ★ FIH acts as a link between the players and the international governing body for hockey.
- ★ The FIH Athletes Committee makes recommendations to various FIH bodies like the FIH Executive Board, FIH Committees, Advisory Panels and other bodies for the development and betterment of hockey worldwide.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

International IP Index 2024

- ★ India has retained its 42nd position on the International IP Index in 2024, which indicates consistency in its intellectual property regime score at 38.64%.
- ★ This information was revealed in a comprehensive report by the US Chamber of Commerce, which evaluated the intellectual property infrastructures of 55 countries.
- ★ The report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of India's IP landscape, indicating that the USA, UK, France, Germany, and Sweden are leading the pack. The report also highlights critical areas where India needs significant improvement.
- ★ The International IP Index 2024 highlighted a positive global trend towards improving IP policies. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and Nigeria have made notable advancements in this regard.
- ★ Intellectual property rights (IPR) are legal rights granted to inventors or creators to safeguard their inventions or creations for a specific period of time.

India is 3rd Largest Digitalised Country among G20 Nations

- ★ According to the State of India's Digital Economy Report, 2024, by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), India is the third largest digitalised country in the world, only behind the United States of America (USA) and China.
- ★ However, at the level of individual users, India is ranked 12th in terms of digitalisation among the G20 countries.
- ★ The study is based on 'CHIPS' framework wherein it has scored countries on five pillars - connect, harness, innovate, protect and sustain.
- ★ India has the world's second-largest internet network with more than 700 million users.

- ★ It has also seen one of the fastest rollouts of 5G, after its launch in October 2022.
- ★ During its G20 presidency, India was recognised as a champion of using digital public infrastructure (DPI).

Best Airport in Asia Pacific Region

- ★ Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport has received the title of 'Best Airport' in the Asia-Pacific region for the sixth consecutive year for its excellence.
- ★ This information was announced by Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) on 11 March 2024.
- ★ IGI found in its survey that IGI Airport is better in the category of airports with a capacity of 40 million per year in 2023.
- ★ The overall service provided to passengers at IGI Airport has been among the best in Asia Pacific.
- ★ Regarding the award, DIAL believes that IGI Airport is providing the best facilities to its passengers while following the global aviation standards.
- ★ This survey of ACI was based on the information given to the international agency about its opinion during travel from other airports including IGI Airport.
- ★ This award strengthens IGI Airport's role as a leader in the aviation industry.

India is Second-Largest Manufacturer of Mobile Phones

- ★ India now stands as the world's second-largest producer of mobile phones at the end of the decade 2014-2024.
- ★ India Cellular and Electronics Association informed that the sector has transitioned from being 78 percent import-dependent in 2014 to 97 per cent self-sufficiency.
- ★ Only three percent of the total mobile phones sold in India are now imported.
- ★ India's mobile phone production is nearing 20 lakh crore rupees in a decade of unprecedented growth.
- ★ India produced 2.45 billion units of mobile phones during these ten years, against a goal of 2.5 billion units.

Haryana, Karnataka And Punjab Lead in Used Water Management

- ★ The Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) released a report on used water management in the country.
- ★ Haryana, Karnataka and Punjab have been placed at the forefront in the country in terms of used water management.
- ★ The demand for water in cities is continuously increasing. Whereas the ground water level is continuously decreasing.
- ★ There is a need to increase the treatment and reuse of water used for non-drinking purposes at the level of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the country.
- ★ The index comparatively ranks ULBs based on five themes. These themes are as follows: finance, infrastructure, efficiency, governance and data and information.

- ★ CEEW utilizes data, integrated analysis, and strategic outreach to elucidate and alter resource utilization, reuse, and misuse.
- ★ CEEW tackles global challenges through an integrated and internationally focused approach.

Gender Inequality Index 2022 of UNDP

- ★ According to the Gender Inequality Index 2022 released by the United Nations Development Programme out of 193 countries India stands at rank 108 with a score of 0.437.
- ★ UNDP released the Gender Inequality Index 2022 in their Human Development Report 2023-2024 on March 13, 2024.
- ★ India's rank was 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021.
- ★ The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a measure of inequality between men and women. A lower GII value indicates a smaller gap between the genders, while a higher value indicates a larger gap.

DHL Connectedness Index

- ★ According to the recently published DHL Global Connectedness Report 2024, India ranked 62nd on the DHL Global Connectedness 2023 Index.
- ★ The DHL Global Connectedness Report has been published annually since 2011.
- ★ The report is commissioned by the German logistics company DHL and prepared by the New York University Stern School of Business.
- ★ A country's connectedness to the world is measured by the global movement of trade, capital, information, and people.
- ★ Based on these indicators, the report ranks 181 countries and territories.
- ★ The 2024 edition ranks the connectedness of 181 countries, accounting for 99.7% of the world's gross domestic product and 98.7% of its population.
- ★ Singapore was the most globally connected country, followed by the Netherlands and Ireland.
- ★ The report found Europe to be the most globally connected region. After Europe, the most connected regions were North America, followed by the Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa.

Bihar's Begusarai Most Polluted Metropolitan City Globally in 2023

- ★ According to the 6th Annual World Air Quality Report, Begusarai has emerged as the most polluted metropolitan area globally in 2023.
- ★ India is among the world's top three most polluted countries in 2023, according to the 6th Annual World Air Quality Report released by IQAir.
- ★ IQAir uses data from both government sources, such as air-quality data from regulatory bodies like the US Environmental Protection Agency, and lower-cost sensors like the ones it produces.
- ★ The report analyzed data from over 30,000 air quality monitoring stations worldwide and indicates a concerning situation for India's environment and public health.

- ★ The report says India's average PM2.5 concentration is more than ten times the World Health Organization's (WHO) annual guideline, ranking India behind only Bangladesh and Pakistan in the list of the most polluted countries.
- ★ The report found that only ten countries and territories had "healthy" air quality levels, namely Finland, Estonia, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand, Bermuda, Grenada, Iceland, Mauritius, and French Polynesia.

UN's World Happiness Report

- ★ In the United Nations sponsored annual 'World Happiness Report' released on 20 March 2024, 'Finland' has been considered the happiest country in the world.
- ★ Finland has become the happiest country in the world for the seventh consecutive year in this United Nations report.
- ★ India ranks 126th among 143 countries in World Happiness Report.
- ★ In the World Happiness Report, Afghanistan has been placed at the lowest position in the list of 143 countries.
- ★ The report is based on global survey data of people from 143 countries.
- ★ The report ranks countries in happiness based on their average life assessment over the past three years.

Hurun Global Rich List Report of Hurun India

- ★ According to a recently released 13th Hurun Global Rich List report of Hurun India on 26 March 2024, India's financial capital, Mumbai, has emerged as the Asian billionaire capital, replacing China's capital, Beijing.
- ★ Mumbai has also emerged as the fastest-growing billionaire capital in the world.
- ★ According to the Hurun report, the number of billionaires in Mumbai increased from 66 to 92 and secured third position.
- ★ According to the report, India added the largest number of new billionaires to the list after the United States of America due to a booming stock market.
- ★ The number of billionaires in India increased to 271.
- ★ New York with 119 billionaires secured top position in the list.
- ★ Delhi was ranked 9th with 57 billionaires. It was included for the first time in the top 10 cities with the highest number of billionaires.

AWARDS & PRIZES

150 Railway Stations Awarded by FSSAI 'Eat Right Station' Certification

- ★ The Eat Right Station initiative has accomplished a remarkable feat as it has certified 150 railway stations nationwide.

- ★ This certification indicates the strict compliance of food safety, hygiene, and nutrition standards. This ensures that the passengers can access healthy and safe meals during their travels.
- ★ The 'Eat Right Station' certification is an initiative by FSSAI that recognizes railway stations that provide passengers with safe and nutritious food.
- ★ After an FSSAI-approved third-party audit agency evaluation, stations are awarded certificates with ratings ranging from 1 to 5 stars, with a 5-star rating indicating full compliance with food safety and hygiene standards.
- ★ This certification is an important part of the 'Eat Right India' movement, a comprehensive initiative by FSSAI aimed at revolutionizing the country's food system to ensure everyone's safety, health, and sustainability.
- ★ Through regulatory measures, capacity-building efforts, collaboration, and empowerment, Eat Right India strives to ensure that food is suitable for people and the planet.
- ★ This movement aims to ensure that every passenger, regardless of their destination, has access to safe and healthy food options throughout their journey.

India Digital Awards

- ★ Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) was awarded "Start-up of the Year" at the 14th India Digital Awards on 29 February 2024.
- ★ ONDC has been given this award for developing a unique open network of its kind for digital commerce in India.
- ★ Established in 2010, the India Digital Awards recognizes excellence in digital initiatives undertaken by the government, businesses and individuals in the country.
- ★ This recognition at the renowned India Digital Summit is a testament to ONDC's commitment towards digital excellence and innovation.
- ★ ONDC noted that it has received the award for its potential impact in revolutionizing e-commerce and levelling digital opportunities for all Indians.

Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for 2022 and 2023

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu will confer the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the years 2022 and 2023 to a total of ninety-four eminent artists in New Delhi.
- ★ These awards will be presented in recognition of outstanding contributions in the fields of music, dance, drama, folk and tribal arts, puppetry, and allied theatre art forms.
- ★ In addition to the Akademi Awards, President Murmu will also bestow the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (Akademi Ratna) to seven distinguished artists during the ceremony.
- ★ The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship is the highest honor given to distinguished artists in the field of performing arts for their outstanding contributions.
- ★ The Akademi Awards have been presented since 1952.
- ★ These honors not only represent the highest standards of excellence and achievement, but also recognize sustained individual work and contribution.

- ★ The Akademi Fellow award carries a cash prize of three lakh rupees, while the Akademi Award includes a cash prize of one lakh rupees.

Tiger Woods Awarded USGA Golf's Most Prestigious Award

- ★ Renowned golfer Tiger Woods has been selected for the Bob Jones Award, the US Golf Association's (USGA) highest honour.
- ★ This award is the highest honor given to Tiger Woods by the United States Golf Association (USGA).
- ★ Tiger Woods will be honored during the US Open on June 12, 2024 in North Carolina.
- ★ Woods was recognized for his exemplary commitment to sporting traditions and integrity, as well as on-course accomplishments.
- ★ Tiger Woods is a 15-time major champion and nine-time USGA champion.
- ★ Woods has redefined the game of golf in the modern era by overcoming physical and personal challenges.
- ★ The award is given to an individual who has demonstrated sportsmanship, personal character and honor consistent with that of Jones, a USGA Championship winner.

First 'National Creators Award' 2024

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi awarded the inaugural 'National Creator Awards' for 2024 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on 8th March.
- ★ In the programme organized at Bharat Mandapam, storyteller Jaya Kishori was given the award for the best writer for social change.
- ★ On this occasion, a total of 23 people from across the country were honored with the National Creators Award.
- ★ This marks the first presentation of the award.
- ★ The National Creators Awards is an effort to recognize excellence and impact in various sectors of society. Mainly the following were included under this are Tell a Story, Advocating Social Change, Environmental Sustainability and Education and Gaming.

IAA Golden Compass Award

- ★ Srinivasan Swamy received the 'IAA Golden Compass Award' from the International Advertising Association (IAA) in March 2024.
- ★ Srinivasan Swamy holds the position of Chairman and Managing Director at RK Swamy Limited. He is also known as Sundar Swami.
- ★ This award is being given for the first time to an Indian industrial leader.
- ★ Srinivasan Swamy has been awarded the IAA Golden Compass Award at the 45th IAA World Congress held in Penang, Malaysia.
- ★ The award honors stalwarts who have made significant contributions in the field of marketing, advertising and media industries.

- ★ The award is given to recognize his commitment to excellence in communications as well as his contribution to the worldwide advancement of the International Advertising Association.
- ★ The Golden Compass Awards honor outdoor industry leaders for their notable achievements in international advertising and marketing.

‘Measles and Rubella Champion Global Award’

- ★ India has been honored with the prestigious ‘Measles and Rubella Champion’ award.
- ★ India has been given this award for its exemplary efforts in combating these diseases.
- ★ India received recognition from ‘The Measles and Rubella Partnership’ at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington DC.
- ★ Ambassador Sripriya Ranganathan accepted the award on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington.
- ★ This award reaffirms India’s unwavering commitment to public health and controlling the spread of these infectious diseases among children.
- ★ According to the Union Health Ministry, vaccination against measles and rubella is being done in the country under the Universal Immunization Program (UIP).

Miss World 2024

- ★ Krystyna Pyszková of the Czech Republic has been crowned the 71st Miss World in a grand ceremony held in Mumbai.
- ★ The 24-year-old Pyszková competed against contestants from 115 countries.
- ★ Miss World 2022 Karolina Bielawska of Poland crowned Krystyna as the 71st Miss World.
- ★ Meanwhile, Yasmina Zaytoun of Lebanon was crowned the First Runner-Up at the beauty pageant.
- ★ The event was co-hosted by former Miss World Megan Young and Indian Film Director Karan Johar.
- ★ According to Miss World Organisation, Krystyna Pyszková is a student, volunteer, and international model.

Diana Memorial Award

- ★ India’s Uday Bhatia and Manasi Gupta were honored with the ‘Diana Memorial Award’ on 14 March 2024.
- ★ Along with them, a total of 20 people from the world were honored with the ‘Diana Memorial Award’.
- ★ This award is given every two years in memory of Princess Diana. This award is given to exceptional youth of the world for their social work or humanitarian services.
- ★ The Diana Award charity, established in memory of the late Princess of Wales, is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

- ★ Uday Bhatia and Manasi Gupta received the award from Prince William at the awards ceremony at the Science Museum, London.
- ★ Uday Bhatia is an inventor from Delhi. Uday Electric, founded by 18-year-old Uday Bhatia, is headquartered in Delhi. Uday's low-cost invention can provide relief from power cuts.
- ★ Manasi Gupta is a mental health campaigner from Haryana. Huesothemind Foundation, founded by Manasi Gupta, is headquartered in Gurugram.

ET Awards for Corporate Excellence 2023

- ★ The Economic Times Award for Corporate Excellence 2023 ceremony was held in Mumbai. At this event, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was the Guest of Honour.
- ★ The Economic Times Awards for Corporate Excellence is sponsored by India's leading financial newspaper, the Economic Times.
- ★ The award recognises and honours the best and brightest in entrepreneurial and business success and policy and reform achievements.
- ★ The Winners in the various segments were selected by a seven-member Jury headed by Tata Sons Chairman N.Chandrasekaran.
 - Reformer of the Year: S. Jaishankar
 - Company of the Year: State Bank of India
 - Lifetime Achievement: AM Naik, Chairman Emeritus, Larsen & Toubro
 - Global Indian of the Year: Leena Nair, CEO, Chanel
 - Business Leader of the Year: CK Venkataraman, MD, Titan
 - Entrepreneur of the Year: Ramesh Juneja, Chairman, Mankind Pharma & Rajeev Juneja, VC & MD, Mankind Pharma.
 - Businesswoman of the Year: Hina Nagarajan, CEO & MD, Diageo India
 - Conscious Corporate of the Year: HDFC Bank
 - Emerging Company of the Year: Adani Green Energy Ltd.

2023 Saraswati Samman

- ★ The K.K. Birla Foundation has selected noted poet and litterateur Prabha Varma for the 33rd Saraswati Samman for 2023 for his novel Roudra Sathwikam .
- ★ According to the Birla Foundation, the novel "Roudra Sathwikam, written in poetic verse in the Malayalam language, probes the conflict between power and politics, individual and state and art and power in a unique way.
- ★ He has published over 30 books, including a dozen collections of poems, three novels in verse, eight books on the contemporary socio-political milieu and literature and seven collections of essays in criticism.
- ★ He has also received the State and Filmfare award for best film lyrics. Prabha Varma is the media advisor to the Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.
- ★ The Saraswati Samman is an annual prize. It is given to an outstanding literary work published in the last 10 years. It is given to a work written in any Indian language by an Indian citizen.

- ★ The winner is given a cash prize of ₹ 15 lakhs, a citation and a plaque.

Sangita Kalanidhi and Nritya Kalanidhi Award

- ★ Renowned Carnatic musician T.M. Krishna has been selected for the 2024 Sangita Kalanidhi.
- ★ Neena Prasad has been selected for the Nritya Kalanidhi Award for 2024.
- ★ The Executive Committee of the Sangeet Academy decided to give him this award in its meeting on March 17, 2024.
- ★ T.M. Krishna will be honored with the prestigious Sangita Kalanidhi Award by The Music Academy, Madras.
- ★ Sri Krishna is an author who has written analytical books on music. Krishna has received numerous awards for his music, his writing and his advocacy of social issues.
- ★ Sangita Kala Acharya Awards will be presented to mridangam maestro Parasala Ravi and singer Geeta Raja.

Aviation Week Laureates Award Was Given To ISRO for Chandrayaan-3

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has received the Aviation Week Laureates Award for its noteworthy accomplishments with the Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- ★ The award was accepted on behalf of ISRO by Sripriya Ranganathan, Deputy Ambassador at the Indian Embassy in the US.
- ★ In the aviation and aerospace industry the Aviation Week Network's Laureate Awards are a prestigious recognition of the extraordinary achievements of individuals and teams.
- ★ The recognition by Aviation Week demonstrates the international appreciation and respect for ISRO's significant contributions to space exploration, having previously received the Leif Erikson Lunar Prize from the Husavik Museum for their unwavering commitment to lunar exploration.
- ★ The mission objectives include demonstrating a safe and soft landing on the lunar surface, rover roving on the moon, and conducting in-situ scientific experiments. Both Vikram and Pragyan are designed to operate for one lunar day, which lasts 14 Earth days.

Devi Shankar Awasthi Award

- ★ Young poet critic Nishant has been announced to be given the 29th Devi Shankar Awasthi Award for the year 2023.
- ★ Nishant will be given this honor for his criticism book 'Kavita Pathak Aalochna'.
- ★ Dr. Devishankar Awasthi was a renowned critic of Hindi literature. In his memory, the honor has been given to a young critic every year for the last 29 years.
- ★ Basically this award is given to a young critic for his significant contribution in the development of Hindi criticism.
- ★ It was founded in the memory of the famous Hindi critic Devi Shankar Awasthi by his wife Kamlesh Awasthi and his family.
- ★ This honor is given to a young critical writer up to the age of 45 years.

Bhutan's Order of the Druk Gyalpo Award

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a two-day visit to Bhutan, was conferred 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' by the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck on 22 March 2024.
- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the first foreign leader to receive the highest Bhutanese civilian award, the Order of the Druk Gyalpo'.
- ★ Prime Minister Modi, along with the Bhutanese King, attended a cultural programme organised in his honour at the Tendrelthang Festival Ground.
- ★ The two leaders discussed various aspects of bilateral relations. They agreed to enhance co-operation in agriculture, environment and forestry, renewable energy, youth exchange, and tourism.
- ★ During his visit, Prime Minister Modi will also inaugurate an Indian-funded state-of-the-art Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Thimphu.

Bihar Diwas in New York Honored Four Prominent Diaspora Members

- ★ Four prominent Americans of Indian origin belong to Bihar were honored on the occasion of 'Bihar Diwas'.
- ★ Four prominent Americans of Indian origin were honored at an event in New York for their outstanding achievements and contributions.
- ★ Four prominent personalities were honored with 'Bihar Vishwa Gaurav Samman' in a special programme in New York.
- ★ Prominent individuals to be honored include the following:
 - Dr. Chris Singh: Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Holtec International. Dr. Chris Singh is an outstanding inventor who is recognized for his contribution in the field of nuclear waste management.
 - Amit Choudhary: Chief Operating Officer of Wipro. Amit Chaudhary underlined the collective spirit of Bihar and its potential in development
 - Dr. Dinesh Ranjan: Founder of 'PRAN Medical Group'. Dr. Dinesh Ranjan emphasized Bihar's underprivileged healthcare needs, urging urgent action.
 - Abhinav Atul: Director of 'Nutrivet Pharmcare'. Abhinav Atul was honored for his mission to provide medicines to pets at affordable prices.
- ★ This felicitation ceremony was organized by the Consulate General of India in New York in collaboration with several organizations.

'Airline of the year' at Air Transport Awards 2024

- ★ Budget airline IndiGo is named as the 'Airline of the Year' at the Air Transport Awards 2024 held in Greece's Athens.
- ★ IndiGo recently became India's first carrier to operate 2,000 daily flights and carry 100 million passengers in a year.
- ★ The low-cost carrier aims to aggressively expand its network by doubling its fleet size by the end of this decade.

- ★ The 2024 Air Transport Awards was organised in partnership with Hermes – Air Transport Organisation and ATN – Air Transport News to recognize the contributions made in the aviation sector.
- ★ The winners are voted for by both the readers of Air Transport News as well as a jury of international aviation experts.
- ★ Founded in 2005, IndiGo is the largest aviation company in India with respect to market share and operates a fleet of over 350 aircraft.

Michel Talagrand Awarded the 2024 Abel Prize

- ★ The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has decided to award the Abel Prize for 2024 to Michel Talagrand of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, France.
- ★ Michel Talagrand is awarded for his work in probability theory and stochastic processes.
- ★ From the outset, the development of probability theory was motivated by problems that arose in the context of gambling or assessing risks.
- ★ The Abel Prize was modelled after the Nobel Prizes, which do not include mathematics and was first awarded in 2003.
- ★ The recipient wins a sum of 7.5 million Norwegian kroner (US\$ 700,000).

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

New Chairperson of Lokpal

- ★ President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar, a former Supreme Court judge, as the new chairperson of Lokpal.
- ★ Justice Khanwilkar will be the second Lokpal in India, succeeding Pinaki Chandra Ghose who retired in May 2022 after serving a two-year tenure.
- ★ Currently, the acting chairperson and judicial member of Lokpal is Justice Pradip Kumar Mohanty, former Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court.
- ★ Besides the appointment of Justice Khanwilkar, the President also appointed former High Court Chief Justices, namely Justice Lingappa Narayana Swamy, Justice Sanjay Yadav, and Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, as judicial members.

Chief Executive Officer of World Gold Council

- ★ The World Gold Council has appointed Sachin Jain as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO), India, who will take up the role in March 2024.
- ★ Jain will succeed Somasundaram PR, who will continue in his present job and duties till Jain joins to facilitate a smooth transfer.
- ★ Somasundaram will continue to work with the World Gold Council as an advisor on the establishment of a self-regulatory organisation (SRO), which is a critical project for the Indian gold sector.

- ★ Sachin joins from De Beers where he has held several senior roles for the past 13 years.
- ★ As Managing Director of De Beers India, he has led the De Beers Forevermark business in India and the Middle East.
- ★ He has over two decades of rich experience and understanding of the Indian consumer.
- ★ Sachin has held senior positions for De Beers, Lladro, Swatch Group and Benetton.

Part-Time Chairman of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of S Ravindran as the part-time Chairman of Tuticorin-based Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB).
- ★ This appointment is effective from February 29, 2024, and extends till August 2, 2026.
- ★ Prior to assuming charge as part-time Chairman of the bank, he has to step down from the directorships in Shriram Finance and Bandhan AMC
- ★ The position of non-executive part-time Chairman at TMB had been vacant since February 2, 2020, following the departure of Annamalai.
- ★ TMB had previously recommended Vijayadurai for the Chairman role on August 20, 2022, but the proposal was not approved by the RBI.

First Female Sniper of BSF

- ★ Suman Kumari achieved the 'Instructor Grade' upon completing an eight-week sniper course at CSWT, Indore, in March 2024.
- ★ BSF Sub-Inspector Suman Kumari made history as the first woman sniper in the Border Security Force.
- ★ The Indian Army is adopting enabling policies to induct women officers and motivate them to join the army.
- ★ A trained sniper is specially trained to act in difficult situations while concealing her identity. Snipers are capable of hitting the enemy accurately from a distance of more than three kilometers.

New Director General of National Security Guard

- ★ The Centre appointed 1990 batch IPS Officer, Daljit Singh Chaudhary as the Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG).
- ★ He took the place of MA Ganapathy.
- ★ Chaudhary, who is currently the DG of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), has been given the additional charge of heading the NSG.
- ★ The National Security Guard (NSG) is an elite counter-terrorism unit under the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- ★ National Security Guard personnel are referred to as 'Black Cats'.
- ★ The force is trained to deal with specific situations and used only in exceptional circumstances as deemed by the government.

Non-Executive Chairman of Bank of India

- ★ Bank of India (BoI) has announced the appointment of MR Kumar, former Chairman of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), as its non-Executive Chairman.
- ★ Alongside MR Kumar's appointment, Bank of India also announced the appointment of Rajiv Mishra as an Executive Director.
- ★ Apart from serving as the Chairman of LIC, he also served as a Director on the boards of Kenindia Assurance, Kenya, and ACC India.
- ★ He has held leadership roles such as chairmanship of the governing board of National Insurance Academy and presidency of the Insurance Institute of India.
- ★ Additionally, he served as the Chairman of the Council of Insurance Ombudsman.
- ★ MR Kumar served as the Chairman of LIC from 2019 to March 2023 before joining BoI.

Whole-Time Director at CSB Bank

- ★ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of BK Divakara as a Whole-Time Director (Executive Director) of CSB Bank for 3 years.
- ★ Divakara is an Associate Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and the Institute of Cost and Management Accounts of India.
- ★ He has been Head-Strategy and Corporate Legal at CSB Bank since June 2023.
- ★ Prior to this, he held the position of CFO from February 2020 to June 2023.
- ★ Before joining CSB Bank, Divakara was Executive Director with Central Bank of India for five years beginning January 23, 2014.

New President of Paralympic Committee of India

- ★ Devendra Jhajharia, a two-time Paralympic gold medalist, has been elected as the new President of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI).
- ★ Devendra Jhajharia, a javelin thrower, won gold medals in the 2004 Athens and 2016 Rio Paralympics in the F46 disability category.
- ★ He was the only candidate for the post of PCI President.
- ★ All the new office bearers were elected unopposed.

A.S. Rajeev Sworn in as Vigilance Commissioner in CVC

- ★ Banker A.S. Rajeev was sworn in as a member of the Central Vigilance Commission on 11 March 2024 in New Delhi .
- ★ He was administered the oath of office as the Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission by the Central Vigilance Commissioner Praveen Kumar Srivastava.
- ★ The other Vigilance Commissioner Arvinda Kumar was also present on the occasion.
- ★ A.S. Rajeev is a career banker and has more than 38 years of experience in four public sector banks Syndicate Bank, Indian Bank, Vijaya Bank and Bank of Maharashtra.

- ★ It consists of a Chairman and two Vigilance Commissioners.
- ★ The tenure of a Central Vigilance Commissioner and Vigilance Commissioner is four years or until the incumbent attains the age of 65, whichever is earlier.

Chairman of FIEO

- ★ On March 11, 2024, Ashwani Kumar was elected unanimously the new Chairman of the premier exporter body, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO). He has replaced A. Sakthivel.
- ★ Mr Ashwani Kumar, who is based in Jalandhar (Punjab), is a business entrepreneur in the engineering sector. He served as the Regional Chairman (Northern Region) of FIEO.
- ★ The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) was established in 1965 as an Apex Body of Export Promotion Organisations.
- ★ FIEO plays a crucial role in bringing together the international trading community of India, the Central and State Governments, and all bodies that facilitate export trade, such as financial institutions, ports, railways, and surface transport.
- ★ It serves on the high-level committees constituted by the Government of India to facilitate trade and provides vital input to the Government on various trade matters.

New Election Commissioner

- ★ On 14 March 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's led three-member selection panel appointed Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as the new Election Commissioners in the Election Commission of India.
- ★ The new members have been appointed under the newly enacted Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act 2023.
- ★ Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu are both retired IAS Officers.
- ★ Gyanesh Kumar retired as the Secretary of the Ministry of Co-operation. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu retired as the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand.

New Chairman of CBSE

- ★ The Central Government has appointed senior IAS Officer Rahul Singh the Chairman of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on March 13, 2024.
- ★ Rahul Singh will replace Nidhi Chiber in this post because Nidhi Chiber has recently been made an advisor in NITI Aayog.
- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Rahul Singh as the Chairman of CBSE. Rahul Singh is a 1996 batch Indian Administrative Service Officer of Bihar cadre.
- ★ Rahul Singh is currently the Under Secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
- ★ AP Das Joshi, a 1994 batch IAS Officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been appointed the additional Secretary of DoPT, replacing Rahul Singh.

Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes

- ★ Shri Kishor Makwana assumed the charge of Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) in New Delhi.
- ★ Shri Luv Kush Kumar also assumed the charge of Member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).
- ★ Makwana served as a joint spokesperson of the Gujarat unit of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP).
- ★ He is also a journalist and a columnist.
- ★ He has been an Author of more than 33 books on the subjects like the 'Samajik Kranti na Mahanayak Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar', 'Swami Vivekananda' etc.

New Prime Minister of Palestine

- ★ Following the resignation of Mohammed Shtayyeh, Mohammad Mustafa was appointed the new Prime Minister of Palestine. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas.
- ★ Mohammad Mustafa is one of Palestine's leading business figures.
- ★ Mohammad Mustafa has overseen Gaza reconstruction under Hamas Islamist rule.
- ★ Mohammad Mustafa has served as an economic advisor to President Abbas for an extended period.
- ★ Mohammad Mustafa holds a doctorate degree in Business Administration and Economics from George Washington University, USA.

Chairman of Prasar Bharati

- ★ The Central Government has appointed retired bureaucrat Navneet Kumar Sehgal the new Chairman of Prasar Bharati. Navneet Sehgal has become the seventh President of Prasar Bharati.
- ★ Navneet Kumar Sehgal replaced A Surya Prakash.
- ★ A. Surya Prakash retired in February 2020 after serving for two consecutive terms since 2014.
- ★ According to an order issued by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Navneet Kumar Sehgal, on the recommendation of the President Selection Committee, has been appointed the Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board.
- ★ The tenure of Navneet Kumar Sehgal would be for a period of three years.

Indian Oil Corporation's Director of Human Resources

- ★ Rashmi Govil has taken charge as Director (Human Resources) at Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IndianOil).
- ★ She joined IndianOil in 1994 and brings with her nearly three decades of rich experience in various facets of the human resources function.
- ★ She has pioneered the unique innovation cell 'Srijan', steered the roll-out of enterprise-wide SAP solutions in HR, and has led multiple landmark settlements with the collectives, including long-term wage settlements with the unions of IndianOil.

- ★ She has also worked at Indian Oil's refineries headquarters, as well as handled the challenging environment at the unit at Mathura Refinery.
- ★ Prior to her appointment as Director (HR), she was serving as Executive Director (HRD & Employee Relations) at the company's corporate office.

Spokesperson of Government of India

- ★ Senior Indian Information Service Officer Sheyphali B. Sharan was appointed as the spokesperson of the Central Government.
- ★ Sheypheli B. Sharan is a 1990 batch Indian Information Service Officer. Sheyphell B. Sharan will hold the charge of Principal Director General (PDG) of Press Information Bureau (PIB).
- ★ The tenure of the current Principal Director General of Press Information Bureau, Manish Desai, is ending on March 31, 2024. After this Sheyphali B. Sharan will take over the charge.
- ★ After 2014, Sheyphali B. Sharan will be the first Woman Officer to become PDG of PIB.
- ★ Sheyphali Sharann worked as the spokesperson of the Election Commission during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Director General of All India Radio

- ★ Maushami Chakraborty was appointed as the Director General of All India Radio.
- ★ According to the information given by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Maushami Chakraborty will replace Vasudha Gupta.
- ★ Maushami Chakraborty is a 1991 batch Indian Information Service Officer.
- ★ Broadcasting in India began about 13 years before All India Radio came into existence.
- ★ In June 1923, the Radio Club of Bombay made the first broadcast in the country.

Vinay Kumar has been Appointed Indian Ambassador to Russia

- ★ Vinay Kumar has been appointed India's next ambassador to Russia.
- ★ The Ministry of External Affairs also announced a host of new ambassadors of India appointed to different countries.
- ★ 1992 batch Indian Foreign Service Officer Vinay Kumar, who is presently the ambassador to Myanmar, has been named the next ambassador to Russia.
- ★ The 1997 batch of Indian Foreign Service Officer T. Armstrong Changsan has been appointed the next ambassador of India to Cuba. T. Armstrong Changsan is currently posted as a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- ★ The 1993 batch of Indian Foreign Service Officer Soumendu Bagchi has been appointed the next ambassador of Iraq.
- ★ 1995 batch Indian Foreign Service Officer Ms Abhilasha Joshi has been appointed the next Indian ambassador to the South American country Chile.
- ★ The President of India appoints a person as India's Ambassador or High Commissioner on the recommendation of the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister.

President of Indian Steel Association

- ★ Noted industrialist and former member of Parliament Naveen Jindal was unanimously elected as the President of the Indian Steel Association (ISA) on 21 March 2024.
- ★ He replaced Mr Dilip Oommen.
- ★ Naveen Jindal is currently the Chairman of Jindal Steel & Power (JSP), India's leading Industrial conglomerate with interests in steel, mining and infrastructure sector.
- ★ He has also been elected as the Lok Sabha member from the Kurukshetra constituency of Haryana in 2004 and again in 2009.
- ★ The Indian Steel Association was set up in 2014 as an apex body of steel producing companies of India. According to the Indian Steel Association it represents 65% of India's crude steel production.

Chairman of Indian Bank Association

- ★ M.V. Rao, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the public sector bank, Central Bank of India, has been elected as the new Chairman of the Indian Bank Association (IBA) for 2023-24.
- ★ M.V Rao will succeed Atul Kumar Goel.
- ★ According to the IBA, the Managing Committee of the IBA, in a meeting on 21 March 2024, also elected various office bearers of the IBA for 2023-24.
- ★ Three newly elected Deputy Chairman of IBA Dinesh Kumar Khara, Chairman of State Bank of India, Shanti Lal Jain, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Indian Bank and Dr.N.Kamakodi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of City Union Bank.
- ★ Honorary Secretary of IBA is Madhav Nair, Country Head and Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait.
- ★ Main Functions of the IBA is to promote and develop sound and progressive banking principles, practices, and conventions in India and to contribute to the development of creative banking.

Chairman and Managing Directors of New India Assurance and United India Insurance

- ★ The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB), the head-hunting agency for public sector banks and insurance firms, has selected Girija Subramanian as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the New India Assurance Company and Bhupesh Sushil Rahul as CMD of United India Insurance Company.
- ★ The post of CMD at United India Insurance has been vacant since February 2024 following the retirement of Satyajit Tripathy.
- ★ Neerja Kapur's tenure as CMD of New India Assurance is scheduled to conclude in April 2024.
- ★ Girija Subramanian is currently the CMD of the Agriculture Insurance Company of India, and B.S. Rahul serves as the General Manager at the same company.

Sadanand Becomes New DG of NIA

- ★ The Central Government has appointed Sadanand V. Date, Maharashtra ATS Chief, as NIA Director General (DG).
- ★ Sadanand V. Date, a 1990 batch IPS Officer of Maharashtra cadre, was awarded the Police Medal by the President for his bravery against terrorists during the 26/11 attacks.
- ★ Sadanand Date will replace Dinkar Gupta.
- ★ Before NIA, Sadanand Date had worked as DIG in CBI. Sadanand also worked as IG (APS) in CRPF.
- ★ Sadanand also held the post of Police Commissioner of Mira-Bhayandar and Vasai-Virar city near Mumbai.

DG of Police Research and Development Bureau

- ★ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed 1990 batch IPS Rajeev Kumar Sharma of Rajasthan cadre as DG of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD).
- ★ His tenure will be till his superannuation on June 30, 2026. Rajeev Kumar Sharma will replace Balaji Srivastava.
- ★ ACC has also appointed Piyush Anand, a 1991 batch IPS Officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, as the current Special Director General in CISF.
- ★ The ACC has appointed S Suresh, a 1995 batch IPS Officer of Kerala cadre, as Additional Director General in the Special Protection Group (SPG).

DEFENCE

Third India-Malaysia Maritime Exercise 'Samudra Laksamana'

- ★ Indian and Malaysian navies conducted joint exercise off Visakhapatnam under the third edition of 'Exercise Samudra Laksamana'.
- ★ According to the Defense Ministry, maritime exercise 'Samudra Laksamana' was conducted off Visakhapatnam from 28 February to 2 March 2024.
- ★ The Defence Ministry said that the aim of the joint exercise is to strengthen relations between the two navies.
- ★ Indian Naval Ship Kiltan participated from the Indian side in this maritime exercise. While from the Malaysian side, Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lakir participated in this exercise.
- ★ According to a Defense Ministry release, the crews of both the ships also held talks at the port.
- ★ The exercise also aims to strengthen relations and advance mutual understanding between the Indian and Royal Malaysian Navies.

INS Jatayu: New Navy Base will be commissioned

- ★ The Naval Detachment Minicoy will be commissioned as INS Jatayu on 6th March 2024, in the presence of Admiral R. Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff.
- ★ This event signifies a significant milestone in the Navy's commitment to gradually enhance the security infrastructure at the strategically important Lakshadweep Islands.
- ★ Minicoy is strategically located on the Sea Lines of Communications. The establishment of an independent Naval unit, complete with necessary infrastructure and resources, will significantly enhance the overall operational capability of the Indian Navy in the region.
- ★ This base will improve operational reach and enable the Indian Navy to more effectively conduct Anti-Piracy and Anti-Narcotics Operations in the Western Arabian Sea, while also enhancing their ability to serve as the first responder in the area and improving connectivity with the mainland.
- ★ The commissioning of INS Jatayu marks the Indian Navy's second Naval base in Lakshadweep, following INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti.

Defconnect 2024 for Defence Innovation

- ★ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated DefConnect 2024 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi on 4th March 2024.
- ★ On this occasion, the Defence Minister launched the Accelerating Development of Innovative Technologies (ADITI-ADITI) scheme along with Innovation for Defence Excellence (IDEX) scheme to encourage innovations in strategic defence technologies.
- ★ Under this, start-ups and innovation efforts in defence technology are eligible to receive grant-in-aid amounting to ₹25 crore.
- ★ On this occasion, the Defence Minister addressed a gathering of entrepreneurs, innovators and policy makers from the industry.
- ★ This scheme aims to foster youth innovation and propel India's advancement in technology.
- ★ ₹750 crore has been earmarked for this for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26.
- ★ It aims to develop around 30 deep-tech critical strategic technologies in the proposed time frame.
- ★ It envisages the creation of a 'Technology Watch Tool' to align the needs of the armed forces with the defence innovation ecosystem.

Indian Navy to Commission New MH 60R Seahawk Multi-Role Helicopter

- ★ The Indian Navy will commission the newly inducted MH 60R Seahawk (a maritime variant of the Blackhawk helicopter) multi-role helicopter on 6th March 2024 at INS Garuda, Kochi marking a pivotal moment in India's Defence modernisation journey.
- ★ The Seahawks squadron will be commissioned in the Indian Navy as INAS 334.
- ★ The helicopters are a part of the 24-aircraft FMS contract signed with the United States (US) Government in Feb 2020.
- ★ The Indian Navy is set to witness a significant surge in its maritime prowess with the induction of the Seahawks.

- ★ The helicopter is designed for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), search and rescue (SAR), medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and vertical replenishment (VERTREP).
- ★ The helicopter has been rigorously tested in Indian Reference Atmosphere (IRA) conditions and is fully integrated into the Fleet.
- ★ The advanced weapons, sensors and avionics suite make the Seahawks ideal for the Indian Navy's maritime security needs, offering enhanced capabilities for both conventional as well as asymmetric threats.

PM Modi Will Participate in 'Bharat Shakti' War Game in Pokhran

- ★ The three forces of India are going to conduct the biggest exercise 'Bharat-Shakti' in Asia's largest field firing range located in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan.
- ★ PM Narendra Modi will participate to see this show of strength of the Indian Army.
- ★ Bharat Shakti is a significant tri-Service exercise showcasing firepower by the Army, Air Force, and Navy.
- ★ In the exercise named Bharat-Shakti at Pokhran Field Firing Range, the three Indian Services will showcase the capability of indigenously manufactured weapons.
- ★ Only indigenously developed weapon platforms and systems will be included in this exercise.
- ★ Top officers of the three forces including CDS General Anil Chauhan will participate in the exercise, which will be held on March 12 in Pokhran.
- ★ The concept of self-reliant India will be seen during this exercise.
- ★ In this exercise named 'Bharat Shakti', defense platforms and network based systems developed in India will be tested.
- ★ This exercise will also reveal the capability of indigenous weapons.

Indian Army will Raise Two 'Army Girls Sports Companies' for Girls

- ★ On International Women's Day on 8 March 2024, the Indian Army announced the formation of 2 Army Girls Sports Companies (AGSC).
- ★ AGSC will be formed in a phased manner by the Indian Army keeping in mind the national vision of women empowerment and demonstration of women power.
- ★ The Army has identified two of its Centers of Excellence for the operation of these companies. These are the Army Marksmanship Unit in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh, and the Army Sports Institute in Pune.
- ★ Through this, girls selected from across the country will be imparted education and will also be made champions in sports.
- ★ These girls who have graduated from these institutions will be able to get direct entry into the army.

Indian Navy Participates in Exercise Cutlass Express 24

- ★ The Indian Navy participated in the Exercise Cutlass Express - 24 (CE-24) which was held at Port Victoria, Seychelles from 26 February -08 March 2024.

- ★ The Indian Navy was represented by INS Tir, the lead ship of the First Training Squadron.
- ★ INS Tir was led by Senior Officer, First Training Squadron, Capt Anshul Kishore.
- ★ The exercise was inaugurated by the President of Seychelles Wavel Ramkalawan in presence of dignitaries from India, USA and African countries.
- ★ Exercise Cutlass Express is a multinational maritime exercise sponsored by the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and led by U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet.
- ★ The exercise seeks to promote maritime security and co-operation in the strategic waters of the East African coast and the Western Indian Ocean.
- ★ The exercise is designed to strengthen maritime domain awareness, counter illicit maritime activities, and promote adherence to the rule of law.
- ★ The exercise aims to test the participating countries Naval forces capabilities in maritime interdiction, information sharing through a series of shore-based and at-sea training events.
- ★ These include visit, boarding of ships, search and seizure, counter-illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing procedures, and initiatives aimed at enhancing Women, Peace, and Security.

Mission Divyastra: India's Test of Agni-5 Missile Successful

- ★ India has conducted the first successful flight test of nuclear ballistic missile Agni-5 on March 11, 2024.
- ★ Agni-5 missile developed under Make in India project by Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).
- ★ This was the first flight test of the indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology.
- ★ This test will ascertain the capability of a single missile to deploy multiple warheads at various locations.
- ★ MIRV is a technology in which a missile has the capability to carry more than one nuclear warhead at once. With its successful testing various enemy targets can be hit.
- ★ Agni 5 missile is the longest range missile of the Agni series with a range of over 5000 km.

PM Modi Witnessed the Tri-Service Exercise – Bharat Shakti at Pokhran

- ★ Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with the foreign delegates from more than 30 countries, witnessed the tri-service exercise 'Bharat Shakti in Pokhran, Rajasthan, on 12 March 2024.
- ★ It was the biggest military exercise ever conducted in the country.
- ★ The tri-service exercise involved the participation of the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and the Indian Air Force. The Indian Army hosted the tri-service exercise.
- ★ The top commanders of the three armed forces were present on the occasion.
- ★ The main aim of the Bharat Shakti exercise was to demonstrate the firepower of the indigenously developed military hardware of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- ★ The Bharat Shakti exercise aims to simulate a war-like condition which tests the operational capabilities of the three armed forces to jointly counter threats emanating across land, air, sea, cyber, and space.

- ★ The exercise highlights India's quest for self-reliance in defence and the country's Armed Force's might, operational prowess, ingenuity and commitment to indigenous defence.

Navy Receives Two Indigenous Anti-Submarine Warships

- ★ On 13 March 2024, two ships 'Agray' and 'Akshay' were launched to enhance anti-submarine operations of the Indian Navy.
- ★ These ships have been built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE).
- ★ For this, almost five years after signing the contract with GRSE, both the warships 'Agray' and 'Akshay' were launched on 13 March 2024.
- ★ Agray and Akshay was named after the former Abhay class corvettes Agray and Akshay of the Indian Navy.
- ★ The primary role of both warships is to conduct anti-submarine operations and low intensity maritime operations in the sea around the coasts.
- ★ This warship will be able to detect enemy submarines underwater.

Defence Ministry Contracts HAL for Indian Navy's 25 Dornier Upgrades

- ★ The Defence Ministry signed a contract worth over ₹2,890 crore with HAL for 'Mid Life Upgrade (MLU)' of 25 Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy.
- ★ Also the Defence Ministry has signed a contract with HAL for various types of equipment for the Indian Navy.
- ★ The 'MLU' of the Dornier aircraft involves upgrading it to include state-of-the-art avionics systems and primary role sensors.
- ★ This upgrade would significantly increase the operational capability of the Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy.
- ★ With Dornier aircraft being 'MLU', it would become easier for the Indian Navy to keep surveillance on the coasts.
- ★ Upgraded Indian Navy Dornier aircraft to perform search and rescue, medical evacuation and communication roles.
- ★ This would contribute significantly to 'self-reliance' in the defense sector in line with the 'Make-in-India' initiative of the Government of India.

Naval Exercise Named "Security Belt-2024"

- ★ China, Iran, and Russia initiated a joint naval exercise named "Security Belt-2024" near the Gulf of Oman.
- ★ The exercise aims to safeguard regional maritime security, explicitly stating that it does not target any third country or current regional tensions.
- ★ This marks the fourth joint naval exercise conducted by the three countries since 2019.
- ★ The joint exercise kicked off after Chinese warships arrived in waters near Chabahar, Iran and rendezvoused with participating Iranian and Russian naval vessels.
- ★ Exercise Theme: The exercise revolves around the theme of "jointly building peace and security".

- ★ It focuses on anti-piracy and search and rescue training courses and is organized into 3 phases: harbor phase, sea phase, and summarize phase.

Joint military 'Exercise Lamitiye-2024'

- ★ The 'Lamitiye' joint military exercise will be conducted in Seychelles from 18-27 March 2024.
- ★ The Indian Army contingent departed for Seychelles on 17 March 2024 to participate in a joint military exercise 'Lamitiye-2024' with Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF).
- ★ This exercise is the 10th exercise between the two countries.
- ★ 'Exercise Lamitiye-2024' includes 'Indian Gorkha Rifles' and 'Seychelles Defence Force'.
- ★ 'Limited War Exercise' is a biennial training programme.
- ★ 45 military personnel from both the defence forces are participating in this exercise.
- ★ 'Exercise Lamitiye-2024' aims to enhance interdiction operations in peri-urban scenarios under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
- ★ The exercise will promote co-operation and interoperability between the two sides during peacekeeping operations.
- ★ The exercise will also build and promote bilateral military ties besides exchange of skills, experience and simulated exercises between the two armies.

Exercise Tiger Triumph-24

- ★ Exercise 'Tiger Triumph – 24' is being organized between India and America. 'Tiger Triumph – 24' is being organized on the eastern seaboard from 18 to 31 March 24.
- ★ 'Tiger Triumph – 24' is in line with the established India-US partnership. It is a bilateral tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) military exercise between the two countries.
- ★ Indian Navy ships with integral helicopters and landing craft, Indian Naval aircraft, Indian Army personnel and vehicles and Indian Air Force aircraft and helicopters along with Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) will participate in the exercise.
- ★ The United States is being represented by US Navy ships. This will include US Marine Corps and US Army soldiers.
- ★ Military Exercise 'Tiger Triumph – 24' aims to develop interoperability for conducting HADR operations.
- ★ The aim is to improve the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enable faster and smooth coordination between the armies of the two countries.

IMT TRILAT-2024 Exercise

- ★ The second edition of the India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) Tri Lateral (TRILAT) Exercise, is being conducted from 21-29 March 2024.
- ★ It is being organized at the ports of Zanzibar in Tanzania and Maputo in Mozambique.

- ★ It is a joint maritime exercise to be held from 21-29 March 2024. The exercise's present version is designed with two phases.
- ★ In the first phase, the port phase scheduled for 21-24 March, naval ships will participate with the respective navies at the ports of Zanzibar and Maputo.
- ★ The sea phase of Exercise TRILAT will take place from 24-27 March 2024.
- ★ Objective of IMT Trilat Practic is to develop capacity to address common threats through training and sharing of best practices and strengthening maritime co-operation among IMT countries.
- ★ These exercises aim to enhance maritime security in the Indian Ocean region and co-operation with maritime neighbours.
- ★ It also reflects the commitment of India and the Indian Navy to promote SAGAR security and development in the region.

Indian Army Launches Elite STEAG

- ★ The Indian Army has initiated the establishment of the Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG), a unit dedicated to researching and evaluating futuristic communication technologies.
- ★ Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group is a unit dedicated to researching and evaluating futuristic communication technologies like 6G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning and quantum computing for military applications.
- ★ Objective is to nurture technologies across wired and wireless systems, covering a wide spectrum of domains including electronic exchanges, mobile communications, software-defined radios, electronic warfare systems and more.
- ★ The unit will conduct technical scouting, evaluation, development, and management of core ICT solutions while providing user interface support through maintenance and upgrades of contemporary technologies.
- ★ The establishment of STEAG reflects the Army's commitment to acquiring new technologies aligned with the tenets of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) and Start-Up India.
- ★ STEAG will play a crucial role in fostering self-reliance in high-end communication technologies, which traditionally have been dominated by countries with advanced economies and research ecosystems.
- ★ It is expected to be a game-changer in India's quest for technological self-sufficiency.

Samudra Paheredar Arrives in Manila Bay, as Part of ASEAN Deployment

- ★ Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ship 'Samudra Peheredar' is on a three-day visit to Manila Bay, Philippines from 25 March 2024. 'Samudra Peheredar' is a special pollution control ship.
- ★ The ICG ship is on overseas deployment to ASEAN countries – Philippines, Vietnam and Brunei from 25 March to 12 April 2024.
- ★ This visit of this special pollution control ship is part of a broader initiative. The objectives of this initiative are to demonstrate ICG marine pollution response capabilities and strengthening bilateral co-operation with the Philippines Coast Guard (PCG).

- ★ During its deployment, the ship is scheduled to conduct port inspections at Manila (Philippines), Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam) and Muara (Brunei).
- ★ The ship is equipped with special marine pollution control equipment to control pollution.

Army Commanders' Conference 2024 will Commence in Hybrid Mode

- ★ The Army Commanders' Conference for the year 2024 will be held in hybrid mode, with the virtual conference scheduled for 28th March 2024 and the physical conference in New Delhi on 1st and 2nd April 2024.
- ★ The conference serves as an important forum for the apex leadership of the Indian Army to discuss conceptual issues, review the overall security situation, and priorities are set for making important policy decisions to chart the course for future direction.
- ★ The conference will be chaired by the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Manoj Pande, in New Delhi, with Army Commanders participating virtually from their respective Command Headquarters.
- ★ During the conference, Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh will also introduce and interact with senior military leadership.
- ★ The discussion will focus on critical agendas impacting the welfare of the region's military and veterans, and include specific subject matter expert interactions on the emerging geopolitical landscape and its impact on national security.
- ★ During the physical conference on 1st April 2024, the Army's top leadership will engage in intensive brainstorming sessions to enhance operational effectiveness, foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, and invest in training and development programs to ensure readiness for future challenges.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Abhay's Translated Magahi Novel 'Phool Bahadur' Features at Dibrugarh

- ★ 'Phool Bahadur' is the first Magahi novel, which has been translated into English by 'Abhay K'.
- ★ It was launched at the Dibrugarh University International Literary Festival on 19-21 March 2024.
- ★ Phool Bahadur was originally written by Jayanath Pati. It was first published in 1928.
- ★ It is published by Penguin Random House India.
- ★ The story of the book revolves around the ambitious Mukhtar Samlal. The novel describes the harmonious union of a Nawab, a courtesan, and a circle officer.
- ★ The characters in this novel each try to exploit the other. All characters and events are manipulated by a dishonest Mukhtar whose only goal is to somehow acquire the title of Rai Bahadur.
- ★ Abhay K, hailing from Nalanda, Bihar, is a versatile writer who excels as a poet, editor, translator, and author of numerous poetry collections.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

India Introduces First Septic Tank Cleaning Robot

- ★ India's first septic tank/manhole cleaning robot, offering an end-to-end solution to eliminate manual scavenging, is strengthening the swachhata abhiyan in different corners of the country.
- ★ The technology called Homosep Atom developed by the startup incubated in the Department of Science and Technology (DST)-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of IIT Madras, solves manual cleaning methods and transforms it to robotic cleaning methods.
- ★ It has reached 16 cities in different parts of India and empowers extensive blade cleanings, solid waste desilting, suction and storage at one device; thereby reducing the cost of owning multiple assets and promotes robotic cleaning in sewers.
- ★ The startup called Solinas, which developed this affordable robotic solution integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) to inspect, clean, and manage confined space for sanitation purposes.
- ★ It helped clean up manhole blockages and reduced sewer overflows in Madurai.
- ★ The application of Homosep Atom was also extended to the intricate lanes of Chennai's densely populated areas.

CIL Partners with IIMs to Support PM's Gati Shakti Mission

- ★ Coal India Limited (CIL) signed MoU with IIM Mumbai and Sambalpur.
- ★ This marks progress in multimodal coal transportation infrastructure aligned with Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti National Master Plan-2021.
- ★ The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Minister Piyush Goyal.
- ★ On this occasion, the MoU was exchanged in the presence of Coal India Chairman PM Prasad and MCL CMD Uday Anant Kaole.
- ★ The partnership agreement between the two IIMs and Coal India promotes collaboration by combining industry knowledge with academic excellence.
- ★ It promises a transformational increase in logistics efficiency. It contributes to economic growth and environmental sustainability.
- ★ Under this initiative, a year-long PGP-Ex course will be conducted for Coal India executives working in MCL and other subsidiaries.
- ★ This course will be based on "Logistics and Operational Excellence through Digitalization" for one year.

India's Own Space Station by 2035

- ★ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi unveiled India's ambitious plans to launch its own space station by 2035 during his visit to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- ★ PM Modi highlighted India's advancements in space technology, emphasizing the significant increase in satellite launches over the past decade.

- ★ The Gaganyaan project aims to demonstrate India's capability for human spaceflight by launching a crew of three members into a 400 km orbit for a three-day mission and safely returning them to Earth, landing in Indian sea waters.
- ★ Before the manned mission, several precursor missions are planned to demonstrate technology readiness levels, including Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT), Pad Abort Test (PAT), and Test Vehicle (TV) flights.
- ★ India's LVM3 rocket has been designated as the launch vehicle for the Gaganyaan mission due to its reliability.

IIT Mandi and Palakkad Researchers Develop Drowning Detection Robot

- ★ Recently, researchers from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi and Palakkad have developed a drowning detection robot.
- ★ This research focuses on developing a prototype of an underwater robot and evaluating its performance in investigative use.
- ★ This robot has been designed to work in the sea and also in the reservoirs and dams present on the earth.
- ★ Testing the robot's performance in various conditions helped to understand the specific equipment and coordination that would be required for a particular mission.

Government Approves ₹10,372 Crore for 'India AI Mission' for 5 Years

- ★ The Union Cabinet has approved an outlay of ₹10,372 crore for the India AI Mission for five year.
- ★ It aims to promote innovation in artificial intelligence through public-private partnerships.
- ★ The money will be used to build a high-level scalable AI ecosystem in a public-private partnership mode.
- ★ This mission will be implemented through the India AI Independent Business Division (IBD) under Digital India Corporation (DIC).
- ★ The India AI Mission will provide supercomputing capacity with more than 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) to various stakeholders to build an AI ecosystem.
- ★ Various institutions in the country will be provided access to the AI supercomputing infrastructure set up under the India AI Mission, which includes startups, academia, researchers and industry.
- ★ Additionally, an AI marketplace will be created to offer AI services and pre-trained models to innovators.
- ★ Of the total outlay, about ₹4,500 crore will be used to create computing infrastructure. About ₹2,000 crore has been earmarked for funding deep-tech startups.

MHI and Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IIT Roorkee)

- ★ The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) and the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IIT Roorkee) signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) to work together to encourage innovation and advance the automotive and electric vehicle (EV) sector.

- ★ This MoU was signed in the presence of Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey, Minister of Heavy Industries, Shri Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister of the State of Uttarakhand (through VC) and senior officials of the Ministry of Heavy Industries and the State of Uttarakhand.
- ★ This MoU represents a joint effort to launch advanced initiatives for creating a Centre of Excellence (CoE) and an Industry Accelerator at IIT Roorkee under the Scheme for Enhancement of Competitiveness in the Indian Capital Goods Sector Phase II of MHI.
- ★ This collaboration seeks to utilize the combined knowledge and resources of both organizations to support groundbreaking projects that will influence the future of transportation.
- ★ With a total grant of ₹19.8745 Cr. provided by MHI and an additional ₹4.78 Cr. contributed by industry partners, the total project cost is ₹24.6645 Cr.
- ★ This joint collaboration is poised to make significant strides in innovation and will also bridge the gap between academia and industry.
- ★ These funds will further brace research, development, and implementation efforts, facilitating the translation of concepts into tangible solutions.

Agnikul Cosmos Postpones Maiden Rocket Launch Due to ‘Technical Issue’

- ★ Agnikul Cosmos, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras incubated startup, has postponed its maiden rocket launch due to a ‘technical issue’.
- ★ The Chennai-headquartered company had initially scheduled the launch of the mission ‘Agnibaan SOrTeD’ (Sub Orbital Technology Demonstrator) for March 22, 2024.
- ★ The launch was planned to take place from its private launch pad located within the campus of ISRO at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh, approximately 100 km from Chennai.
- ★ The Agnibaan SOrTeD mission is described as an innovative, single-stage Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator.
- ★ Agnikul Cosmos Private Limited was incubated at the Indian Institute of Technology – Madras (IIT-Madras).
- ★ It builds dedicated, fully customizable & transportable launch vehicles for small satellites to Low Earth Orbits (LEO) called Agnibaan.
- ★ The launch vehicle- Agnibaan is powered by a single-piece 3D-printed engine that can be made in 72 hours without any human intervention.

Pushpak – Reusable Landing Vehicle Landing experiment Conducted by ISRO

- ★ The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully conducted the second landing test of its reusable launch vehicle (RLV), named Pushpak, at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Challakere near Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- ★ The vehicle’s name has been inspired by the Ramayana’s mythical ‘Pushpak Viman’ since this modern-day aircraft stands as a symbol of innovation and prosperity.
- ★ ISRO conducted the first landing experiment, RLV-LEX-01, with a scaled down version of the RLV technology demonstrator (RLV-TD) 2023 on a Chinook Helicopter of the Indian Air Force.
- ★ The scientists have designed the Pushpak RLV as an all-rocket and fully reusable single-stage-to-orbit (SSTO) vehicle.

- ★ It includes several important elements like the X-34 testbed technology demonstrator, the X-33 advanced technology demonstrator, as well as the upgraded DC-XA flight demonstrator.
- ★ This is Pushpak's third flight after a series of tests were carried out by the scientists with the aim of perfecting the vehicle's robotic landing capabilities amid complex conditions.

IAU Approved Name of Chandrayaan-3 Landing Site on Moon as Shiva Shakti

- ★ International Astronomical Union approved the name 'Shiva Shakti' for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander, following the success of the mission on August 26, 2023.
- ★ The name is derived from a compound word in Indian mythology that represents the duality of masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) nature.
- ★ At the Indian Space Research Organization's Command Centre, PM Modi explained that the name "Shiv Shakti Point" was chosen to represent the welfare of humanity, with "Shiv" signifying welfare and "Shakti" representing the strength required to achieve it.
- ★ He added that the Moon's Shiv Shakti Point will serve as a symbol of unity, inspiring future generations to use science for the betterment of humanity.

CAG Signs MoU with IIT Delhi on Artificial Intelligence

- ★ The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi on Artificial Intelligence.
- ★ The MoU was signed and exchanged between Additional Deputy C AG A. M. Bajaj and IIT Delhi Director, Prof. Rangan Banerjee, in the presence of CAG Girish Chandra Murmu.
- ★ The Government of India had unveiled the national strategy for AI in 2018.
- ★ It aims to encourage innovation, skilling of the workforce, and promotion of responsible AI adoption.
- ★ As part of the MoU, the CAG will have access to cutting-edge AI expertise, capacity building for our workforce, and development of bespoke AI solutions tailored to specific audit needs.

IMPORTANT DAYS

National Science Day

- ★ National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on 28 February.
- ★ This day is celebrated to commemorate the discovery of 'Raman Effect' by Sir Chandrashekhara Venkata Raman.
- ★ The theme of NSD 2024 is "Indigenous Technology for Viksit Bharat".
- ★ On the occasion of NSD, the whole country celebrates it as a science festival by organizing workshops, exhibitions of science films, seminars etc.
- ★ Its main objective is to create scientific thinking in the minds of people.

Zero Discrimination Day

- ★ 'Zero Discrimination Day' is celebrated every year on 1st March.
- ★ This day is celebrated globally by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).
- ★ The main objective of organizing this day is for everyone to join in to create a big movement for change.
- ★ The theme of Zero Discrimination Day this year 2024 has been set as "To protect everyone's health, protect everyone's rights".
- ★ World Zero Discrimination Day was first celebrated on March 1, 2014. UNAIDS launched its Zero Discrimination campaign on World AIDS Day in December 2013.
- ★ Zero Discrimination Day is celebrated across the world to promote equality, inclusion and tolerance.

World Seagrass Day

- ★ 'World Seagrass Day' is celebrated every year on 1st March.
- ★ This day is celebrated to raise awareness about seagrass and its important functions in the marine ecosystem.
- ★ The theme of World Seagrass Day for the year 2024 has been set as "Healthy Seagrass, Healthy Planet".
- ★ There are plants like seagrass that live close to the sea. Seagrass are the only flowering plants that grow in marine environments.
- ★ There are more than 60 species of seagrass in the world. They act as the best carbon sinks and provide food for marine life.
- ★ It was declared by the United Nations General Assembly after a resolution was passed by Sri Lanka to emphasize the conservation of seagrass in the marine environment.
- ★ On 23 May 2022, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared 1 March as World Seagrass Day. It is celebrated annually by UNGA.
- ★ The UNEP was also invited to facilitate the observance of the day. In this way the first World Seagrass Day was organized in 2023.

World Hearing Day

- ★ World Hearing Day is commemorated annually on 3rd March.
- ★ It is a global health care programme. It is celebrated every year since 2007 from the headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva.
- ★ The purpose of this day is to bring together patients suffering from hearing loss.
- ★ The aim is to promote ear and hearing care by creating a community.
- ★ The theme of 'World Hearing Day' this year 2024 is "Changing Mindsets: Let's make ear and hearing care a reality for all".
- ★ It aims to emphasize the importance of eliminating misconceptions about hearing loss among the public and primary health care providers.

- ★ It discusses its epidemiological profile, status, awareness about its diagnosis and treatment.

National Safety Day

- ★ National Safety Day 2024 is celebrated on 4th March.
- ★ To create awareness about the importance of all guidelines like safety, workplace safety, and the safety of human health and the environment the National Safety Day 2024 is celebrated every year on 4th March.
- ★ 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.
- ★ On March 4, 1966, the National Safety Council of India (NSC) was registered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- ★ Then the council was registered under the Society Registration Act of 1860 and the idea behind this council was to create the SHE campaign.
- ★ The SHE campaign stands for the safety, health, and environmental movement.

International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness 2024

- ★ 'International Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness Day' is celebrated every year on 5th March.
- ★ The day is celebrated to promote awareness and understanding of disarmament issues, especially among the youth.
- ★ UNGA established it in 2021 to promote disarmament and non-proliferation for peace and security.
- ★ The aim of the day is to encourage action to reduce the threat of weapons and promote peace and security.

International Women's Day

- ★ 'International Women's Day' is celebrated every year on 8th March.
- ★ This day is celebrated to empower women globally. Celebrating this day started in the year 1909.
- ★ A global event is organized on this occasion.
- ★ The day celebrates women's achievements, struggles and the ongoing fight for gender equality.
- ★ This year 2024, the theme of the International Women's Day celebration focuses on 'Invest in Women: Accelerating Progress'.
- ★ The day serves as an important reminder that the fight for gender equality is far from over.
- ★ Therefore, International Women's Day has been partially successful in achieving its objective.

CISF Raising Day

- ★ CISF Raising Day is celebrated on 10 March 2024.

- ★ The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is one of the Central Armed Police Forces in India.
- ★ CISF is a unique organization in the paramilitary forces of India, which works to provide security cover to over 300 industrial units, government infrastructure projects, and facilities and establishments located all over India.
- ★ CISF was formed on March 10, 1969, under the CISF Act of the Parliament of India.
- ★ It started with as many as 2,800 personnel for the better protection and security of industrial undertakings in the country.
- ★ Three battalions were formed to provide integrated security cover to the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) which, in those years, occupied the commanding heights of the economy.

No Smoking Day

- ★ 'No Smoking Day' is celebrated every year on the second Wednesday of March.
- ★ This year in 2024, 'No Smoking Day' is being celebrated on 13 March.
- ★ The main objective of celebrating this day is to spread awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and promote the importance of a smoke-free environment.
- ★ During this time people are encouraged to quit smoking and adopt a healthy lifestyle.
- ★ The theme of No Smoking Day for this year 2024 is, 'Protecting children from tobacco industry interference'.
- ★ Celebrating No Smoking Day started in 1984. The day was first celebrated in the United Kingdom on Ash Wednesday.

International Day of Action of Rivers

- ★ International Day of Action of Rivers 2024 is an international event celebrated on 14 March.
- ★ The International Day of Action for Rivers 2024 theme is 'Water for All', which demands that the rivers be declared a national asset.
- ★ The International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life was adopted by the participants of the First International Meeting of People Affected by Dams in March 1997 in Curitiba, Brazil, according to internationalrivers.org.
- ★ River experts from 20 countries decided that March 14 will be the 'Day of Action for Rivers'.
- ★ The participants aimed to unite against the destruction of rivers, other water bodies, and the ecologically fragile watershed areas.

World Kidney Day

- ★ World Kidney Day is observed on the second Thursday of March, every year.
- ★ This year it falls on March 14.
- ★ World Kidney Day aims to create awareness about the importance of healthy kidneys and how one can maintain kidney health and prevent kidney-related diseases.
- ★ The day The theme for the 2024 campaign is 'Kidney Health For All'.

- ★ This theme focuses on the increasing burden of chronic kidney disease and achieving optimal kidney care to overcome these challenges at different levels.
- ★ Kidneys are one of the most important organs of the body and help remove toxins from the body to keep it fit and healthy.

International Day to Combat Islamophobia

- ★ International Day to Combat Islamophobia is observed every year on 15 March.
- ★ In many countries, Muslims often face discrimination and hatred based on their religious beliefs.
- ★ In the year 2022, the United Nations declared March 15 as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia.
- ★ The first International Day to Combat Islamophobia was observed in the year 2023.

World Consumer Rights Day

- ★ 'World Consumer Rights Day' is celebrated every year on 15 March to protect the rights of consumers.
- ★ Its purpose is to shed light on enduring problems regarding the needs and rights of consumers.
- ★ It is a global programme that aims to raise awareness about consumer rights and needs. The day emphasizes the value and understanding of consumer rights, benefits and possibilities
- ★ The theme of World Consumer Rights Day 2024 is 'Fair and Responsible AI for Consumers'.

National Vaccination Day

- ★ 'National Vaccination Day' is celebrated annually on 16 March.
- ★ This is an important moment in people's collective commitment to public health. National Vaccination Day is organized to make people aware about vaccination.
- ★ The theme of 'National Vaccination Day' this year 2024 is "Vaccines Work for All".
- ★ The history of National Vaccination Day starts from 1995 because in the same year the Government of India had established the Pulse Polio Vaccination Programme for the first time with the aim of eradicating polio from the country.
- ★ National Vaccination Day is celebrated in India to raise awareness about eradicated diseases and ensure that the community is protected from them.

Ordnance Factories Day

- ★ Ordnance Factories Day 2024 is observed on the 18th March
- ★ The East India Company of England, to increase their economic interest and political hold, considered manufacturing military hardware as a vital element.
- ★ The British authorities in 1775 established a Board of Ordnance in Fort William, Kolkata, which marks the official beginning of the Army Ordnance in India.
- ★ They further set up a gunpowder factory in 1787 at Ishapore, which started production in 1791.

- ★ In 1801, the British established a Gun Carriage Agency at Cossipore, Kolkata and production started on March 18, 1802.
- ★ This heralded the first industrial establishment of Ordnance Factories in India and they continue to operate to date.

International Day of Happiness

- ★ The International Day of Happiness is observed annually on March 20.
- ★ This day is celebrated to inform people about the importance of happiness as a way to live a healthy life. On this occasion people are made aware about the importance of happiness and its benefits.
- ★ The theme of this year 2024 is “Reconnecting for Happiness: Building Resilient Communities”.
- ★ The history of this day starts from 2013 when it was first celebrated by the United Nations (UN).
- ★ It was declared in 2012 by the UNGA to recognize the importance of happiness in life and ways to make people happy.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

- ★ ‘International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’ is celebrated every year on 21 March.
- ★ On the occasion of this day, unity is called for against casteism and racial discrimination.
- ★ The theme of this year 2024 is ‘A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent’.
- ★ This year’s theme is associated with the International Decade for People of African Descent. It spans the time frame from 2015 to 2024.
- ★ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) designated March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in October 1966.

World Water Day

- ★ ‘World Water Day’ is observed each and every year on 22 March.
- ★ On this occasion, people are reminded of the importance of freshwater and the need for sustainable water management techniques.
- ★ Currently water shortage remains a global concern. The theme of ‘World Water Day’ for this year 2024 is ‘Water for peace’.
- ★ The primary objective of World Water Day is to promote the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.
- ★ In which a target has been set to provide water and sanitation to all by 2030.

World Meteorological Day

- ★ ‘World Meteorological Day’ is celebrated every year on 23 March.

- ★ It is a global event celebrated to commemorate the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
- ★ The main objective of celebrating this day every year is to make people aware about meteorology and the continuous changes taking place in it.
- ★ The theme of 'WMD' this year in 2024 is "At the frontline of climate action".
- ★ World Meteorological Day was first celebrated in 1951.
- ★ The World Meteorological Organization plays an important role in contributing to the safety and well-being of people.

World Tuberculosis Day

- ★ World Tuberculosis Day is commemorated each year on the 24th of March. This day is celebrated globally to create awareness among people about tuberculosis.
- ★ Tuberculosis, an infectious disease that mainly affects the lungs.
- ★ This year the theme of 2024 World Tuberculosis (TB) Day will be 'Yes! We can end TB'.
- ★ The theme implies eliminating the world's deadliest disease, with sustained efforts and awareness campaigns.
- ★ The day is an annual event to continue research and investment on tuberculosis treatment strategies, prevention methods and awareness.

International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

- ★ International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade 2024 is celebrated every year on 25 March.
- ★ International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations international observance designated in 2007 to be marked on 25 March every year.
- ★ The day honours and remembers those who suffered and died as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade, which has been called "the worst violation of human rights in history", in over 400 years more than 15 million men, women, and children were the victims.

International Day of the Unborn Child

- ★ International Day of the Unborn Child 2024 is celebrated every year on 25 March.
- ★ International Day of the Unborn Child was established by Pope John Paul II to coincide with the Feast of the Annunciation and is officially recognized in several predominantly Catholic countries.
- ★ John Paul II viewed the day as "a positive option in favor of life and the spread of a culture for life to guarantee respect for human dignity in every situation".
- ★ El Salvador was the first country to recognize a Day of the Right to Be Born, which was established in 1993.

Purple Day of Epilepsy

- ★ Purple Day of Epilepsy is a global awareness campaign for epilepsy held annually on March 26.
- ★ The day is dedicated to educating people about epilepsy, a neurological condition that affects millions worldwide.
- ★ Cassidy Megan, a young Canadian girl diagnosed with epilepsy, started Purple Day in 2008 to raise awareness about the condition.
- ★ The first Purple Day was held on March 26th, 2008, and witnessed enthusiastic participation in Canada.
- ★ In 2009, Cassidy Megan and the Epilepsy Association of The Maritimes joined forces with The Anita Kaufmann Foundation to launch Purple Day internationally.
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World Theatre Day

- ★ World Theatre Day is celebrated every year on March 27.
- ★ It is celebrated to honor the art of theatre.
- ★ It celebrates the importance of theatre and its role in the entertainment industry. This day is a reminder for everyone to recognize the value of theatre.
- ★ The International Theatre Institute (ITI) started World Theatre Day in 1961.
- ★ Their aim was to promote World Theatre Day around the world and show how important.

OBITUARY NEWS

Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney

- ★ Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, widely regarded as one of the country's most popular leaders in recent memory, passed away.
- ★ Mulroney, who first became PM in a landslide victory in 1984, was also the country's leader when it suffered its worst-ever terror attack.
- ★ Brian Mulroney was the leader of the Conservative party and achieved a significant victory in the 1984 Federal elections, winning 211 out of 282 seats in the House of Commons.

- ★ Mulroney was greatly appreciated for his efforts in drafting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Ex-Navy Chief Admiral Who Fought for Peoples' Rights, Laxminarayan Ramdas

- ★ Former Navy Chief Admiral (retired) Laxminarayan Ramdas passed away at the age of 90.
- ★ He joined the Joint Services Wing of the Armed Forces Academy in Clement Town, Dehradun in 1949.
- ★ He was commissioned as an Officer of the Indian Navy in September 1953.
- ★ He served as the 13th Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) between December 1990 and September 1993.
- ★ He served as Aam Aadmi Party's internal lokpal.
- ★ He commanded INS Beas, which had played a pivotal role during the 1971 India-Pakistan war.
- ★ He served as the Indian Naval Attache in Bonn, West Germany (1973-76) and as Fleet Commander of the Eastern Naval Command.
- ★ On 26 January 1989, he was awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal.
- ★ He was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace in 2004.

Renowned Rabindra Sangeet Singer Sadi Mohammad

- ★ In Bangladesh, A legendary Rabindra Sangeet singer and composer Sadi Mohammad passed away at the age of 70.
- ★ Sadi Mohammad is the son of Liberation War martyr Salim Ullah.
- ★ In 2007, Mohammad debuted as a music composer when he released the album Amakey Khujey Pabey Bhorer Shishirey.
- ★ He released the albums Srabon Akashey in 2009 and Sharthok Janom Amar in 2012.
- ★ He served as the Director of the Cultural Organization, Rabi Raag.
- ★ In 2017, Mohammad was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by **Channel i**.
- ★ He received the Rabindra Award from the Bangla Academy.

Former Pakistan Test captain Saeed Ahmed

- ★ Saeed Ahmed, the former Pakistan Test captain and a dashing batsman of his time, passed away at the age of 86.
- ★ Saeed Ahmed made his Test debut against the West Indies in 1958 at the age of 20.
- ★ His last Test match was during Pakistan's tour of Australia in 1972-73, played in Melbourne.
- ★ Throughout his Test career, he played 41 matches, accumulating 2,991 runs, including five centuries and 16 half-centuries.
- ★ He also contributed with his off-spin bowling, taking a total of 22 wickets.
- ★ He was Pakistan's sixth Test captain and replaced Muhammad as skipper of the side during England's tour of Pakistan in 1969.

- ★ He only led Pakistan for three Tests and all were drawn.

MISCELLANEOUS

First Person who reaches point Nemo-Remotest Point on Earth

- ★ Chris Brown of Britain has become the first person in history to reach Point Nemo, the oceanic pole of inaccessibility in the Pacific Ocean.
- ★ The Point Nemo is located in the southern Pacific Ocean east of New Zealand.
- ★ He named the region Point Nemo in 1992 after the fictional captain Nemo created by author Jules Verne.
- ★ In Jules Verne's fiction book Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea, Captain Nemo was the captain of a submarine.
- ★ Nemo is a Latin word which means 'no man'.

