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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 04-08-2023

NATIONAL NEWS

AI-Powered Chatbot Named 'Just Ask'

- The Madhya Pradesh government in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has introduced an AI-powered chatbot named 'Just Ask'.
- The primary goal of this initiative is to provide accurate and easily accessible information related to social issues and sexual and reproductive health and rights, targeting adolescents and young adults.
- The interactive nature of a chatbot allows it to engage users in conversation and provide reliable information at no charge. It is designed to showcase two aspiring role models named Dhruv and Drishti.
- The 'Just Ask' digital engagement platform aims to cater to user queries on various subjects related to adolescence, such as body changes, menstruation, reproductive health, pregnancy, and family planning.

Assam CM Launches 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' App

- The 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' app and web portal was launched by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.
- 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' app and web portal aims to plant 1 crore saplings in a single day on 17th September 2023, a significant milestone in the state's efforts to boost the green economy and contribute to the fight against global warming.
- The primary objective of the project is to significantly increase the forest cover of Assam and encourage collective action in the face of climate change.
- Individuals who register on the 'Amrit Brikshya Andolan' app or portal and upload their geo-tagged photographs planting saplings will receive a reward of Rs 100 in their bank account.

India Post to Sell National Flag Through Its 1.6 Lakh Post Offices

- Government of India under the aegis of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) introduced the Har Ghar Tiranga Campaign.
- The campaign was an immense success in 2022 when 23 crore households hoisted the Tiranga at their homes physically and six crore people uploaded selfies on HGT Website.
- The Department of Posts (DoP) took this campaign to the last mile and ensured the availability of the national flag in the remotest corner of the country.
- To continue this zeal and patriotism, the Government is organising the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign between 13–15 August 2023.
- It has been decided to leverage the vast physical network of 1.6 lakh post offices in the country and to ensure the sale of flags under the campaign through all the post offices in the country.
- The sale of flags in the post offices will start soon and citizens can walk into their nearby post office to purchase the flag.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman Launches 'WorldCoin Crypto Project'

- Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, along with co-founders Alex Blania and Max Novendstern, launched the 'WorldCoin Crypto Project'.
- The primary objective of the WorldCoin crypto project is to establish a universal and decentralised digital identity that prioritises privacy and gives people access to various online services and benefits.
- A notable aspect of the project is the vision of implementing WorldCoin as a means of distributing Universal Basic Income (UBI) to individuals around the world regardless of their location, income or social status.
- The Tools for Humans organisation, headquartered in San Francisco and Berlin, provides support and assistance to the WorldCoin initiative.
- An impressive 2 million users have already signed up for the beta version of the WorldCoin cryptocurrency project.

Bhutan Announces Successful Elimination of Rubella

- The World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia Region announced that Bhutan and Timor-Leste have successfully eliminated rubella, a highly contagious viral infection that can cause severe illness and irreversible birth defects in newborns when contracted during pregnancy.
- The achievement was made possible through widespread vaccination efforts in these countries.
- Bhutan and Timor-Leste had eliminated measles in 2017 and 2018 respectively, and now join Maldives and Sri Lanka to achieve elimination of measles and rubella by 2023.
- Bhutan first had the rubella outbreak around 2003 and the vaccine rollout took place in 2006.
- According to the WHO, UNICEF estimates that the coverage with the first dose of a measles-rubella-containing vaccine in the South-East Asia Region has improved from 86% in 2021 to 92% in 2022 (a 6%increase), while coverage of the second dose of the vaccine has jumped from 78% in 2021 to 85% in 2022 (a 7 percent point increase).

BANKING

Paytm Launches 2 New Innovative Devices

- One97 Communications Limited (OCL), the parent company of Paytm, India’s prominent payments and financial services company, launched two payment devices – Paytm Pocket Soundbox and Paytm Music Sound Box.
- It is to provide enhanced payment experiences for merchants while being non-promotional.
- The Paytm Pocket Soundbox is a first-of-its-kind Made in India portable device, as small as a debit card, that conveniently fits in the pocket of merchants on the move.
- With 4G connectivity, this device empowers merchants with instant audio payment alerts, making transactions more efficient.
- It offers a 5-day battery life and a built-in torch for seamless usage even in low-light conditions.

- Paytm introduces the Paytm Music Soundbox, a unique device enabling merchants to manage payment transactions while enjoying music from their mobile phones via Bluetooth.
- It is equipped with a robust 4W speaker, 4G connectivity, and an impressive 10-day battery life.
- Its unique voice overlay function ensures that merchants can receive payment notifications even when music is playing in the background.

SBI Raises ₹10,000 Crore through 15-Year Infrastructure Bonds

- India's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has raised ₹10,000 crore after issuing 15-year infrastructure bonds at the coupon rate of 7.54%.
- The proceeds will be directed towards bolstering long-term resources for funding critical infrastructure projects and supporting the affordable housing segment.
- This is the first issuance of a long-term bond of this tenor by any bank in the current financial year.
- The bank offered bonds at an interest rate slightly better than the interest rate given by standard government bonds.
- In January 2023, SBI raised another set of infrastructure bonds worth 9,718 crores at a spread of 17 bps over the standard government bond rates.
- The primary purpose of infrastructure bonds is to raise long-term capital to finance large-scale infrastructure projects that require substantial investment.

Swiggy Launches Co-Branded Credit Card with HDFC Bank

- Foodtech giant Swiggy has launched a co-branded credit card in partnership with HDFC Bank to lure customers and get an upper hand over its rival Zomato.
- The credit card, which will be hosted on Mastercard's payment network, would be rolled out in a phased manner over the next 7-10 days.
- Swiggy's co-branded credit card will offer users 10% cashback across services such as food delivery, grocery delivery, and dining out.
- In addition, users will be able to avail 5% cashback on other ecommerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, Myntra.
- This is not the first time that HDFC Bank has partnered with another platform to offer a co-branded credit card, it already offers co-branded credit cards with companies like Tata Neu, IRCTC, Indigo and more.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chairman and Managing Director of Engineering Projects India Ltd

- Shivendra Nath, a distinguished 1994-batch IAS officer, has been chosen by the esteemed Public Enterprises Selection Board (PSEB) panel to assume the pivotal role of Chairman and Managing Director at Engineering Projects India Ltd (EPIL), a significant Public Sector

Undertaking (PSU) operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises.

- In his new role, Nath will be the Chief Executive of the company working under the board and directors.

- He will be responsible for the smooth functioning of the company in order to achieve the organisational objectives.

- Currently, he holds the position of Senior General Manager at Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), which is also a PSU under the Department of Telecommunications.

DEFENCE

Indian Army Applies Common Uniform for Brigadier

- The Indian Army implemented a common uniform for Brigadier and above rank officers irrespective of the parent cadre and appointment.
- The decision was taken after detailed deliberations during a recently concluded Army Commanders Conference and extensive consultations with all stakeholders.
- It is to promote and strengthen the common identity and approach in service matters amongst senior leadership, beyond the boundaries of regimentation.
- The headgear, shoulder rank badges, gorget patches, belts and shoes of senior officers of flag rank (Brigadier and above) will now be standardised and common.
- The flag-rank officers will now not wear any lanyards.
- There is no change to the uniform worn by Colonels and below-rank officers.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Launches Streaming Service NASA+

- NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) has introduced an on-demand streaming platform, name NASA+.

- NASA’s new platform will provide live coverage of space events, original content and documentaries, which will be available exclusively on the platform where content will be ad-free and without any charge.

- NASA is also revamping its science websites.

- It is a beta website that can be accessed through the preview of the beta website.

- NASA has invited the public to explore the website and also submit feedback at beta.nasa.gov.
- Based on these feedbacks, NASA will continue to update and improve the beta site on a rolling-basis.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

New Book Titled "How Prime Ministers Decide"

- Veteran journalist Neerja Chowdhary recently released a new book titled "How Prime Ministers Decide".

- The book "How Prime Ministers Decide" highlights the dramatic events that led to Sonia's announcement, which was prompted by Rahul's concern for his mother's safety.

- According to the book, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi maintained positive relations with many RSS leaders but was careful to maintain a certain distance between herself and the organisation.

- The book throws light on the working style of the Prime Ministers of India and examines six landmark judgements.

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