

Monthly GK Digest

March 2023



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Dear readers,

This **Monthly GK Digest** is a **complete docket** of important news and events that occurred in the month of '**March-2023**'. This file is important for, **Bank, SSC, and Railway** exams.

Banking & Financial Awareness

1. According to the Union ministry of statistics, **India's Gross Domestic Production (GDP)** growth has been registered at **4.4% in the October-December** third quarter of the current fiscal (2022-23).
Note: GDP in the third quarter of 2022-23 is estimated at Rs 40.19 lakh crore, as against Rs 38.51 lakh crore in the third quarter of 2021-22. The **real GDP is estimated to grow at 7%** for the current FY compared to 9.1% in 2021-22. While Nominal GDP is estimated to grow at 15.9 percent.
2. According to the data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the **credit growth** of Indian banks has **doubled to 16.8% in the October-December quarter** (2022-23) from a year earlier.
Note: Bank credit had expanded by 8.4% in the quarter that ended December 2021 and 17.2% in the quarter that ended September 2022. The **aggregate deposits of banks increased by 10.3% year-on-year** in the December quarter. Banks' credit-deposit ratio rose further to 75.9% in the December quarter.
3. **Bajaj Finserv Ltd** has received the **final registration from SEBI** to commence its **mutual fund operations** under Bajaj Finserv Mutual Fund.
Note: Bajaj Finserv Mutual Fund, with Bajaj Finserv Asset Management Ltd (BFAML) as the Investment Manager, will soon offer a range of mutual fund products. The products **include equity, debt, and hybrid funds**, both in the active and passive segments, for investors.
4. Global rating firm **Moody's** Investors Services has raised the **growth projection of India to 5.5% in 2023** from the earlier projection of 4.8 percent in November 2022.
Note: Moody's also projected the growth of India at **6.5% in 2024**. According to Moody's projection, India's growth rate in 2023 is the highest among G20 countries. It is followed by China (5 %) and Indonesia (4.8%). The US is expected to grow by 0.9%, the Euro area by 0.5%, Japan by 1.5%, and the UK (-0.4%).
5. According to the Finance Ministry, the government collected **Rs 1,49,577 crore** as **gross goods and service tax (GST) revenue in the month of February 2023**.
Note: This amount was **increased by around 12%** on an annual basis (YoY). India's GST revenue in February 2022 was Rs 1,33,026 crore. Of the total revenue collected, CGST is Rs 27,662 crore, SGST is Rs 34,915 crore, IGST is Rs 75,069 crore while cess is Rs 11,931 crore (including Rs 792 crore collected on import of goods).
6. The **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** has received the approval from Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to launch the **rupee-denominated NYMEX WTI Crude Oil and Natural Gas (Henry Hub) futures contracts** in its commodity derivatives segment.
Note: Earlier, NSE had signed a data licensing agreement with CME Group allowing NSE to list, trade and settle rupee-denominated NYMEX WTI Crude Oil and Natural Gas derivatives on its platform. **NSE MD: Ashishkumar Chauhan**
7. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) and **HDFC Bank** partnered to launch a co-branded **travel credit card - IRCTC HDFC Bank Credit Card**.
Note: It is a co-branded card, in a single variant, and is available on NPCI's Rupay network. This is the **third tie-up of IRCTC after the State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda**. The card will provide exclusive benefits and maximum savings on bookings of train tickets. **Chairman & MD, IRCTC: Rajni Hasija**
8. Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has launched **Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and 'Swadhan-e-pension-Gov' services** for **Kangra Central Cooperative Bank**.
Note: Aim: To make bank transactions easier and quicker, especially for the elderly and those living in remote areas. These services would benefit

thousands of account holders of the bank. He also released the bank's annual calendar on this occasion.

9. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a **penalty of three crore six lakh sixty-six thousand rupees on Amazon Pay (India) Private Limited.**

Note: Reason: For **non-compliance with certain directions** related to Prepaid Payment Instruments and Know Your Customer. The action was based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the entity with its customers.

10. RBI has **imposed a Rs 5,000 cap on withdrawals by individual customers** from Tamil Nadu-based **Musiri Urban Co-operative Bank.**

Note: Reason: It is a part of several restrictions imposed on the lender **due to its deteriorating financial condition.** The restrictions on the lender will remain in force for six months from the close of business on March 3, 2023. Without the approval of the RBI, the cooperative bank cannot grant loans, make any investments, or disburse any payments.

11. **New India Assurance** has become the **second domestic insurance company** to launch **surety insurance bonds.**

Note: Surety bond insurance acts as a security **arrangement for infrastructure projects** and will insulate the contractor as well as the principal. These bonds are legally **enforceable tripartite contracts** that guarantee compliance, payment, and performance. The issuing insurer provides a guarantee, for a premium, in case of a default in the execution of a project.

12. The board of directors of **HDFC Bank** has recommended the **reappointment of Sashidhar Jagdishan** as managing director and **CEO for three years**, with effect from 27 October 2023.

Note: The Bank also informed that it is subject to the approval of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the shareholders. Sashidhar Jagdishan joined the Bank in 1996 and was appointed as a chief financial officer in 2008, after which he was appointed as the MD and CEO.

13. According to **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, the **estimated annual per capita** (net national income) at current prices for 2022-23 is **Rs 1,72,000**, showing a growth of around 99% from Rs 86,647 in 2014-15.

Note: However, after adjusting for inflation (constant prices), the per capita income **has risen by approximately 35%** from Rs 72,805 in 2014-15 to Rs 98,118 in 2022-23. The average growth of India's per-capita income in real terms from 2014 to 2019 was 5.6 percent per annum.

14. The **World Bank** will lend up to **\$1 billion to India** to strengthen its **health infrastructure.**

Note: The lending will be divided into two **complementary loans of \$500 million each.** The bank will support India's flagship Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) which was launched in October 2021. The loans will prioritize health service delivery in **seven States - Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh.**

15. MoS, personnel, public grievances, and pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh informed that the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare will **integrate all the pension portals - Pension Disbursing Bank portals, ANUBHAV, CPENGRAMS, CGHS, etc into a single portal.**

Note: These portals will be integrated into the form of the newly created "Integrated Pensioners' Portal" (<https://ipension.nic.in>). Aim: To ensure the ease of living for the elder citizens

16. The **All India Home Price Index (HPI)**, released by the **RBI**, has **recorded a 2.79% growth (year-on-year) to 302 in the third quarter (ended December) of 2022-23** as compared with 293.8, despite the rise in interest rates.

Note: On a quarter-on-quarter sequential basis, the index rose from 298, an increase of 1.34%, from September 2022. The Y-o-Y movements in HPI varied widely across the cities, ranging from a growth of 7.1% (Kochi) to a contraction of 9% (Jaipur).

17. According to the **CRIF High Mark**, the **total retail loan outstanding was Rs 100.28 lakh crore in Dec 2022**, up from Rs 81.91 lakh crore a year ago.

Note: The share of **female borrowers** in the retail loans outstanding has **gone up to 26% at Rs 26.07 lakh crore** as of Dec 2022 from 25% (Rs 20.47 lakh crore) in Dec 2021. **Major retail loan products availed by female borrowers in India:** Gold loans (42% share), Education loans (35%), Home loans (32%), and Loans against property (29%)

18. The RBI Governor, Shaktikanta Das has launched the Mission '**Har Payment Digital**' during the Digital Payments Awareness Week 2023, which is being observed from March 6 to 12, 2023.

Note: Campaign theme: Digital Payment Apnao, Auron ko bhi Sikhao (Adopt digital payments and Also teach others) RBI has launched a program to adopt **75 villages** and convert them into digital payment-enabled villages. Payment system operators (PSOs) will adopt these villages across the country.

19. **Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and UN Women India** launched a new program named '**FinEMPOWER**' on 8th March 2023.

Note: It is a year-long joint capacity-building program between BSE and UN Women to **empower women** toward financial security. BSE and UN

Women India collaboratively **organized the 'Ring the Bell for Gender Equality' ceremony** to accelerate investment in women leaders and entrepreneurs at BSE. MD and CEO of BSE: Sundararaman Ramamurthy

20. **Max Life Insurance and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank** have partnered to offer life insurance offerings to Ujjivan SFB's customers.

Note: Through this partnership, both will offer a range of savings, protection, retirement, and group life insurance plans to Ujjivan SFB customers. Max Life Insurance Company Limited is a joint venture between Max Financial Services Limited and Axis Bank Limited. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited began its operations in February 2017.

21. As per the Finance Ministry notification, the **exchange between virtual digital assets and fiat currencies**, the exchange between one or more forms of virtual digital assets, and the transfer of virtual digital assets will **be covered under the money laundering act**.

Note: The safekeeping or administration of virtual digital assets and the participation in financial services related to the offer and sale of virtual digital assets will also come under the preview of the Act.

22. SEBI has imposed **restrictions** on the placement of bids, price, and volume for the companies undertaking share **buyback through the stock exchange route**, effective on March 9, 2023.

Note: A company will not be able to **purchase more than 25% of the average daily** trading volume of its shares in the 10 trading days preceding the day in which such purchases are made. The company will not place bids in the first 30 minutes and the last 30 minutes of the regular trading session.

23. On International Women's Day 2023, **Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company (AMC)** launched a digital campaign called '**DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality**'.

Note: Aim: To drive the culture of digital literacy among the women's fraternity. The campaign calls for the digital inclusion of all with the **hashtag, #IncludeAll**. The digital campaign showcases Kotak group's women employees sharing their stories about supporting and empowering other women in their lives.

24. **Axis Bank and ITC (FMCG)** joined hands to offer **lending products and services to farmers** who are a part of ITC's agriculture ecosystem.

Note: Aim: To enable the bank to reach out to the **unserved and under-served farmers across rural regions**. The bank will offer credit facilities for rural lending products like Farmer Funding loans & Gold Loans. The bank will also leverage **ITC-MAARS (Meta Market for Advanced Agricultural Rural Services)** to address farmers' financial needs.

25. In an exchange filing, the **Bank of Baroda** has informed that the bank's board has approved **divesting up to 49% stake in subsidiary BoB Financial Solutions Ltd**.

Note: Currently, **BOB holds 100% of the total equity** share capital of BFSL. BFSL, a registered non-banking financial institution, is primarily involved in credit cards and merchant-acquiring businesses.

26. The FinMin has tightened the **definition of beneficial owners** under the **anti-money laundering law**, mandating reporting entities to collect information from their clients.

Note: Beneficial Owners: Any individual or group **holding 10% ownership (earlier 25%)** in the client of a reporting entity. The reporting entities are banks and financial institutions engaged in real estate and jewellery sectors. They also include intermediaries in casinos and crypto or virtual digital assets.

27. Stock exchanges **BSE and NSE have designated 15 trading platforms as Qualified Stock Brokers (QSBs)** with effect from July 1, 2023.

Note: These shortlisted stock brokers are required to meet enhanced obligations and discharge additional responsibilities. Some of the **notable stock brokers in the QSB list** are Zerodha Broking, 5Paisa Capital, HDFC Securities, IIFL Securities, ICICI Securities, Motilal Financial Services, Kotak Securities, and Sharekhan among others.

28. **Yes Bank** has partnered with **Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd** to offer home loans at competitive interest rates to customers from **lower and middle-income groups**.

Note: This partnership is in accordance with the **co-lending framework of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**. Under this framework, the RBI enables banks and non-banking companies to jointly bring forth financial solutions that cater to the requirements of unserved and underserved sections of society.

29. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank has launched the '**Unpause Initiative**' to assist women who have taken a career break and are now ready to return to the workforce.

Note: The initiative is part of the bank's commitment to promoting workplace diversity and inclusion. The bank's employees participated in a **3 km walk from its registered headquarters in Koramangala** to support an initiative. Ujjivan SFB has also announced a special Hiring Drive and Employee referral program for women.

30. Central government has released **Rs 1,40,318 crores as monthly instalment for March towards tax devolution** to states, which is much more than the normal monthly devolution of Rs 70,159 crore made for states.

Note: This is in line with the commitment to strengthen the hands of states to accelerate their

capital and developmental expenditure, an official statement said. **Uttar Pradesh has received the highest installment of Rs 24,783 crore among all states.**

31. **IDFC Mutual Fund** has been rebranded itself as **Bandhan Mutual Fund** and its schemes will reflect the new name with effect from March 13, 2023.

Note: IDFC Mutual Fund has also unveiled a new logo as the company was **acquired by Bandhan Financial Holdings**-led consortium in April 2022. Scheme of the fund house will be renamed to replace the word 'IDFC' with 'Bandhan'. Unitholders of IDFC MF would continue to benefit from the same high-quality investment approach.

32. **Punjab National Bank** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Central Warehousing Corporation** to facilitate financing under **e-NWR (Electronic Negotiable Warehousing Receipt)**.

Note: Aim: To provide easy access to finance to farmers/ food processors/ traders against the pledge of agriculture commodities stored in CWC warehouses. **CWC is a statutory body under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.**

33. According to the report, released by PhonePe and Boston Consulting Group, **India's digital payments market will more than triple from \$3 trillion to \$10 trillion by 2026.**

Note: In 2015, the Indian government launched its **Digital India program**, with the objective to achieve a "faceless, paperless and cashless" status for financial transactions at the grass-root level. **NPCI launched UPI in 2016**, which enables inter-bank transactions through mobile devices instantly.

34. In an initiative to promote **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**, **Kochi Metro** has started accepting **digital currency in its parking facilities.**

Note: With this, Kochi Metro is the **first Metro** in the country to accept CBDC. The program was inaugurated at the **parking facility in Thykoodam** and system would be introduced in all other parking areas of the Metro soon. The program was introduced in association with IDFC FIRST Bank partnered with Anantham Online, a technology startup

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

Note: Earlier, it was **classified as an Investment and Credit Company (ICC)**. With the IFC status, IREDA will be able to take higher exposure in RE financing. It will also help the company to access a wider investor base for fund mobilization, resulting in competitive rates for fundraising.

36. According to the **Mudra portal** (as of 27.01.2023), **more than 38.58 crore loans** have been extended since the inception of the Scheme in April 2015.

Note: Out of this, over 26.35 crore loans have been extended to **Women Entrepreneurs (68%)**. **SC/ST/OBC category borrowers** received 19.84 crore loans (51%). As per the Ministry of Labour survey, PMMY helped in generating 1.12 crore net additional employment in the country from 2015 to 2018.

37. **Suryoday Small Finance Bank** has launched a new savings account for women customers called the **Blossom Women's savings account.**

Note: Women can earn up to **7% interest rate per annum**. An exclusive and free Rupay Platinum Debit Card that rewards women customers with discounts and cashback. Monthly Interest Pay-out in the account. One complementary account for child (Savings Aditya Account). Average Monthly Balance (AMB) of ₹10,000

38. According to the data released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**, India's **retail inflation has lowered to 6.44% in February 2023** from 6.52% in January 2023.

Note: But it remained above the **upper band of the 4+/- 2 percent medium-term target** of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the second consecutive month. While food inflation eased marginally to 5.95 percent in February 2023 from 6% in January 2023, inflation for cereals, milk, and fruits picked up.

39. New York-based **Signature Bank** was **shut by regulators in the US**, becoming the **second bank** in the country after Silicon Valley Bank.

Note: The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) **has been appointed as a receiver**, which typically means it will liquidate the bank's assets to pay back its customers, including depositors and others. The standard insurance amount from **FDIC is \$250,000 per depositor**, per bank, for each account ownership category.

40. **Wholesale Price-based Inflation (WPI)** has been eased to two years low of **3.85% in February 2023** against 4.73% recorded in January 2023.

Note: It will primarily contribute to the fall in the prices of crude petroleum, food products, electronics, chemicals, and electrical equipment. In February, fuel and power rose 14.82% as compared to 15.15% in January 2023. While **the food index stood at 2.76% (Feb 2023)** against 2.95% (Jan 2023). Retail inflation (Feb 2023): 6.44%

41. **RBI** has granted approval to **foreign banks in 18 countries** to **open Vostro accounts** to settle international trade in rupees.

Note: 18 Countries: Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Russia, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and UK. MoS Finance,

Bhagwat Karad informed in the Rajya Sabha. In July 2022, govt informed that it would set up a mechanism to settle international trade in rupees.

42. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved **Reliance Industries Ltd to acquire the German firm Metro AG's** wholesale operations in India for ₹2,850 crore.

Note: On 22 December 2022, Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) signed definitive agreements to **acquire a 100% equity stake** in Metro Cash & Carry India Pvt Ltd. Metro started operations in India in 2003 as the first company to introduce a cash-and-carry business format in the country.

43. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** signed an MoU with the **Central Bank of the UAE** to promote innovation in financial products and services.

Note: Both central banks will work together to **explore Central Bank Digital Currencies**. They will also investigate interoperability between the CBDCs of CBUAE and RBI. They will conduct proof-of-concept and pilot tests of the bilateral CBDC bridge to facilitate cross-border transactions of remittances and trade.

44. According to the credit rating agency **CRISIL report**, India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is estimated to grow at **6% in 2023-24**, slower than the 7% estimated for 2022-23.

Note: Report Title: Rider in the Storm: Tracing India's Growth in a Volatile World. It was also estimated that the corporate revenue would continue to grow in double digits, buoyed by strong domestic demand. **Retail inflation will average 5% over 2023-24**, lower than the 6.8% (averaged in 2022-23).

45. The **Go Digit General Insurance** has **announced three new plans** under the Digit Health Insurance policy.

Note: The three plans—**Digit Double Wallet, Digit Infinity Wallet, and Digit Global Treatment**. Aim: To meet Indians' newly evolved health insurance demands following the pandemic. Under the Infinity Wallet and Worldwide Treatment plan for every claim-free year, the policyholders can earn 50% of the sum insured as a cumulative bonus of up to 100% of the SI.

46. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed **Rs 5 lakh monetary penalty** on mortgage **financier HDFC Ltd** for failing to transfer matured deposits of certain depositors to designated bank accounts of such depositors during 2019-20.

Note: As per RBI, HDFC was found to be non-compliant with certain provisions of Housing Finance Companies (NHB) Directions, 2010. **CEO of HDFC Bank: Sashidhar Jagdishan**.

47. **Sri Lanka's Seylan Bank** has opened an Indian rupee-denominated **Nostro account in Indian Bank in Mumbai**.

Note: Aim: To help in setting cross-border transactions using the Indian rupee. It enables local customers to enter into transactions denominated in the Indian Rupee and eliminates the need to conduct Trade and Remittance transactions in US dollars. **Nostro account:** It is a bank account held in a foreign country by a domestic bank, denominated in the currency of that country.

48. The **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)** has received approval from the Union Government **for listing on the Stock Exchanges**.

Note: The CCEA decided to approve an **Initial Public Offer (IPO)** by the part sale of the Government's stake in the CPSE. Aim: To raise funds through the issue of fresh equity shares. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) will drive the listing process.

49. **ICICI Prudential Life Insurance** has launched **ICICI Pru Gold**.

Note: It is an innovative **long-term savings product** designed to enable customers to create an additional income stream to meet their diverse income requirements. Besides receiving guaranteed lifelong income, the life cover component in the product provides financial security to the family. This product is available in three variants i.e. Immediate Income, Immediate Income with Booster, and Deferred Income.

50. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** executive board has approved a **\$3-billion four-year** extended financing **arrangement for Sri Lanka**.

Note: It paves the way for an immediate disbursement of about \$333 million to the cash-strapped country. The new **Extended Fund Facility (EFF)** arrangement program aims to restore Sri Lanka's macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability, mitigate the economic impact on the poor and vulnerable, and safeguard financial sector stability.

51. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a **monetary penalty of 22.7 million rupees (\$274,915)** on private lender **RBL Bank Ltd**.

Note: Reason: For not complying with certain directives on loan recovery agents. The RBI has found deficiencies in regulatory compliance after it examined complaints received against RBL's recovery agents during the financial years 2018-19 to 2021-22. **RBL Headquarters: Mumbai; MD & CEO: R. Subramaniakumar**

52. The **gross NPA ratio** was declining from 14.6% in March 2018 to **5.53% in December 2022**.

Note: All PSBs are in profit with aggregate profit being Rs 66,543 crore in 2021-22 and that further increased to Rs 70,167 crore in the first nine months of the current financial year. At the same time, resilience has increased with the provision coverage

ratio of PSBs rising from 46% to 89.9% in December 2022. The **capital adequacy ratio improved from 11.5% to 14.5% in December 2022.**

53. **India and the World Bank** have signed a loan agreement to construct the **Green National Highway Corridors Project in four States.**

Note: Four states: HP, Rajasthan, UP, and Andhra Pradesh. The agreement has been signed to construct 781 kilometers, with loan assistance of 500 million dollars. The total project cost is over 7,662 crore rupees. Objective: To demonstrate safe and green highways keeping in view climate resilience and the use of green technologies

54. **Commercial Bank, a digital Bank in Qatar** has announced to launch of **Unified Payment Interface (UPI) remittance service to India.**

Note: With this decision, this bank becomes the first bank in Qatar to offer this service. Customers can use Commercial Banking digital platforms to initiate UPI payments using UPI-ID. The transactions can be completed within 60 seconds and are available 24/7. UPI is a convenient payment system that allows customers to transfer money in real time.

55. **Women employees** constitute over **25% of the total workforce** on average in the **nationalized banks** in the country.

Note: The largest Public Sector Bank-- the **State Bank of India (SBI)**, has **26.7% women employees** in their total staff strength. While Indian Overseas Bank has a maximum of 36% women staff and the Punjab National Bank has the least 24% women staff strength. This data was provided by the Ministry of Finance in the Lok Sabha.

56. According to the data shared by the Union MoS for Finance, Dr. Bhagwat Kisanrao Karad in Rajya Sabha, the enrolments under **Atal Pension Yojana** have shown a hike of **More than 40%** in FY 2021-22 from FY 2019-20.

Note: The total fund allocated under APY for Government Co-contribution, Payment of Incentives to Banks, Promotional Campaigns, and Gap fund is Rs. 2078.94 crore (2015 to Feb 2023). Out of the total amount, Rs. 1529.41 crores has been released till February 2023.

57. According to the **Finance Ministry report**, the **Indian economy** is expected to **grow at 7%** in FY23 despite global headwinds.

Note: Retail inflation would moderate in line with wholesale inflation which fell to a 25-month low in January 2023. It will be supported by the gains from high services exports, the moderation in oil prices, and the recent fall in import-intensive consumption demand. The current account deficit (CAD) of India is estimated to fall in FY23 and FY24.

58. **Axis Bank** has entered into a co-lending **pact with Autotractor Finance (AFL)** through YubiCo.Lend

platform to offer new tractor loans for agricultural and allied activities in rural segments of the country.

Note: This partnership will leverage the wide customer experience of Autotractor Finance and the deep financial expertise of Axis Bank to enable easy credit availability for farmers. They would be able to reach out to potential customers. **Axis Bank CEO: Amitabh Chaudhry**

59. **Income Tax Department** has launched a free-of-cost Mobile app namely AIS for taxpayers.

Note: Aim: To facilitate the taxpayers to view their information as available in the Annual Information Statement (AIS) and Taxpayer Information Summary (TIS). In the app, taxpayers can view various information related to TDS, interest, share transactions, tax payments, Income Tax refunds, and GST Data among others. It will also have the option and the facility to provide feedback.

60. **Amazon Pay** has collaborated with **Bharat BillPay** to strengthen its **loan repayment facility.**

Note: **Bharat BillPay is a biller platform of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).** Loan repayment is one of the top categories in terms of bill payment, amongst other options such as electricity and municipal tax payments. The category facilitates loan repayment options for customers who avail of their loans through banks, microfinance institutions, and NBFCs.

61. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has laid the foundation stone for the establishment of a **"Greenfield Data Centre" and "Enterprise Computing & Cybersecurity Training Institute"** in **Bhubaneswar, Odisha.**

Note: The Governor also highlighted the need for augmenting the existing computing infrastructure of the RBI supported by cutting-edge facilities for research and capacity building. It will cater to the emerging requirements of the RBI and the financial sector.

62. **Egypt** joined the **BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) as an official member.**

Note: Egypt completed all the necessary procedures to become an eligible member on February 20, 2023. BRICS' New Development bank was established in July 2014, after an intergovernmental agreement was signed by the partner nations at the sixth BRICS summit in Fortaleza. **NDB bank includes India, Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa as member countries.**

63. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 30 lakh on **Karur Vysya Bank for violating rules.**

Note: Reason: For non-compliance with certain provisions of directions issued by RBI on 'Reserve Bank of India (Frauds - Classification and reporting by commercial banks and select FIs) directions 2016'. The penalty was imposed in the exercise of

powers conferred on RBI under the provisions of Section 47 A(1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

64. The central government has increased the **Dearness Allowance (DA)** by 4%, taking the **total to 42%** of the Basic Pay for central government employees and pensioners.

Note: The Union Cabinet has given its approval to release an additional installment of DA to Central Governments employees and Dearness Relief to Pensioners with **effect from 1st January 2023**. The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both DA and Dearness Relief will be over 12,815 crore rupees per annum.

65. **Karur Vysya Bank** signed an agreement as an additional **bancassurance partner** in the life insurance category with **SBI Life**.

Note: Under this arrangement, banks earn additional revenue from the sale of insurance products via commission. And, insurance companies can reach a wider set of customers without increasing their manpower. **Bancassurance:** It is an arrangement between a bank and an insurance firm through which the insurer sell its products to the bank's customers.

66. **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** will provide a loan of up to Rs 754 crore to SAEL Industries Ltd for **setting up biomass power plants in Rajasthan**.

Note: SAEL is a solar and agricultural waste-to-energy company. It has developed a business model where crop residues are used as fuel in waste-to-energy projects. The company aims to **grow its portfolio to 3.5 GW** over the next four years by adding 100 MW of new biomass and 600 MW of new solar capacity annually.

67. The Centre has notified a hike in wage rates up to **10% under MGNREGS for 2023-24, Haryana** having the highest **daily wage at ₹357 per day**.

Note: **Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the lowest at ₹221**. The wage hikes, which range from ₹7 to ₹26, will come into effect from April 1, 2023. It is a flagship program aimed at enhancing the livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment.

68. **ICICI Lombard** launched the '**Anywhere Cashless**' feature for **health insurance** policyholders to avail of cashless facilities at any hospital.

Note: The feature will be subject to the hospital's acceptance of the cashless facility. Policyholders must inform the company 24 hours prior to the date of admission by giving basic information about the patient, policy details, hospital name, diagnosis, and treating doctor, among others.

69. **S&P Global Ratings** has kept its forecast for India's economic growth unchanged at **6%** for 2023-24 and 6.9% for 2024-25.

Note: In the quarterly economic update for Asia-Pacific, S&P highlighted that the inflation rate will be **eased to 5% in 2023-24** from 6.8% in the current financial year (2022-23). It has also been forecasted that the GDP of India will grow by 7% in the current financial year ending March 31 (2022-23). S&P Global HQ: New York, U.S.

70. According to the **World Bank's** report titled 'Falling Long-Term Growth Prospects: Trends, Expectations, and Policies', the **global economy's 'speed limit'** is on track to crash to a three-decade low by **2030**.

Note: The 'speed limit' refers to the maximum long-term growth rate without sparking inflation concerns. At 2.2%, the global average potential GDP growth rate would be sharply lower than the 3.5% recorded in the first decade of the century.

71. **Aditya Birla Group** has agreed to sell its insurance broking business, **Aditya Birla Insurance Brokers Ltd (ABIBL)** to **Samara Capital** for **₹455 crore**.

Note: ABIBL is specialized in providing integrated insurance broking and advisory services to companies and individuals. It also offers reinsurance solutions to insurance companies. It is subject to receipt of the approval of IRDAI and other regulatory and statutory approvals.

72. **First Citizens Bank** will **acquire Silicon Valley Bank** and assume control of all its **deposits and loans**.

Note: As part of the deal, North Carolina-based First Citizens Bank has agreed to **purchase \$72 billion worth of SVB's assets** at a \$16.5 billion discount from the FDIC. First Citizens Bank will take control of \$56 billion in deposits. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) will continue to retain receivership of around \$90 billion worth of SVB's assets.

73. Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has fixed **8.15% interest rate** on employees' **provident fund (EPF) deposits for 2022-23**.

Note: In March 2022, EPFO lowered the interest on **EPF for 2021-22 to 8.1%** for its about five crore subscribers, from 8.5% in 2020-21. After the CBT's decision, the interest rate on EPF deposits for 2022-23 will be sent to the Ministry of Finance for concurrence. EPFO provides the interest rate only after finance ministry ratification.

74. The government has set a maximum rate of **GST compensating cess on pan masala**, cigarettes, and other kinds of tobacco, with the highest rate tied to the retail sale price.

Note: The cess rate was capped as part of amendments to the Finance Bill 2023. According to the amendment, the maximum GST compensation cess rate for **pan masala will be 51% of the retail sale price per unit**, from the current cess charge at 135% ad valorem.

75. CRIF Connect Private has received approval from RBI to commence operations **as an NBFC Account Aggregator (AA)**.

Note: CRIF Connect is uniquely positioned to benefit both consumers and financial institutions. It is an end-to-end encrypted platform that securely fetches and transfers a consumer's financial data based on their explicit consent between financial institutions, making data sharing extremely safe based on RBI-approved guidelines.

76. The SEBI has simplified the procedural requirements for **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) onboarding**.

Note: SEBI has allowed **designated depository participants (DDPs)** to grant FPI registration based on scanned copies of application forms and supporting documents. Trading can only be activated following the verification of the physical documents. It has allowed DDPs to accept the use of digital signatures by FPIs for the execution of registration-related documents.

77. SEBI has imposed **penalties** totaling of **₹35.67 crore** on **PNB Finance and Industries Ltd, Camac Commercial Company Ltd, and various other entities**.

Note: It includes promoters Samir Jain and Meera Jain who have also been barred from the securities market. Reason: Comply with the minimum public shareholding requirement under Sebi norms. Listed companies are required to have at least 25% public shareholding. SEBI imposed a fine of Rs 12 crore on PNBFIL.

78. NPCI has recommended an **interchange fee of up to 1.1%** on merchant UPI transactions done **using prepaid payment instruments (PPIs)-wallets/cards-with effect from April 1, 2023**.

Note: The charges will be levied on UPI payments of **over ₹2,000** made to online merchants, large merchants, and small offline merchants. However, on certain merchant categories, a lower interchange starting from 0.5%, might be levied as per applicable caps.

79. Under the IRDAI (Payment of Commission) Regulations, 2023, the IRDAI has replaced the earlier individual cap on commission payments on insurance products with an overall cap on **Expenses of Management (EoM) of insurers**.

Note: **EoM:** It is computed as a percentage of premiums collected, and includes commissions/other expenses. It is applicable for life and non-life insurers. The EoM of general insurers **cannot exceed 30%** of the gross premium written in India in a financial year.

80. The Finance Ministry informed that the government has decided to make a **gross market borrowing of ₹8.88 trillion** in the first half of FY24.

Note: It is accounting for 57.55% of the overall market borrowings planned for the year. The

borrowing is scheduled to be completed in 26 weekly tranches of Rs 31,000-39,000 crore. The Centre has budgeted a gross market borrowing of **₹15.43 trillion in FY 2024**. The borrowing program is finalized in consultation with the RBI.

81. According to data presented in the Rajya Sabha, the public sector banks (PSBs) have written off around **₹91,000 crores** in the first 9 months of the current fiscal year.

Note: PSBs have just managed to recover a little over ₹1 out of ₹5 in written-off accounts during FY22. However, the pace of recovery has picked up from around 8% in 2017-18 to a little over 21% in FY22. **Bank-wise details:** SBI (₹17,356 cr) followed by Union Bank of India (₹16,497 crore), and BoB (₹13,032 cr)

82. SEBI has approved a framework for an **Application Supported by a Blocked Amount (ASBA)** like facility for secondary market trading.

Note: It is based on the blocking of funds for trading in the secondary market through UPI. **ASBA:** It is an IPO application process under which the application money by an investor is blocked in that investor's bank account. And once the IPO application is approved, the application money is debited from the investor's account.

83. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has allowed **Private Equity (PE)** funds to **sponsor Mutual Fund schemes**.

Note: The decision comes in the backdrop of IDFC Mutual Fund getting acquired by a consortium comprising Bandhan Financial Holdings Ltd, Sovereign Wealth Fund GIC, and private equity fund ChrysCapital. It has also permitted the set-up of self-sponsored asset management companies (AMCs). SEBI chairperson: Madhabi Puri Buch

84. The Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank has approved a **\$100 million loan to Odisha**.

Note: Reason: To robust its early forecasting systems for improved **response to disasters** and enhance its social protection coverage for poor and vulnerable households through digital platforms. Odisha is vulnerable to natural disasters with cyclones hitting the state every 15 months on average. The Program has a maturity of 12.5 years with a grace period of 3 years.

85. BharatPe has joined hands with **NITI Aayog's Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)** to extend its support to women entrepreneurs in the country.

Note: Focus area: To facilitate the development of a first-of-its-kind aggregator platform that gives access to peer support, mentorship, networking channels. According to the 6th economic census, **women comprise only 13.76% of the total entrepreneurs in India**.

86. Aditya Birla Health Insurance Co. Ltd. (ABHICL) has signed a bancassurance pact with **UCO Bank** for the distribution of health insurance products.

Note: This partnership enables ABHICL to expand its national footprint by leveraging UCO Bank's widely distributed network of 3,164 branches. **ABHICL now has 17 bancassurance partners** with over 80,000 direct-selling agents, across the country. CEO, Aditya Birla Health Insurance: Mayank Bathwal

87. Godrej Capital has signed a strategic MoU with the **State Bank of India (SBI)** for various financial products and offerings.

Note: Both organizations joined together to make financial solutions more accessible and affordable, unlocking opportunities for financial inclusion. The association leverages the strengths of both groups by facilitating a gamut of financial services provided by the bank such as banking products, credit cards, and wealth management.

88. Axis Bank and Shriram Housing Finance Limited signed a partnership agreement under the **co-lending model through the Yubi Co.Lend platform**.

Note: Both lenders will offer secured MSME loans and home loans to the middle and low-income

segment borrowers based in rural and semi-urban regions. It will leverage the financial expertise of bank, and the loan processing technology of SHFL to assess the credit profile of borrowers and provide loans at competitive interest rate.

89. Ambit Finvest has partnered with SKALEUP (digital technology services arm of Bajaj Finserv Direct) to develop a **Direct-to-customer (D2C)** instant loan application.

Note: Under this partnership, they will provide give business loans to MSME business owners through a completely paperless and automated digital onboarding process. Ambit Finvest is the **NBFC of the Ambit Group**. CEO of Bajaj Finserv Direct: **Ashish Panchal**

90. The World Bank's Executive Board of Directors has approved a **USD 363 million loan to Karnataka**.

Note: Reason: To provide a clean drinking water supply to two million rural households in the state through a piped water connection in their homes. The USD 363 million loan from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The loan has a maturity of 13.5 years including a grace period of two years.

Obituaries

1. Former Chief Justice of India, A M Ahmadi passed away at 90 due to a brief illness.

Note: He was the **26th Chief Justice of India** from October 1994 to March 1997. In 1964, he was appointed a civil and sessions judge in Ahmedabad and become the state's law secretary. In 1976, he was appointed a judge of the Gujarat High Court and was elevated to the Supreme Court in 1988.

2. Renowned Bengali novelist and short story writer, Sasthipada Chattopadhyay passed away in Howrah, West Bengal.

Note: He was known for his famous '**Pandav Goenda**' (five detectives) series. He joined Anandabazar Patrika and also worked for its 'Rabibasoryo' supplement before joining the Indian Railways. He created two more detective series — 'Detective Ambar Chatterjee' and 'Goenda Tatar'.

3. A former Indian diplomat, Chandrashekhar Dasgupta passed away at the age of 82.

Note: He joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1962. He served as the ambassador to the European Union, Belgium, Luxembourg, and China. He was honoured with the **Padma Bhushan in 2008** for his work in Indian civil service.

4. Bollywood actor-director Satish Kaushik passed away at the age of 66 in Delhi due to cardiac arrest.

Note: Kaushik was an alumnus of the National School of Drama (NSD) and the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). He was known for his iconic

roles in Mr. India, Tere Naam, Roop Ki Rani Choron Ka Raja, Deewana Mastana, Brick Lane, Saajan Chale Sasural among others.

5. American Olympic athlete Pat McCormick died at 92 in California due to health-related problems and dementia.

Note: She won the **women's 3-meter springboard and 10-meter platform** competitions at the **1952 Olympics in Finland**. She was honored by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) with the James E. Sullivan Award - amateur athlete of the year in 1956. She was the 2nd woman to win the award after Swimmer Ann Curtis(1944).

6. Japanese novelist, Kenzaburo Oe passed away at the age of 88 on March 3, 2023, due to age-related issues.

Note: He was known for his pacifist and anti-nuclear views. He was honoured with the **Nobel Prize** in Literature in **1994** for creating "an imagined world, where life and myth condense to form a disconcerting picture of the human predicament today". His notable works are 'A Personal Matter' and 'The Silent Cry'.

7. Actor Sameer Khakhar, best known for his role in the **iconic television show Nukkad**, has died at 71 due to respiratory and other medical problems.

Note: He rose to fame with his roles in TV shows 'Nukkad' and 'Circus'. He was also featured in 'Shrimaan Shrimati', and 'Adaalat'. He also played

vital roles in films, including 'Hasee Toh Phasee', 'Jai Ho', and 'Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi'.

8. **Jag Mohan Nath (retd)**, who passed away, was a veteran **IAF Wing Commander**.

Note: He was honoured with the **Maha Vir Chakra**, for gathering information during his missions which proved vital to Indian air efforts during the wars. Wing Commander Nath retired in 1970 and later joined Air India as a commercial pilot.

9. **Charukeerthi Bhattaraka Swamy** of **Jain mutt**, passed away at 73 due to health-related issues.

Note: The seer was a **scholar in Sanskrit and Prakrit**. During his tenure as head of the mutt, he conducted mahamastakabhisheka, the grand anointment of the 57-foot tall Gomateshwara statue at Shravanabelagola four times (1981, 1993, 2006, and 2018). The ceremony is organized once in 12 years.

10. **Journalist Naidunia Abhay Chhajlani**, who passed away at 88 due to health-related issues, was associated with which field.

Note: He entered the field of journalism in 1955 and graduated from the Thomson Foundation, Cardiff (UK). He was awarded the **Padma Shri in 2009** for his outstanding contribution to journalism. He also served as the president of the Indian Language Newspaper Association (ILNA) and Indian Newspaper Society (INS).

11. **Gordon Moore**, who passed away, was the **creator of Intel**.

Note: He was the driving force behind the development of modern computing devices. He started working on semiconductors in the 1950s and co-founded the Intel Corporation in 1968. He was best known for coining **Moore's law** which predicted the speed of advances in computer chips that came to explain the exponential improvement in technology of all kinds.

12. Renowned **Malayalam actor 'Innocent' Vareed Thekkethala**, who passed away at 75.

Note: He joined the film industry in 1972 with the movie 'Nriyashala' starring Prem Nazir and Jayabharathi. He acted in over 700 films and was known for his comic roles. He was also a **former Lok Sabha MP**. He had won the 2014 Lok Sabha elections as an independent candidate backed by the Left Democratic Front, from Chalakudy. He also acted in a few Hindi films, notably 'Malamaal Weekly'.

13. **Artist Vivan Sundaram**, who passed away in Delhi at the age of 79.

Note: His work has been showcased in museums and exhibitions across the world. He worked with different media – painting, sculpture, printmaking, photography, installation, and video art. He was a founding member of the Kasauli Art Center, the Journal of Arts & Ideas, the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT), and a managing trustee of the Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation.

Important Days

1. **World Wildlife Day 2023** is marked annually on **March 3** to celebrate the unique wild species and create awareness to help conserve them.

Note: Theme 2023: Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation. The 68th session of the UNGA has designated March 3 as World Wildlife Day on December 20, 2013. Reason: To raise awareness about the conservation of the world's wild flora and fauna

2. **The 5th Jan Aushadhi Diwas** is being organized on **7th March 2023** across India to enhance awareness about the scheme and promote generic medicines.

Note: Theme 2023: Jan Aushadhi – Sasti bhi Acchi bhi. The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI), and States/UTs. A week-long event is being organized in different cities all across the country from March 1-7, 2023.

3. The **International Day for Disarmament** and Non-Proliferation Awareness was observed on **5 March**.

Note: Aim: To deepen the global public's understanding of how disarmament efforts contribute to enhancing peace and security,

preventing and ending armed conflicts, and curbing human suffering caused by weapons. This day seeks to promote better awareness and understanding of disarmament issues among the public, especially young people.

4. **World Obesity Day** is observed on **March 4** every year to promote practical solutions and maintain a healthy weight.

Note: 2023 theme: Changing Perspectives: Let's Talk About Obesity

5. India celebrates **National Security Day on March 4** every year.

Note: The purpose of this day is to express gratitude to our nation's security forces, which include the police, paramilitary units, guards, commandos, army officers, and other units involved in preserving the safety and security of our citizens. **2023 theme: Nurture young minds – Develop safety culture**

6. **National Safety Day** is observed on **March 4** annually to promote safe working environment and ensure the safety of people in all aspects.

Note: This year will mark the onset of the 52nd National Safety Day. **The theme for 2023 National Safety Day is 'Our Aim – Zero Harm'.**

7. **Zero Discrimination Day** is observed on **1 March** to celebrate the right of everyone to live a full and productive life and live it with dignity.

Note: Zero Discrimination Day is helping to create a global movement of solidarity to end all forms of discrimination. **Theme 2023: Save lives: Decriminalise**

8. **World Civil Defence Day** is observed on **1st March** to raise awareness about the importance of civil defence measures in protecting people.

Note: The day honours the work of several civil defence organisations. **2023 theme: Uniting the world's leading specialists for the safety and security of future generations**

9. **World Seagrass Day** is celebrated annually on **1st March** to raise awareness about seagrass and its important functions in the marine ecosystem.

Note: The seagrasses are grass-like plants that live close to the sea. They are the only flowering plant to grow in the marine environment.

10. **International Women's Day** is observed every year on **March 8** to raise awareness about gender equality and create a better society free of gender bias.

Note: The day celebrates women and addresses issues such as women's equal rights, violence and abuse against women, and reproductive rights. **2023 Theme: DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality.** This theme emphasizes the importance of technology in bringing gender issues to light.

11. **No Smoking Day** is observed on the second **Wednesday of March.**

Note: In 2023, No Smoking Day falls on **March 8**. Aim: To encourage people to quit smoking and raise awareness about its harmful effects on their health. **This year's theme is: "Stopping smoking improves your brain health".** The United Kingdom witnessed that people in the country are getting addicted to smoking.

12. The **International Day of Women Judges** is observed every year on **March 10** to honour all-female judges who have taken the lead in the fight against social injustice.

Note: This day is being observed with the campaign **"Women in Justice, Women for Justice"**. It is a symbolic day for the fight for gender equality and the fight against gender-based discrimination. In April 2021, UNGA enacted resolution 75/274 designating March 10 as the International Day of Women Judges.

13. **World Consumer Rights Day** is celebrated on **March 15** every year to raise awareness about consumer rights and promote consumer protection.

Note: 2023 Theme: Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions. This day was first observed on March 15, 1983, which was inspired by US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's US Congress address on March 15, 1962. He addressed the issue of consumer rights and laid emphasis on its importance.

14. **National Vaccination Day** is observed every year on **March 16** to spread awareness about the importance of vaccinations for human health.

Note: The theme for 2023 has not been announced by the Ministry of Health. The day was first observed in 1995 when the Indian government started the Pulse Polio Immunisation program. It focuses on the relevance of vaccinations in the battle against deadly diseases and appreciates the hard work of healthcare professionals.

15. **Global Recycling Day** is observed every year on **18th March** to help recognise, and celebrate, the importance recycling plays in preserving our precious primary resources and securing the future of our planet.

Note: It is a day for the world to come together and put the planet first and was created in 2018. **Theme of 2023: Creative Innovation.**

16. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has organized the **fifth Poshan Pakhwada** from **20th March to 3rd April 2023** with various activities nationwide.

Note: Theme 2023: "Nutrition for All: Together Towards a Healthy India". Aim: To raise awareness about the importance of nutrition and promote healthy eating habits through Jan Andolan and Jan Bhagidari. Poshan Abhiyaan was launched by PM Narendra Modi on 8th March 2018 to improve nutritional outcomes in a holistic manner.

17. The **International Day of Happiness** (World Happiness Day) is celebrated every year on **March 20** to create a kinder and happier world by urging people to adopt simple, daily practices to be happy.

Note: Theme 2023: Be Mindful. Be Grateful. Be Kind. On 12th July 2012, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed March 20 as the International Day of Happiness in its resolution 66/281. This day was first celebrated in 2013.

18. **World Oral Health Day** is observed globally on **March 20** every year with the primary aim of creating awareness about the importance of oral health.

Note: The theme for 2023 is 'Be Proud of Your Mouth,' which is the same theme used for the past three years. World Oral Health Day was celebrated first on September 12, 2007, by the World Dental Federation (FDI). It is the birth date of Dr. Charles Godon (founder of FDI).

19. The **International Day of Forests** is celebrated each year on **March 21** to raise awareness about

the importance of forests and trees for the survival of humanity.

Note: 2023 theme: Forests and health. This day can be traced back to 1971 when the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) established World Forestry Day. In 2011, the United Nations declared the years 2011 to 2020 as the International Decade of Forests.

20. World Water day is celebrated on **March 22** every year to spread awareness about the water crisis all over the world.

Note: UNGA adopted World Water Day in 1992. **The theme for 2023 is "Accelerating the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis."** In 2015, the world was committed to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 as part of the 2030 agenda. A promise to provide safely managed water and sanitation by 2030. The report is published on World Water Day every year.

21. World Meteorological Day is observed on **March 23** every year to celebrate the formation of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1950. **Note:** This day was designated to raise awareness about various weather-related issues and to encourage people to take action to address them. **2023 theme: The future of weather, climate, and water across generations.** The theme highlights the changes in weather and climatic conditions and their effects on Earth.

22. World Tuberculosis Day is observed every year on **March 24** to educate the world about the impact of tuberculosis, globally.

Note: The theme for 2023 World Tuberculosis Day is "Yes! We can end TB!" On March 24, 1882, Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacterium that causes tuberculosis. The elimination of Tuberculosis is one of the sustainable development targets to be achieved by 2030 by the world.

23. International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is observed on **March 25**.

Note: 2023 theme: Fighting Slavery's Legacy of Racism Through Transformative Education. It was established in 2007 with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 62/122.

24. Earth Hour was observed annually on **Last Saturday in March from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm**.

Note: In 2023, this day was observed on March 25 at 8.30 pm local time. It is a worldwide movement organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to encourage individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off non-essential electric lights for one hour. It was first started in Sydney, Australia on March 31, 2007, at 7:30 pm local time and has since gained popularity and momentum.

25. The international theatre community and ITI centers celebrate World Theatre Day on March 27th.

Note: The theme for 2023 is "Theatre and a Culture of Peace". The International Theatre Institute founded World Theatre Day in 1961. ITI is a worldwide organization that promotes international exchange in theatre arts and promotes the values of UNESCO.

New Appointments

1. Rajesh Malhotra, a 1989-batch IIS officer, has been appointed as the **Principal Director General of the Press Information Bureau (PIB)**, with effect from March 1, 2023.

Note: He succeeded **Satyendra Prakash**, who was superannuated on February 28, 2023. He was associated with the ECI as in-charge of media and communication for 21 years (1996-2017). While Priya Kumar was named the Director General of Doordarshan News (DD News). She will succeed Mayank Agrawal.

2. The ruling party candidate, Bola Tinubu (70) has **defeated vice president Atiku Abubakar** (opposition People's Democratic Party) to win the disputed **presidential election in Nigeria**.

Note: He received 37%, Atiku Abubakar polled 29%, and Labour's candidate Peter Obi received 25% of the vote. The opposition parties dismissed the poll as a sham and demanded a rerun. He will become Nigeria's fifth elected president since 1999.

3. Pakistan Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif has appointed **Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora** as the **Ambassador-at-Large for Kartarpur Corridor**.

Note: This appointment is part of efforts to attract Sikh pilgrims from across the world. He hails from Kartarpur in Narowal. He is also the central general secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) minorities wing. This corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan with the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district, Punjab, India.

4. Hekani Jakhalu of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) has created history by becoming the **first woman MLA of the Nagaland Assembly**.

Note: She was announced the **winner from the Dimapur-III constituency in the 2023 Nagaland Assembly elections**. She defeated Azheto Zhimomi of LJP (Ram Vilas) by 1,536 votes. Of 31,874 votes counted in the constituency, she received 45.16% of the votes, just ahead of the LJP (RV)'s Azheto Zhimomi who received 40.34% votes.

5. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of a 1988 batch IPS officer of the Maharashtra cadre, **Rashmi Shukla** as **director general of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)** till her superannuation (30.06.2024).

Note: Presently, she is serving as the Additional Director General of CRPF. SSB: A border protection force of India deployed along the borders with Nepal and Bhutan. SSB Founded: 1963; Headquarters: New Delhi

6. The **Vietnam** lawmakers have elected the candidate of the ruling Communist Party, **Vo Van Thuong** (52) as the new **President** of the country.

Note: His election comes after the **sudden resignation of his predecessor Nguyen Xuan Phuc in January 2023**, who the Party blamed for wrongdoing and violations. A total of 487 out of 488 deputies present at the National Assembly voted for him. He is the youngest member of the party's Politburo (the country's top decision-making body).

7. **Karnataka Bank** has appointed **Abhishek Sankar Bagchi** as a **chief financial officer (CFO)** on a contract basis.

Note: He has **replaced Muralidhar Krishna Rao**, whose tenure has been completed on 1 March 2023. He has over 18 years of work experience in RBI reporting, strategic planning, fund management, financial reporting, financial planning & control, taxation, and budgeting. He was CFO and Head of Finance at NSDL Payments Bank since September 2017.

8. **Hockey India** has appointed **South African Craig Fulton** as the **new chief coach** of the Indian **men's hockey team**.

Note: He will **succeed Australian Graham Reid** who resigned in January 2023. He has nearly 25 years of coaching experience and earned 195 caps over a span of 10 years for South Africa. He also played Atlanta and Athens Olympic Games. He was named the Belgium Coach of the Year after he guided his club KHC Dragons to the Belgium Hockey League title in the 2020-21 season.

9. Crown prince, **Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf al-Sabah** has been **re-appointed as the Prime Minister of Kuwait**.

Note: This decision came more than a month after the government resigned due to increased tensions with the parliament. Crown Prince Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who also oversees the duties of the ruling emir has nominated Sheikh Ahmed. Although political parties are prohibited in Kuwait, the legislature has more power than similar bodies in other Gulf monarchies.

10. **S.S. Dubey**, a 1989-batch Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) officer, has taken charge as **the 28th Controller General of Accounts (CGA)** effective from 6th March 2023.

Note: Prior to this role, he was an Additional Controller General of Accounts, Public Financial Management System (PFMS). CGA is 'the Principal Advisor' on Accounting matters to the Union Government. CGA is also responsible for exchequer control and internal audits for the Central Government.

11. National People's Party president, **Conrad K Sangma**, has taken oath as the **chief minister of Meghalaya** for the **second consecutive term**.

Note: **Governor Phagu Chauhan** has administered the oath of office to Sangma. The sworn-in ceremony was attended by PM Narendra Modi, BJP president JP Nadda and home minister Amit Shah. While Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)'s Neiphiu Rio will take oath as Nagaland chief minister.

12. **Dr. Manik Saha** has been sworn in as the **new chief minister of Tripura** for the **second consecutive term**.

Note: **Tripura governor Satyadeo Narain Arya** administered the oath to him at Vivekananda Maidan in the capital city of Tripura, Agartala. The oath ceremony was attended by PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. In 2022, he was made the chief minister after replacing Biplab Deb.

13. Indian-American **Arun Subramaniam** has been confirmed as the **first South Asian District Judge for the Southern District of New York**.

Note: His nomination was confirmed by Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer by a vote of 58-37. He received his Juris Doctor (J.D) from Columbia Law School in 2004 and his BA from Case Western Reserve University in 2001. South District New York notably has one of the largest South Asian-American populations in the country.

14. **Group Captain Shaliza Dhami (Ludhiana)** has been selected by the **Indian Air Force** to take over a **frontline combat unit's command in the western sector**.

Note: She becomes the **first woman officer** in the history of the IAF to be given the frontline combat unit command. Currently, she is posted in the operations branch of a frontline command headquarters. She also served as flight commander of a Chetak unit at the Hindon air base— both firsts for an IAF woman officer.

15. Senior Nepali Congress leader **Ram Chandra Paudel** (78) has been elected **the third President of Nepal**.

Note: He **defeated CPN-UML Vice-chair Subash Chandra Nembang**. He won the presidential elections with 33,802 votes, while his opponent received 15,518 votes. The President is elected by an Electoral College consisting of the members of the Federal Parliament and the Provincial

Assembly. The tenure of Bidya Devi Bhandari as Nepal's President will be ended on March 12.

16. **Citi group** has named **Bhanu Vohra** as the head of **Citi Commercial Bank (CCB) business in India**.

Note: He has replaced **Tushar Vikram**, who is now the global head of healthcare for CCB. He will report to Ashu Khullar (Citi India CEO) and Rajat Madhok (head of Citi Commercial Bank Asia Pacific).

17. **B Gopkumar** (MD & CEO of Axis Securities) has been appointed as **the new CEO of Axis Mutual Fund**.

Note: He would replace **Chandresh Nigam** who has stepped down as the CEO. Nigam's tenure will be ended April 30, 2023, and Gopkumar will take over on May 1, 2023, for a 3-year term. Gopkumar has been in charge of Axis Securities since October 2019.

18. **Rohit Jawa** has been appointed as the **Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL)** with effect from 27th June 2023.

Note: He is presently the Chief of Transformation for Unilever and has been appointed for 5-year. He will succeed **Sanjiv Mehta**, who was the part of Hindustan Unilever since 2013. He will also join Unilever Leadership Executive (ULE).

19. **Xi Jinping** has secured an **unprecedented third term** as **the President of China** and has been re-elected as the General Secretary of the Communist Party for five-year.

Note: Nearly 3,000 members of China's rubber-stamp parliament, National People's Congress (NPC), voted unanimously for Xi Jinping to be president. Apart from him, Zhao Leji has been elected as the new parliament chair and Han Zheng as the new vice president.

20. **Siddhartha Mohanty** has been appointed as the **interim chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** for three months with effect from March 14, 2023.

Note: He is presently a managing director and chief executive officer (MD & CEO) of LIC Housing Finance. Currently, Bishnu Charan Patnaik, Ipe Mini, Siddhartha Mohanty, and Raj Kumar are the Managing Director of LIC.

21. RBI has approved the appointment of **Sumant Kathpalia** as MD and **CEO of IndusInd Bank for two years** from 24 March 2023.

Note: RBI's confirmation comes nearly six months after the bank's board of directors had cleared another term for Kathpalia. He has been an MD & CEO of the bank since March 2020. Before this role, he served as Head of the Consumer Bank at IndusInd Bank.

22. **Asia's first female locomotive pilot, Surekha Yadav** is now **operating the Vande Bharat Express**.

Note: She operated Vande Bharat Express from Solapur to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminal (CSMT) in Maharashtra. She hails from Stara, Maharashtra, and become the country's first female train driver in 1988.

23. The government has appointed **two Managing Directors (MD) of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) - M Jagannath and Tablesh Pandey**.

Note: **M Jagannath** took the charge as MD on March 13, 2023. Before this, he was working as the Zonal Manager of South Central Zone, Hyderabad. While **Tablesh Pandey** is an Executive Director at the Central office of LIC in Mumbai and will take charge on April 1, 2023.

24. The **Boxing Federation of India (BFI)** appointed legendary boxer **MC Mary Kom** and actor **Farhan Akhtar** as the **brand ambassadors** of the IBA Women's World Championships 2023.

Note: BFI also unveiled the title sponsor, Mahindra Automotive for the event. The championship is scheduled from March 15 to 26 at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi. India is hosting the World Championships for the third time.

25. **The United States of America (USA) Senate** approved the appointment of **Eric Garcetti** as **the next US Ambassador to India**.

Note: His appointment will now fill in the key diplomatic position that had been vacant for more than two years. His nomination was confirmed via a 52-42 vote, which was pending before the US Congress since July 2021.

26. **Deepak Mohanty** has been appointed as the **chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**.

Note: He replaced **Supratim Bandyopadhyay**, whose term ended in Jan 2023. Before this, Mohanty was a former executive director of the Reserve Bank of India. He was appointed PFRDA member (Economic) in August 2020 for a period of three years or till attaining the age of 62 years.

27. **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** has appointed **veteran K Krithivasan** as **MD & CEO designate** with effect from March 16, 2023.

Note: He has replaced **Rajesh Gopinathan**, who resigned recently. Gopinathan completed his six years as CEO and was reappointed as CEO till 2027. He will continue with the company till September 15, 2023, and provide transition and support to K Krithivasan. Before this role, K Krithivasan served as President and Global Head of BFSI Business Group, TCS.

28. **FSIB** has recommended the **executive director of Indian Bank, Ashwani Kumar** as **an MD of UCO Bank**.

Note: Before Indian Bank, he worked as chief general manager of the Mumbai Zone of Punjab

National Bank (PNB). He would succeed Soma Sankara Prasad, whose tenure will be completed on May 31, 2023. The final decision on the FSIB recommendation would be taken by the ACC headed by PM Narendra Modi.

29. ICICI Bank's executive director **Anup Bagchi** will take over as the **CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance** on June 19, 2023, subject to regulatory and statutory approvals.

Note: He will **replace the present CEO, NS Kannan**, who will superannuate on June 18, 2023. He has been working with the ICICI group since 1992 and was appointed as an executive director of ICICI Bank on February 1, 2017. He worked as the Non-Executive Director of ICICI Prudential Life since October 2018.

30. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed **India's Kavilmadam Ramaswami Parvathy** as the **United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan**.

Note: She has served in leading roles at the World Food Programme in Turkey and Afghanistan. She has more than 30 years of experience in the development and humanitarian sectors, focusing on strategic planning, performance, risk management, people management, conflict analysis, and humanitarian access negotiations.

31. **Luxor Writing Instruments Private Limited** has signed cricketer **Virat Kohli** as its **new brand ambassador**.

Note: He will represent Luxor's stationery products and help the company increase its appeal among young writers. He will also help to enhance the market position in the country. Luxor International Private Limited is a well-known Indian stationery manufacturer.

32. The government has approved the appointment of **Lalit Kumar Gupta** as **CMD of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)**, with effect from the date of his assumption of charge of the post for a period of five years.

Note: He was recommended for the post of CMD of CCI by the PESB panel. Presently, he is serving as Director (Finance) in the same organization. He joined CCI in August 1994 and has a very long association with Cotton Corporation of about 25 years.

33. **Manmeet K Nanda** has been appointed as the Managing Director & CEO (Additional charge) of Invest India.

Note: She is joint secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). She has replaced Deepak Bagla, who resigned from the post. Deepak Bagla has served the organization for nearly 8 years and contributed to Invest India's development.

34. **Siddhartha Mohanty** has been selected by the Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) as the new **chairman of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)**.

Note: As per the guidelines, the chairman is selected from the four managing directors of the company. At present, he is an MD of LIC and was earlier given interim charge as chairman for a period of three months, effective from March 14, 2023. The final decision will be taken by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

35. Former Brazilian President, **Dilma Vana Rousseff** has been appointed as the **new President of New Development Bank (NDB)**, with immediate effect.

Note: She has **replaced Marcus Troyjo**. She served as the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil between January 2011 to August 2016. She was elected the President of Brazil for two consecutive terms. NDB is a multilateral financial institution set up by the five BRICS countries.

36. **Justice Pritinker Diwaker** has been appointed as the **Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court**.

Note: Justice Ramesh Sinha of Allahabad has been appointed as Chief Justice of Chhattisgarh High Court. Justice K Vinod Chandaran of Kerala High Court as Chief Justice of Patna HC. In February 2023, the SC Collegium recommended several judges as Chief Justices of HC.

37. The 14th Dalai Lama has named an **8-year-old Mongolian boy as the 10th Khalkha Jetsun Dharma Rinpoche** - the third highest rank in **Tibetan Buddhism**.

Note: The ceremony was organized in Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama (87) lives in exile. The eight-year-old boy is the son of a university professor and has a twin brother. In 1995, the Dalai Lama named a new Panchen Lama, the second most important figure in the faith. The boy was arrested by Chinese authorities.

38. **NDTV** has appointed **U.K. Sinha and Dipali Goenka** as the **Independent Directors of NDTV** for two years effective March 27, 2023.

Note: U.K. Sinha has also been designated as the Non-Executive Chairperson of NDTV. U.K. Sinha served as the Chairman of SEBI between 2011 and 2017 and also served as the Chairman of UTI Asset Management for 6 years. Dipali Goenka is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) of Welspun India Limited.

39. Vice-President, **Jagdeep Dhankhar** appointed **Prof (Dr.) Renu Cheema Vig** as the **Vice Chancellor of Panjab University for a term of three years**.

Note: She is also the **first woman** to hold the position in the varsity's 141-year history. She was working as the Acting Vice Chancellor of Panjab University since January 16, 2023, after the resignation of Prof. Raj Kumar amid allegations of

corruption. A three-member selection committee was formed for recommending names for the position

40. The board of **Hero Motocorp** has appointed **Niranjan Gupta** as the **new CEO** with effect from May 1, 2023.

Note: He has been elevated from his current designation of Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Head-Strategy and Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A). He has played an important role in Hero Motocorp's partnerships with Harley Davidson and Zero Motorcycles. While Pawan Munjal will continue as Executive Chairman and Whole-Time Director on the company's Board.

41. **Tata Power** has approved the reappointment of **Praveer Sinha as CEO and MD for four years**, effective from May 1, 2023.

Note: His present tenure as a CEO and MD is scheduled to conclude on April 30, 2023. Currently,

He is also serving as the Chairman of the CII Western Region council and co-chairs the CII National Committee on Power. He has also contributed to setting up the first international incubator in India for promoting innovations in the clean energy space.

42. The central government has approved the appointment of **Justice TS Sivagnanam as Acting Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court** with effect from March 31, 2023.

Note: He **succeeded the current Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava** who retired. He enrolled in the Bar Council of Tamil Nadu in September 1986. He was appointed as an additional judge of the Madras High Court in March 2009. He was transferred to the Calcutta High Court in October 2021.

Important News – India

1. The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has launched a **digital platform - Grievance Appellate Committee (GAC)**.

Note: It was established by Union MoS Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar. It is a **faceless dispute-resolution mechanism** that would make all platforms (big and small) accountable to digital citizens. In accordance with the modified IT Regulations, 2021, the IT Ministry announced that three GACs must be established.

2. Union MoS (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh has launched the **VAIBHAV Fellowship scheme for the Indian Diaspora abroad**.

Note: Aim: To improve the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational Institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world. **Eligible applicant: Should be NRI, PIO, or OCI.** Must have obtained Ph.D/M.D/M.S degree from a recognized University.

3. Union Minister for fisheries and animal husbandry, Purushottam Rupala, has launched **phase 2 of the National Surveillance programme**.

Note: Reason: For aquatic animal diseases and **genetic improvement programme**. Aim: To help the farmers to identify and report the disease and also offer solutions. The government has allocated 33 Crore rupees for a period of three years for the implementation of the programme. The crop insurance scheme for shrimp-growing farmers was also launched.

4. The **Indian govt** has approved the signing **contract with Larsen and Toubro Limited** for the acquisition of **three Cadet Training Ships**.

Note: The delivery of these indigenously designed, developed, and constructed ships are scheduled to commence in 2026. These ships can use to train the officer cadets at sea and can be deployed for the evacuation of people. They can also train cadets from friendly countries to strengthen diplomatic relations.

5. **Government eMarketplace (GeM)** has commemorated the success of **"SWAYATT" initiative**.

Note: This initiative aims to promote **Startups, Women, and Youth Advantage Through eTransactions (SWAYATT)** on GeM. It was established by GeM in February 2019. Goal: To stimulate the inclusion of diverse categories of sellers and service providers on the portal. It was achieved by taking aggressive measures to simplify their training and registrations.

6. **NTPC** has commissioned **India's first air-cooled condenser** at the **North Karanpura** supercritical thermal plant in **Jharkhand**.

Note: It would help in water conservation. This project has been envisaged with Air Cooled Condenser (ACC) which has almost 1/3rd water footprint as compared to a conventional Water Cooled Condenser (WCC). NTPC started commercial operation of **1st unit of 660 MW at North Karanpura (3X660 MW) on March 1, 2023**.

7. Youth Affairs and Sports and Information and Broadcasting Minister, Anurag Singh Thakur has

launched **Yuva Utsava - India@2047 from Ropar in Punjab.**

Note: He has also **launched the Dashboard of Yuva Utsav.** Aim: To promote youth power. In the first phase, Yuva Utsav is being organized in 150 districts across the country till the 31st of March, 2023. Youth Affairs Ministry is conducting 'Yuva Utsav India @2047' under its flagship youth organization Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.

8. Union Home Minister, Amit Shah has launched the first phase of the **Safe City project in Bengaluru, Karnataka.**

Note: The project is an initiative to ensure the safety and security of residents in Bengaluru, **especially women.** Phase-1 of the project **features high-resolution cameras, forensic vans, safety islands,** and much more. The city police must maintain maximum reach and speed in addressing emergency situations while using the right technological intervention.

9. During the Indian Seed Congress event, organized by the **National Seed Association of India,** Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said that the government would soon launch a **seed traceability system.**

Note: Reason: To ensure **the availability of good quality seeds to the farmers.** This system will help to curb the pilferage in the seed trade sector. India is in the leading position in agriculture but needs to be self-sufficient in oilseeds and cotton areas.

10. **Deakin University (Australia)** has become the **first foreign university** to receive the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)'s** approval to set up an International Branch Campus in GIFT City.

Note: During Budget 2023-24, Finance Minister announced that the **World Class Foreign Universities** and Institutions would be allowed in GIFT City. The in-principle approval was based on the recommendation of the Committee of Experts set up by GIFT City Company Ltd.

11. President Droupadi Murmu has launched the **'Catch the Rain-2023'** as part of efforts to turn the **conservation of water into a mass campaign** in the run-up to the monsoon season.

Note: The **theme of the 2023 campaign** was **'Source Sustainability for Drinking Water'.** The president also conferred 18 awards under Swachh Bharat Mission – Grameen, Jal Jeevan Mission, and National Water Mission.

12. **The Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH)** Investment Fund has completed 20,557 homes worth ₹12,000 crore since its inception in 2019.

Note: About SWAMIH Investment Fund: It was **launched in November 2019.** Aim: To complete stressed and brownfield properties registered

under Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA). SWAMIH investment fund is a government-funded initiative and it is managed by the State Bank Group's SBICAP Ventures Limited.

13. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has prohibited **sale of hallmarked gold jewellery or gold artefacts** without the **six-digit alphanumeric hallmark unique identification number (HUID) after March 31, 2023.**

Note: Aim: To protect consumers and enhance their confidence in the purchase of hallmarked gold jewellery. It would ensure traceability and assure quality in gold jewellery. The **six-digit HUID number was introduced on July 1, 2021.**

14. The **8th Edition of the Raisina Dialogue** will be organized from 2-4 March 2023 in New Delhi.

Note: The Dialogue will be inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi and joined by the **PM of Italy, Giorgia Meloni as the Chief Guest. Theme 2023: Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence: Lighthouse in the Tempest.** It is a flagship conference of India on geopolitics and geo-strategy. It is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with Observer Research Foundation.

15. The **first Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG)** meeting of the G20 is being organized in **Gurugram, Haryana** from 1st - 3rd March 2023.

Note: The ACWG was joined by over 90 delegates from 20 member countries, 10 Invitee countries, and 9 International Organizations. Aim: To strengthen International Anti-corruption mechanisms. G 20 ACWG meetings have one Chair (Presidency country) and one co-chair country. The **co-chair for the G20 ACWG 2023 is Italy.**

16. Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has inaugurated the three-day-long **Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela in New Delhi.**

Note: It is being organized with **the theme Nutrition, Food, and Environmental Protection with Shree Anna.** The event also conducts technical sessions on contemporary issues in Agriculture, including the development of Shree Anna-based value chain, Smart Farming Model, Sustainable Agriculture, and Farmer Producer Organisations.

17. **India hosted the Quad Foreign Ministers** in New Delhi on March 3, 2023.

Note: External Affairs Minister **Dr. S. Jaishankar chaired the meeting.** The Foreign Ministers of Australia and Japan and the Secretary of State of the US participated in the meeting. It is an opportunity for the Ministers to continue their discussions held at their last meeting in New York in September 2022.

18. President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the **7th International Dharma-Dhamma Conference at Bhopal (MP)** on March 3, 2023, and will continue till March 5, 2023.

Note: Theme: Eastern Humanism for the New Era. Aim: To bring together religious, political, and thought leaders from Dharma-Dhamma traditions to ponder over building a philosophical framework for the emerging new world order. Organized by: India Foundation in collaboration with Sanchi University of Buddhist-Indic Studies

19. Governor of Goa, P.S. Sreedharan Pillai has inaugurated the **23rd Commonwealth Law Conference in Goa**, which is being held from March 5-9, 2023.

Note: The event was also **attended by Union Minister for Law, Kiren Rijiju**, and Goa CM Pramod Sawant. Minister also informed that the government had started eCourts phase III to make Indian Judiciary completely paperless. 500 delegates from 52 countries attended the Conference. It is a platform for open discussions on critical issues.

20. **India and Lithuania** have agreed to work in the areas of deep tech startups and forge **lasting ties in the manufacturing of semiconductor chips**.

Note: Minister Jitendra Singh and Economy and Innovation Vice Minister of Lithuania, Karolis Aemaitis discussed ways and means to revive the 2010 agreement in the area of science and tech. In 2010, a revised Indian counter-draft with a few modifications was formally submitted to the Lithuanian and its formal response is still awaited.

21. **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** has signed two MoUs with **HTMi, and Lamrin Tech Skill University**.

Note: NSDC and HTMi: It aims to provide certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, and certification courses in hospitality trades to aspiring students. **NSDC, HTMi, and LTSU:** LTSU as an implementation partner for the first phase of this partnership, NSDC & HTMi envisage similar such partnerships as the program gets scaled up.

22. The flagship company of the **Godrej Group, Godrej & Boyce** has partnered with **Renmakch** to collaborate on **Machinery & Plant (M&P) projects for Railways** and Metro Rail, offering 'Made in India' world-class equipment.

Note: With the help of this partnership, Godrej & Boyce will be able to offer a complete value chain ranging from design to building for the Railways. The Company has been a **trusted partner of the Indian Railways for over 15 years**.

23. **India** has signed an MoU with **Mexico** on **research, technology, and innovation collaborations** in New Delhi.

Note: Focus: Key technology areas including Aerospace, Electronics, Earth and Ocean Sciences and Water, Minerals, Clean Energy, Biotech, and Healthcare. Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh has assured Mexican Foreign Minister, Marcelo Ebrard

that India with CSIR and sister Organizations will provide tangible results in the three priority areas of Water, Lithium and Vaccines.

24. After having comprehensive talks between **Indian PM Modi and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni**, both countries are ready to elevate their **bilateral ties to a strategic partnership**.

Note: Both countries signed an MoU on defense cooperation and announced the establishment of a '**Startup Bridge**' between India and Italy. Both nations also decided to hold joint exercises and training courses between the armed forces. Italian PM also attended the 8th Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.

25. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has installed a **200-meter-long Bamboo Crash Barrier on the Vani-Warora Highway in Maharashtra**.

Note: The highway **connects the Chandrapur and Yavatmal districts** of the state. This Bamboo Crash Barrier has been christened as '**Bahu Balli**'. **Bahu Bali:** The bamboo species used in the making of this barrier is Bambusa Balcoa. It is treated with creosote oil and coated with recycled High-Density Poly Ethylene (HDPE).

26. **Australian PM Anthony Albanese arrived in Ahmedabad**, Gujarat on a state visit to India on March 8, 2023.

Note: During his four-day tour, he will also visit Mumbai and Delhi as well. He will be accorded a ceremonial welcome at Rashtrapati Bhawan on 10th March and call on President Droupadi Murmu. He will hold the Annual Summit with PM Modi to discuss areas of cooperation under the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

27. The **Task Force report** titled "Production and Promotion of Organic and Bio-fertilizers with Special Focus on Improving Economic Viability of Gaushalas" was **released by NITI Aayog**.

Note: It suggested measures **to make Gaushalas economically viable**, address the problem of stray and abandoned cattle, and utilization of cow dung and cow urine in the agriculture and energy sector. It provides factual estimate of operating and fixed costs and other Gaushalas issues.

28. The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** has issued operational guidelines, that the government will **provide financial assistance** to eligible agencies for undertaking initiatives for the **promotion of Geographical Indications (GIs) products**.

Note: It can be extended to **eligible agencies as 100% grants** in aid for the promotion of GIs. DPIIT is an arm of the commerce and industry ministry.

29. PM Modi has dedicated the **10-lane and 118-km-long, Bengaluru-Mysuru Expressway in Karnataka** to the nation.

Note: It was constructed at a cost of over 8400 crore rupees. It will reduce the travel time between Bengaluru and Mysuru from three hours to about 75 minutes and boost connectivity and socio-economic growth in Karnataka. He also laid the foundation stone for the Mysuru-Kushalnagar highway.

30. The Central Railway has achieved 100% electrification of its broad gauge network of 3,825 kilometers.

Note: The CSMT-headquartered zonal railway informed that the 52-kilometer Ausa Road-Latur Road stretch in the Solapur division was the last non-electrified section and its electrification was completed in March 2023. This move helps in reducing carbon footprints of 5.204 lakh tonnes every year as well as savings of 1670 crore rupees.

31. The second edition of 'World Food India-2023' will be organized from 3-5 November 2023 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

Note: The event will be organized by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. During the event, Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras outlined pivotal elements of the WFI-2023 as Millets- 'Shree Anna-The Super Food of India', Innovation and Sustainability 'Green Food', White Revolution 2.0, making India an export hub and focus on technology and digitisation.

32. The Ministry of Jal Shakti had constituted a Committee to identify 75 Water Heritage Structure (WHS) in reference to 75 years of India's Independence.

Note: A total of 421 nominations were received and out of which, Committee has recommended 75 water heritage structures. It includes 5 WHS from Gujarat and 4 WHS from Andhra Pradesh. At present, there is no central fund allocated/disbursed for the maintenance of these sites.

33. India and Sweden signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) to strengthen cooperation and promote research networking between research institutions from both countries.

Note: Aim: To promote mobility funding opportunities in both countries. It facilitates academic cooperation through mobility activities as well as through seminars, workshops, and conferences. This partnership will take forward joint Science and Technology efforts particularly in smart cities, AI, and many more.

34. India and Australia signed an audio-visual co-production agreement to offer filmmakers financial incentives amounting to up to 30% of the expenditure incurred in the respective countries.

Note: The agreement was signed by I&B Secretary Apurva Chandra and Australian High Commissioner Barry O'Farrell. Australia is the 16th country with

which India has a co-production agreement. It would benefit mainly small filmmakers keen on shooting movies in that country.

35. India and the US inked an initial pact on increasing private-sector cooperation in the area of semiconductors.

Note: The two countries would facilitate business opportunities and develop an ecosystem with a view to reducing their dependency on China and Taiwan. Both sides have agreed to set up a semiconductor sub-committee, led by the Department of Commerce for the US side and MeitY and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the Indian side.

36. PM Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 3rd Session of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (NPDRR) in New Delhi on March 10, 2023.

Note: Theme: Building Local Resilience in a Changing Climate. It is jointly organized by the Home Ministry, National Disaster Management Authority, National Disaster Response Force, and National Institute of Disaster Management. It will comprise four Plenary Sessions, one Ministerial Session, and eight Thematic Sessions.

37. The Election Commission of India (ECI) hosted the 3rd International Conference in virtual format on 09 March 2023.

Note: Theme: Inclusive Elections and Elections Integrity. ECI is leading the Cohort on Elections Integrity which was established as a follow-up to the 'Summit for Democracy' held virtually in December 2021. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioners Anup Chandra Pandey and Arun Goel addressed the Conference.

38. Misra Centre for Financial Markets and Economy (MCFME) at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), along with Centre for Advanced Financial Research and Learning (CAFRL) has organized 'International Research Conference on FinTech: Innovation, Inclusion, and Regulation'.

Note: It is a two-day conference for bringing top researchers, practitioners, and regulators from across the globe together to deliberate on key issues of FinTech.

39. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav has inaugurated two-day G20 Flower Festival has been being organized at Delhi's Connaught Place for highlighting the vibrancy of G20 members and guest countries.

Note: G20 countries like Japan, Singapore, and the Netherlands are participating in it. Flower plants of different colours and varieties are being displayed in different forms and installations to showcase the diversity of the Indian subcontinent.

40. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioners Anup Chandra Pandey and Arun Goel has inaugurated **Vote Fest 2023 to create awareness on the election process in Bengaluru.**

Note: They also inaugurated 'Electon 2023', which is a **30-hour hackathon** for securing the electoral future. The fest seeks people's suggestions on improving voter turnout, ensuring the registration of new voters, and how to ensure the involvement of urban youth in the democratic process.

41. Arjun Ram Meghwal has inaugurated the **exhibition titled 'Women and Nation Building: 1857 to the Republic'** at National Archives of India, New Delhi on **133rd Foundation Day of National Archives of India.**

Note: The exhibition highlights the contributions of women in nation building and freedom struggle from 1857 in an interesting manner like Durgawati Devi and Kasturba Gandhi. It also presents a selection of original documents drawn from the attics of the archival repository.

42. Union Minister Narayan Rane launched the **MSME Competitive (LEAN) Scheme** at the NDMC Convention Centre, Delhi.

Note: Aim: To **provide a roadmap to global competitiveness for the MSMEs** of India. Under the scheme, MSMEs will implement LEAN manufacturing tools like 5S, Kaizen, KANBAN, visual workplace, and Poka Yoka. MSMEs can reduce wastages substantially, increase productivity, improve quality, work safely, expand their markets, and finally become competitive and profitable.

43. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) - NITI Aayog launched ATL Sarthi.**

Note: It is a comprehensive self-monitoring framework to strengthen the ecosystem of Atal Tinkering Labs. Atal Innovation Mission has established **Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATL)** in schools to foster curiosity, creativity, and imagination in young minds. ATL Sarthi is a charioteer and will enable the Atal Tinkering Labs to be efficient and effective.

44. The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has launched the **'Learning Science via Standards'** series for students.

Note: Focus: Aimed to use scientific concepts, principles, and laws to help students understand their practical applications in manufacturing, functioning, and testing of quality characteristics of different products. This series is in a continuum with an earlier BIS initiative under which 'Standards Clubs' are being established in educational institutions.

45. Union Minister of Agriculture **Narendra Singh Tomar** has inaugurated a 5-day cultural program **"AgriUnifest"** in Bengaluru.

Note: This program was organized by Bangalore Agricultural University in **collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).** It was participated by students from 60 State Agricultural Universities/Deemed Universities/Central Universities participated. Aim: To integrate Indian agriculture by connecting various Indian cultures

46. **MoS (I/C) Earth Sciences Dr. Jitendra Singh** has informed in Lok Sabha that **REACHOUT** is being **implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences for capacity building.**

Note: **REACHOUT: Research, Education, and Training Outreach.** It is an umbrella scheme of the following six sub-schemes: R&D in Earth System Science; International Training; Centre for Operational Oceanography; Program for Development of Skilled manpower in Earth System Sciences; Outreach and awareness; KRCNet; BCWC

47. Union Minister Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Parshottam Rupala unveiled the department's annual **publication, the 'Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2022'.**

Note: Total **milk production in the country** during 2021-22 is 221.06 million tonnes. **Top 5 Producing States: Milk:** Rajasthan (15.05%), UP (14.93%), MP (8.06%), Gujarat (7.56%) and Andhra Pradesh (6.97%). **Egg:** Andhra Pradesh (20.41%), TN (16.08%), Telangana (12.86%), WB (8.84%) and Karnataka (6.38%)

48. Union Minister of Renewable Energy & Power, R. K. Singh informed in the Lok Sabha, that **Solar projects of an aggregate capacity of 64,380 MW have been installed** in the country (as of 28.02.2023).

Note: India's solar capacity has **increased from 21,651 MW to 64,380 MW**, an increase of 197% in the last 5 years. The Government has set a target of achieving 500 GW of installed capacity from non-fossil fuels (including around 270 GW of solar capacity) by 2030.

49. **Japan's PM, Kishida Fumio** will be on a two-day visit to India from 20th March 2023.

Note: He will hold talks with PM Modi and also hold discussions on regional issues of mutual interest and priorities for their respective Presidencies of the G7 and G20. Japan is the fifth largest investor in India. The bilateral trade stood at 20.75 billion dollars in 2022 (largest ever). Defense and security cooperation has emerged as one of the most important pillars of the Special Strategic

50. Mos (IC) for MoSPI, Rao Inderjit Singh released the **Women and Men in India 2022 report.**

Note: India's sex ratio **is expected to improve from 943 in 2011 to 952 by 2036.** The Labor Force Participation Rate (above 15 years) has been increasing since 2017-2018. However, the rate was

77.2% for males and only 32.8% for females in 2021-22. It has also highlighted the gender disparity in wages, with men in rural areas earning more than women in urban areas.

51. According to the US Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, **India can achieve energy independence by its 100th year of independence in 2047.**

Note: Study title: Pathways to Atmanirbhar Bharat. It has been suggested that achieving this goal would result in significant economic, environmental, and energy benefits for India, including USD 2.5 trillion in consumer savings by 2047. It also **reduces fossil fuel import expenditure by 90%** (\$240 billion) annually.

52. According to the report, published GCEW, revealed **that India will face a reduction of over 16% in food supply due to water and heat stress in 2050.**

Note: However, the **report placed China at the top**, where food supply would be reduced by 22.4%, followed by South America by 19.4%. The water supply availability in India is between 1100-1197 billion cubic meters (bcm). In contrast, the demand is expected to grow from 550-710 bcm in 2010 to 900-1,400 bcm in 2050.

53. The **3rd annual edition of International SME Convention 2023 (ISC)** is to be organized from 19th to 21st March 2023 in New Delhi.

Note: It is jointly **organized by Ministry of MSME & Ministry of External Affairs, India SME Forum**, along with Govt. of Madhya Pradesh as a Key State Partner and Govt. of Uttar Pradesh as Associate State Partner. International partner: International Network for SMEs and World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises

54. The **Civil20 India (C-20) Inception** meeting will be **hosted by Orange City, Nagpur, Maharashtra** from 20th to 21st March 2023.

Note: It is one of the empowered groups, which provides a platform for Civil Society Organisations to voice the people's aspirations to the world leaders in G20. The inaugural ceremony will be attended by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi and Spiritual leader Mata Amritanandmayi. **Focus issues:** Health, Lifestyle for Environment, Art and Crafts

55. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has virtually addressed the **Global Conference on Digital Health - Taking Universal Health Coverage to the Last Citizen.**

Note: This conference is a co-branded event under India's G20 Presidency organized by WHO - South-East Asia Region in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The Indian government aims to launch a global initiative on digital health as an institutional framework.

56. The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** and the **Ministry of Ayush** signed an MoU for the **skilling of rural youth and empowering women.**

Note: The MoU is valid for three years. Under this MoU, the training program shall be **funded as per Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) cost norms.** National Rural Livelihoods Mission and DDU-GKY will communicate to States/UTs for enlisting willing SHG members and rural poor youth

57. **GAIL (India) has signed MoU with Shell Energy India Private Ltd** to explore prospects of importing and handling of ethane and other hydrocarbons.

Note: It is primarily used as petrochemical feedstock and is separated from the other components of natural gas in most well-developed gas fields. It will be transported further through 14,830 km of natural gas pipelines to different demand centres. Ethane is mainly used to produce ethylene, which is used for other products.

58. **V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI)** signs MoU with **Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)** to promote professional and organizational development in labour and employment-related areas that benefit stakeholders in the sector.

Note: It includes policy advocacy, with the organizations working together to advocate for policies.

59. The **Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry** has signed an MoU with the **World Food Programme (WFP)** during the **Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference.**

Note: The MoU between WFP and the Government of India for **cooperation between 2023 and 2027** was signed in the presence of Agriculture Minister Tomar. The WFP is working towards promoting food self-sufficiency and supporting governmental and global efforts to ensure long-term solutions to the challenge of hunger.

60. **India and Japan signed two documents** on the sidelines of the bilateral talks between PM Modi and Japanese PM Fumio Kishida.

Note: Renewal of Memorandum of Cooperation in the **Japanese language.** Exchange of notes on **JICA loan for 300 billion Yen on Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed railway project.** PM Kishida formally invited PM Modi to G7 Hiroshima Summit. PM Modi also urged the Japanese PM to declare 2024 as the year of Youth Exchanges between the two countries.

61. **NGEL** (a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited) has signed a Joint Venture Agreement **with IOCL** for setting up renewable energy projects to meet Round the Clock power requirement of IOCL Refineries.

Note: NGEL has set a **target of building a renewable generation portfolio of 60 GW** over

the next decade to aggressively pursue its green energy business.

62. Government has announced the sites for **setting up of 7 PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks for the Textile industry** in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Note: PM MITRA will offer the opportunity to create an Integrated Textiles Value Chain right from spinning, weaving, processing/dyeing and printing to garment manufacturing etc. at one location and will reduce logistics cost of the Industry.

63. According to a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, the **groundwater levels in Delhi, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, and 20 other cities dipped by more than 20 meters from 2017 to 2020.**

Note: While Faridabad (Haryana) becomes 100% dependent on groundwater use and cities like Ghaziabad (UP) are on the verge of becoming totally dependent on it. The total annual extractable groundwater resource of 398 billion cubic meters (BCM) in the country till 2020, 245 BCM was being extracted.

64. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched a **DigiClaim**, under the ambit of **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** for claim disbursal through National Crop Insurance Portal.

Note: With the DigiClaim Module, insurance claims of over 1,260 crore rupees have been disbursed to insured farmers of six states on March 23, 2023. The states are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Haryana.

65. BharatPe co-founder **Ashneer Grover launched** a cricket-focused fantasy sports app named **CrickPe**.

Note: The launch comes ahead of the marquee Indian Premier League (IPL) tournament that is set to begin on March 31, 2023. This sports app can be available on the Google Play store and Apple store. He has raised about \$4 million in seed funding for his venture Third Unicorn Pvt Ltd. Notably, the cricket app has been launched to take on rivals like Dream11, MPL, and My11Circle.

66. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has extended the subsidy of **200 rupees per LPG cylinder** for a period of one year, **under the PM Ujjwala Yojana.**

Note: It will be provided to the Ujjwala Yojana beneficiaries for **up to 12 refills per year**. The total expenditure on it in 2022-23 will be 6,100 crore rupees and in 2023-24 will be 7,680 crore rupees. The government launched PM Ujjwala Yojana in May 2016 to provide deposit-free LPG connections to women of poor households.

67. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved Minimum Support Price (MSP) for **Raw Jute at 5,050 rupees per quintal for 2023-24.**

Note: The approval is based on the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices recommendations. This would ensure a return of 63.20% over the all-India weighted average cost of production. The Jute Corporation of India will continue as Central Government Nodal Agency to undertake Price Support Operations and the losses incurred, if any.

68. FM Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the government has established a committee to review the **New Pension System (NPS), headed by TV Somanathan.**

Note: From January 2004, the government has opted to move to NPS for all new recruits, with the government employees contributing 10% of their salary towards pension and the govt making a matching contribution. **Recently, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, HP, and Punjab have decided to opt out of NPS.**

69. The **first Urban Climate Film Festival** under U20 engagement events was organized by **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** from 24-26 March 2023.

Note: A curated **selection of 11 films from nine countries** was showcased in the festival to create wider awareness of the impact of climate change on life in cities. The festival was organized with support from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the French Development Agency, and the European Union.

70. Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav launched **Aravalli Green Wall Project to green the 5 km buffer area around the Aravalli Hill Range in four states.**

Note: He also **unveiled the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation Through Forestry Interventions** and a FAQ on Agro-forestry published by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education.

71. The Government has constituted a **Committee to monitor the stock of Tur** held by entities such as importers, millers, stockists, and traders in close coordination with the state governments.

Note: The decision has come against the backdrop of reports of market players not releasing stocks despite the regular arrival of imports in good quantities. The Committee has been constituted under the **chairmanship of Additional Secretary Nidhi Khare.**

72. Union Minister for Rural Development, Giriraj Singh has onboarded **19 Captive Employers** under **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY).**

Note: Captive employers will **train Rural Poor Youth and employ trained youth** in their company or subsidiary. MoRD and the Captive Employers also signed MoU towards this aim. DDU-GKY is a placement-linked skilling program of the Ministry of Rural Development under the aegis of the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM).

73. The Union government has sanctioned **800 crore rupees** under the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme Phase -2** for setting up 7432 public fast charging stations across the country.

Note: At present, there are about 6,586 charging stations across the country. This move will boost the electric vehicle ecosystem in India and encourage more people to switch to cleaner modes of transportation. The government has formulated FAME India Scheme in 2015.

74. The **Ministry of Education** has shortlisted around **9,000** schools across the country for its flagship **Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI)**.

Note: The institutions were selected based on six broad parameters including curriculum, access and infrastructure, human resources, and gender equity were assessed. PM Modi announced this scheme on 5th September 2022. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Aim: To upgrade and develop around 14,500 schools

75. **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has constituted a nine-member task force to make India a 'product developer and manufacturing nation'.

Note: It will be **chaired by the additional secretary (MeitY), Bhuvnesh Kumar** with the joint secretary (electronics), Amitesh Kumar Sinha as the member convenor. This is an effort to position itself as an alternative to the likes of China and Vietnam.

76. According to the annual **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report 2021-22**, Agriculture has the **highest estimated percentage distribution of female workers**.

Note: Nearly 63% of workers are female in the agriculture sector at the pan-India level, **followed by 11.2% in the manufacturing sector**. The government has incorporated several protective provisions in the labor laws for equal opportunity and a congenial work environment for women workers.

77. **Ministry of Textiles** has issued **PAHCHAN cards to 30.53 lakhs handicrafts artisans** and 30.90 lakhs handloom weavers across the country under the PAHCHAN initiative.

Note: The cardholder's details are available on the website of the Office of the Development Commissioner of Handicraft and Handloom.

PAHCHAN card is an initiative to issue Aadhar link identity cards to handicrafts artisans under this initiative. The Union MoS for Textiles, Darshana Jardosh informed in Lok Sabha.

78. **NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd** has signed an **MoU with Indian Army** for setting up **Green Hydrogen Projects** in its establishments on **Build, Own, and Operate (BOO) model**.

Note: Aim: To reduce complex logistics and dependence on fossil fuels and to accelerate decarbonization. NTPC REL CEO, Mohit Bhargava and Lt. General Rajinder Dewan signed MoU. NTPC REL will also design, develop, and install renewable energy projects for the Indian Army. NTPC REL is a wholly subsidiary of NTPC.

79. **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (SJE)** signed an **MoU with the Sant Nirankari Mandal** for spreading the message of Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan among the youth, women, and students.

Note: Aim: To create awareness about the ill effects of substance abuse among the youth, with a focus on higher education institutes, and university campuses. It was signed in the presence of Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Virendra Kumar and MoS, SJE Pratima Bhounik.

80. **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** and the **Society for Electronic Transactions and Security (SETS)** collaborated to do joint R&D leading for the development of tools and products in deep tech domains.

Note: Both organizations will also conduct joint research on emerging tech areas like Cyber Security, IoT Security, etc. Aim: To improve self-reliance on information and cyber security and to reduce dependence on tools developed outside the country.

81. PM Modi addressed the **One World TB Summit 2023 in Varanasi** on the occasion of **World Tuberculosis Day (March 24)**.

Note: Organized by: Health and Family Welfare Ministry and Stop TB Partnership. In March 2018, the PM called on India to achieve TB-related SDG targets by 2025. The PM also awarded select States/UTs and districts for their progress toward ending TB. State level: Karnataka and J&K. District level: Nilgiris, Pulwama, and Anantnag

82. **The second G20 Infrastructure Working Group (IWG)** meeting is being organized in **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh** from March 28-29, 2023.

Note: It is being conducted under the **theme of Financing Cities of Tomorrow: Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable**. The conference is attended by 63 representatives of G-20 countries and other invited organizations, ADB and World Bank. The **first G-20 IWG summit was held in**

Pune (Maharashtra) under the presidency of India.

83. The **first G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG)** Meeting under India's G20 Presidency is being organized in **Mumbai (Maharashtra)** from March 28– 30, 2023.

Note: The event was attended by 100 delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries, regional groupings, and international organizations. On the first day, an International Conference will be held on 'Trade Finance'. On the second day, the focus will be on making trade work for growth and prosperity.

84. **India** hosted a meeting of **National Security Advisors (NSA)- SCO** and top officials on March 29, 2023.

Note: National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval addressed the meeting. Pakistan and China attended the SCO-NSA meeting virtually. SCO is an intergovernmental organization established in 2001. **Members: India, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.**

85. The **First G20 Disaster Risk Reduction WGM** under India's G20 Presidency is being held in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat** from 30th March to 1st April 2023.

Note: The meeting was **inaugurated by Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr. P K Mishra and MoS for Communications Devusinh Chauhan**. Five priority areas have been identified for the meeting which include an early warning for all, resilient infrastructure, and improving the National system for financing Disaster Risk Reduction.

86. **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board** approved a **unified tariff for a natural gas pipeline** of Rs 73.93 per metric million British thermal units (MMBtu), effective from **April 1, 2023**.

Note: Aim: To boost the consumption of natural gas and increase its share in India's energy basket from 6.2% to 15% by 2030. **Three zones for unified tariff:** 1st: Up to the distance of 300 km from the source. 2nd: More than 300 km and up to 1,200 km. 3rd: Remaining length of the grid system.

Important News – State

1. A **Kerala temple, Irinjadappilly Sree Krishna Temple (Thrissur district)**, has introduced a life-size **motorized model** of an **elephant for performing rituals** such as carrying processional deities.

Note: The 11-foot-tall robotic elephant, weighing 800 kg and made of an iron frame and rubber coating, **was donated by People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India**. Film actor Parvathy Thiruvothu joined hands with PETA in donating the robotic elephant, which cost 5 lakh rupees.

2. **Madhya Pradesh** CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced that **Mauganj, a tehsil of Rewa district**, will be the **53rd district** of state.

Note: It will be developed by **joining four tehsils of Rewa district**. Four tehsils: Mauganj, Hanumana, Nai Garhi, and Deotalab. Residents of Mauganj were raising the demand for a separate district for a long time. He has also released 605 crore in the bank accounts of 27,000 beneficiaries of the Sambal Yojana in financial distribution program.

3. Presiding over a state-level event for International Women's Day (8th March), **Himachal Pradesh** CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has announced a nearly **five-fold increase in the monetary award under the Himachal Pradesh Mahila Vikas Protsahan Puraskar**.

Note: The **monetary award for the Mahila Vikas Protsahan Puraskar** has been hiked to **Rs 1 lakh** from the current Rs 21,000. The **allowance for**

district-level awards has been raised from Rs 5,000 to **Rs 25,000**.

4. Odisha's CM, Naveen Patnaik has unveiled the **iconic Dakota aircraft of legendary leader Biju Patnaik** for public viewing at the Bhubaneswar Airport.

Note: It was **unveiled on the 107th birth anniversary** of the former CM of Odisha. It was brought from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata to Bhubaneswar on January 18, 2023. A 10-member team of Aerospace Research Development required has dismantled the aircraft and packed it in proper shape for public viewing

5. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and four Sikkim ministers released a unique **cover of the Department of Posts, 'Go Green, Go Organic' for Sikkim**.

Note: The special cover is a testament to the state's achievements in organic farming and progress and a reminder of the importance of sustainable development for the entire country. Sikkim is the **first state in the world** to get recognized as an **Organic state** by the World Book of Records (London).

6. The **Yaoshang festival** has begun in **Manipur** on March 7, 2023, and will continue for five days.

Note: The festival is **celebrated by the Meetei** who are predominantly Hindu and it is celebrated at the same time as Holi. However, during the Yaoshang festival, apart from playing with colour, the festival

also witnessed a number of cultural and religious activities for five days. The Manipur Governor and CM conveyed warm greetings to the people of Manipur.

7. **Maharashtra Deputy CM, Devendra Fadnis** has informed that the state government will introduce the **fourth women's policy**.

Note: Aim: To give more opportunities to women.

State Government initiative: To introduce a rehabilitation scheme for those above 18 years old girls from the orphanage. To start a Hirkani Room(Kaksha) for breastfeeding mothers at the police station. Govt also proposed to provide equal and dignified positions to women in all sectors.

8. Directorate of Rural Sanitation, **Jammu and Kashmir** has launched **Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen Internship-2023** for engaging the youth enrolled in colleges and universities, as well as research scholars, who are interested in working in rural areas.

Note: It will provide an opportunity for young minds to gain valuable experience, develop their skills, and contribute meaningfully towards the implementation of the SBM (G) Phase II.

9. **Uttarakhand** has become India's first state to launch the **Resham Keet Bima scheme for sericulturists**.

Note: In the first phase of this pilot project, 200 sericulturists from five blocks of four districts -- Dehradun, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar, and Nainital -- have been **insured from the ill effects of climate change**, scarcity of water, and other hazards. This scheme will be **run under Saral Krishi Beema**.

10. According to the Landslide Atlas report, prepared by the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of ISRO**, the **Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand** has the **maximum exposure to landslide risk in the country**.

Note: Tehri district (Uttarakhand) ranked second on the list of landslide-prone districts. As per the State Emergency Operation Centre data, Uttarakhand reported 253 landslides between 2018 and 2021. Kerala's Thrissur and Palakkad districts ranked 3rd and 5th respectively.

11. **Odisha's** state cabinet led by CM Naveen Patnaik has announced a **new livelihood and income-generating scheme** for the tribal people with an **outlay of Rs 500 crore for three years (2023-24 to 2025-26)**.

Note: The livelihood cluster development initiative will be implemented by the ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare dept under Mukhya Mantri Janajati Jeebika Mission. The state-funded scheme will be **implemented in 119 tribal sub-plan (TSP) blocks**.

12. A new initiative called '**beggar-free city**' has been started in **Nagpur, Maharashtra**.

Note: Commissioner of Police of Nagpur City, Amitesh Kumar informed that notification of 144 CrPC has been issued in this regard. Notices have been served to people. The Nagpur police will strictly enforce this and begging will not be allowed in public places. This is the **joint venture of Nagpur City police and Nagpur Municipal Corporation's (NMC) social welfare department**.

13. **Sweden India Business Council (SIBC)** has signed an MoU with the **Maharashtra government** for **cooperation in waste to energy**, sustainable infrastructure & transportation, defense manufacturing, and investment.

Note: The MoU was signed between SIBC and **Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC)** in the presence of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis. Both have also agreed to work together to explore and facilitate funding opportunities.

14. **Punjab government** has **cancelled 813-gun licenses** in the state to clamp down on the gun culture, along with a review of all licenses issued within 3 months.

Note: The new rule will also **bar the issuance of new licenses for the next 3 months**, except in extraordinary circumstances. The ban is on carrying and displaying weapons in public functions, religious places, marriage ceremonies, or any other events in Punjab.

15. An **Agri Legal Aid Clinic** has been inaugurated in the **Jangaon District of Telangana** to provide benefits to the **farmer community**.

Note: It was **inaugurated by Supreme Court Judge Justice V. Ramasubramanian**. It is a Joint initiative of Telangana Legal Services Authority with technical support from NALSAR University of Law, and an NGO, Legal Empowerment and Assistance for Farmers Society. Aim: To educate farmers on various agricultural legislations, Welfare Schemes, rights etc.

16. **J&K LG, Manoj Sinha** laid the foundation stone for a ₹250-crore mega **shopping mall at Srinagar's Sempora area**.

Note: This shopping mall will be **constructed by Dubai-based Emaar Group**. It is the first "foreign direct investment" in the Union territory. It will be constructed over an area of 10 lakh sq. ft. and is expected to be completed by 2026.

17. **Bihar** observed its **111th foundation day** on March 22, 2023.

Note: On this day, the state of Bihar was carved out from the Bengal presidency in 1912. The **theme of the 2023 event is "Yuva Shakti Bihar ki Pragati"**. This year, a number of events are being organized in Gandhi Maidan, Patna from March 22 to 24, 2023.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar have congratulated people on the occasion of Bihar Divas.

18. **Tamil Nadu** has notified **Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary** as the **18th wildlife sanctuary in the state**.

Note: It is spread over 80,567 hectares in the **forest areas of Anthiyur and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district**. It is close to Malai Mahadeshwara wildlife sanctuary, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, and Cauvery wildlife sanctuary in Karnataka. It also acts as a connecting point between Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.

19. **Himachal Pradesh** signed an MoU with the **French Development Agency Agence Francaise de Development (AFD)** for **Rs 817.12 crore project**.

Note: Objective: To develop better sewerage facilities in **five towns of the state - Manali, Bilaspur, Palampur, Nahan and Karsog**. It also aims to improve drinking water supply in Manali and Palampur towns. The beneficiaries of the

project would receive house service connections in these five cities

20. The Principal Bench of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** in New Delhi has **imposed a penalty of ₹10 crore** on the **Kerala government** for its **failure to check the indiscriminate pollution of the Vembanad and Ashtamudi lakes**.

Note: The Bench was led by its **chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel**. The penalty of ₹10 crore had to be utilized for conservation/restoration measures by preparing an action plan to be preferably executed within six months.

21. **Rajasthan** becomes the **first state in India to pass the 'Right to Health (RTH) Bill'**.

Note: Under this bill, private hospitals will not be able to charge emergency patients and will be compensated by the state. Free healthcare services including diagnostics, drugs, emergency transport, emergency care, and procedure will be provided at public institutions. In the case of medico-legal nature, no private or public hospital can delay treatment on grounds of police clearance.

Important News – World

1. According to the **WHO Global Report on Sodium Intake Reduction**, **two million deaths can be prevented by 2025** and **seven million by 2030** if policies recommended by WHO to reduce sodium intake are implemented.

Note: The world is off-track to achieve its global target of reducing sodium intake by 30% by 2025. The global average salt intake is **estimated to be 10.8 grams per day** (more than double the WHO recommendation of fewer than 5 grams of salt per day (one teaspoon)).

2. The **US** has formally recognized the **McMahon Line as the international boundary** between **India's Arunachal Pradesh and China**.

Note: The US has also **rejected Beijing's claim that the northeastern state falls under Chinese territory**. A bipartisan resolution acknowledged Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of India. The resolution, titled 'Reaffirming the state of Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and condemning the People's Republic of China's provocations in South Asia'.

3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina jointly inaugurated the **India-Bangladesh friendship diesel pipeline**.

Note: The foundation stone for the construction of this **pipeline was laid in September 2018**. Since 2015, Numaligarh Refinery Limited has been supplying petroleum products to Bangladesh. IBFP is the first cross-border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh with a capacity to transport 1 MMTPA of High-Speed Diesel to Bangladesh.

4. **TIME Magazine** has released its annual list of the **50 greatest places in the world for 2023**.

Note: Among the chosen destinations are **two locations from India: Ladakh and Mayurbhanj**. Ladakh is a high-altitude region, which is famous for its breathtaking landscapes, crystal-clear lakes, and snow-capped mountains. On the other hand, Mayurbhanj is a lesser-known destination located in the eastern state of Odisha. The list also includes Willamette Valley; Río Grande etc.

5. According to the **tenth Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report**, **Afghanistan remains the country most impacted** by terrorism for the fourth consecutive year, despite the attacks and deaths falling by 75% and 58%, respectively.

Note: Afghanistan followed by Burkina Faso, Somalia, Mali, and Syria. Pakistan has climbed four spots to rank sixth on the index. While **India ranked 13th on the index**. South Asia remains the region with the worst average GTI score.

6. According to the **World Happiness Report 2023, published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, **India ranked 125 based on the various parameters of happiness**.

Note: India's neighboring countries such as Nepal, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have a higher ranking than India. Finland tops the ranking for the sixth consecutive year with a score of 7.8 followed by Denmark and Iceland. Out of the 137 countries, Afghanistan has ranked last.

7. **UAE Food Bank** launched an initiative to **distribute three million meals and food parcels**

to disadvantaged individuals and families during Ramadan.

Note: Aim: To raise public awareness regarding the crucial goal of achieving zero food waste. For this initiative, the organization has **partnered with Ne'ma -the national initiative to reduce food loss and wastage**, to enhance community awareness, education, and empowerment in making better decisions regarding food consumption.

8. UAE has launched its **National Genome Strategy** to provide a comprehensive legislative and governance framework to support the development and implementation of genomic programs.

Note: The strategy will last ten years and will **focus on delivering public health priorities** while improving the country's well-being. The Emirates Genome Council will oversee the National Genome Strategy. It will advance the nation's preventive and personalized healthcare agenda.

9. According to a **Kroll report 'Celebrity Brand Valuation Report 2022: Beyond the Mainstream'**, with a brand value of \$181.7 million, **actor Ranveer Singh is India's most valued celebrity of 2022.**

Note: He **surpassed cricketer Virat Kohli**, who occupied the top spot for five years. Kohli ranked second, followed by actors Akshay Kumar, and Alia Bhatt. Notably, the aggregate brand value of the top 25 celebrities is \$1.6 billion in 2022 (estimated), a 29.1% rise from 2021.

10. According to the **QS World University Rankings by Subject 2023**, **44 programs from various campuses have been featured in the global top 100 list.**

Note: In 2022, only 35 Indian programs were featured in the list. Five broader areas of

University ranking: Engineering and Technology, Arts and Humanities, Life Sciences and Medicine, Natural Science and Social Sciences and Management. IIT Delhi's Electrical engineering ranked 49 and IIT Bombay's mathematics ranked 92.

11. According to the **2023 M3M Hurun Global Rich List**, released by Hurun India and M3M India, **Mukesh Ambani** is the only Indian in the world's top 10 billionaires list (rank 9).

Note: The list is topped by **Elon Musk**, followed by Jeff Bezos, Bernard Arnault, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, and Sergey Brin. Indian billionaires list: Gautam Adani and family (Rank 23); Cyrus S Poonawalla (Rank 46); Shiv Nadar and family (Rank 50); Lakshmi N Mittal (Rank 76)

12. According to **UN World Water Development Report 2023**, **About 26% of the world's population does not have safe drinking water**, and 46% lack access to safely managed sanitation.

Note: Between 2-3 billion, people **experience water shortages for at least 1 month per year.** This poses severe risks to livelihoods and access to electricity. The global urban population facing water scarcity is projected to double from 930 million (2016) to 1.7 -2.4 billion (2050).

13. According to the **Passport Index 2023**, released by Arton Capital, **144 is the rank of India passport.**

Note: In 2023, **India ranked 138th out of 199 countries.** The ranking was topped by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with a mobility score of 181, followed by Sweden, Germany, Finland, Luxembourg, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Austria. Note: India ranked 85th out of 199 countries in the Henley Passport Index 2023.

Honor & Awards

1. **India** has been awarded the prestigious **GSM Association (GSMA) Government Leadership Award 2023** at Mobile World Congress Barcelona on 27 February 2023.

Note: Reason: For **implementing best practices in telecom policy** and regulation. Minister for Communications, Ashwini Vaishnaw has also informed that the Right of Way (RoW) permissions which used to take more than 230 days, now get approval within 8 days. More than 85% of mobile tower clearances are now instantaneous.

2. **Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla (87)** has won the **2023 PEN America award for lifetime achievement in literature.**

Note: It is one of the most coveted literary prizes worldwide. His acclaimed **novels like Naukar Ki Kameez (1979) and poetry collections like Sab Kuch Hona Bacha Rahega (1992).** He was

awarded the Sahitya Akademi award in 1999 for **Naukar Ki Kameez**, the **Atta Galatta-Bangalore Literature Festival Book Prize** in 2019, and the **Mathrubhumi Book of the Year award** in 2020.

3. The **Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry** has received the **Porter Prize 2023.**

Note: The ministry was honored for the government's strategy in managing COVID-19, its approach, and the involvement of various stakeholders (involvement of ASHA workers to create PPE Kits). It was announced during 'The India Dialog' at Stanford University, California. Porter Prize: This award was named after award-winning economist Michael E. Porter. **Minister for Health: Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya**

4. Under the **Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) program** of the Union Ministry for Power, the **Punjab State Power Corporation Limited**

(PSPCL) was awarded as the **top performer among all Discoms across the country** for energy conservation measures.

Note: The award ceremony was held in New Delhi on March 1. During PAT cycle II, a **total number of 80,686 'Energy saving certificates' (ESCerts)** were issued to PSPCL. PAT is a flagship scheme under the National Mission on Enhanced efficiency.

5. **NTPC Limited** has been honored with the **CBIP Award 2022 for Outstanding Contribution in Power Generation**, attributed to its **Vindhyachal Super Thermal Power Station (VSTPS)**.

Note: VSTPS is the largest power station in the country for its efficiency and high level of generation. Union Minister of Power, R.K. Singh presented the award. It is conferred to institutions/individuals for their outstanding contributions to the development of water, power, and Renewable Energy Sectors.

6. **60th Indian GM D Gukesh** was honored with the **Player-of-the-Year award 2023** by the **Asian Chess Federation (ACF)** for winning the gold medal with a record-breaking score of 9/11 in the 44th Chess Olympiad at Mahabalipuram.

Note: Most Active Federation: All India Chess Federation. Man-of-the-Year: Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin. Best Women's team of the Year: Indian women's team. Men's Coach-of-the-Year: GM R B Ramesh. Women's Coach-of-the-Year: GM Abhijit Kunte

7. According to the Airport Council International (ACI), **Delhi airport has been ranked among the cleanest airports in Asia-Pacific.**

Note: ACI is a trade association of global airports. The airport service quality award is based on passenger surveys carried out to rate customer satisfaction on the day of travel. It covers over 30 performance indicators across key elements of a passenger's airport experience such as ease of finding your way and dining offerings.

8. **Weightlifter Mirabai Chanu** has won the **2022 BBC Indian Sportswoman of the Year award** after a public vote.

Note: She becomes the **first athlete to win the award twice** in a row after winning for the year 2021. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, she became the first Indian to win a silver medal in weightlifting. Para Sportswoman: Bhavina Patel (TT Player). Lifetime Achievement Award: Pritam Siwach (Women Hockey Player). Emerging Player: Nitu Ghanghas (Boxer). Best goal (Puskas award): Marcin Oleksy

9. The **Ministry of Tourism of India** has **bagged a Golden & Silver Star** at The **International 'Golden City Gate Tourism Awards 2023'** at ITB, Berlin 2023.

Note: Category: TV/Cinema Commercials International and Country International. Arvind Singh, Secretary (Tourism) received awards on 8th March 2023 at ITB, Berlin. **The Golden City Gate Tourism Multi-media Awards** are given annually in various categories related to the Tourism and Hospitality sectors.

10. The Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri has launched the **'Women Icons Leading Swachhata' (WINS) Awards 2023.**

Note: Aim: To recognize celebrate and disseminate inspiring and **exemplary initiatives in urban sanitation and waste management by women-led organizations** and individual women. The applications are open from 8th March to 5th April 2023. Applications for the Awards are open to SHG, Micro-enterprises, NGOs, Startups, and Individuals.

11. **RRR's Naatu Naatu** has created history by winning the **prestigious Academy Awards 2023** in the **Best Original song category.**

Note: The music of **Naatu Naatu** was given by **M. M. Keeravani** and **Lyrics by Chandrabose double-dagger.** While **India's The Elephant Whisperers (directed by Kartiki Gonsalves)** won the award for Best Documentary Short Subject. Best Actress: Michelle Yeoh (Everything Everywhere All at Once). Best Actor: Brendan Fraser (The Whale).

12. **Tamil writer Perumal Murugan's novel 'Pyre'** has been selected for the International Booker prize longlist for 2023.

Note: This book is a translation of his **original Tamil book 'Pukkuli'** which tells the story of an inter-caste couple who elope, setting in motion a story of terrifying foreboding. Aniruddhan Vasudevan translated this novel into the English language in 2016. Prize money: £50,000, will be split equally between the author and translator.

13. The Reserve Bank of India Governor, **Shaktikanta Das** was awarded the title **'Governor of the Year' for 2023** by Central Banking.

Note: Reason: For his leadership during difficult periods, such as the failure of a significant non-banking company, COVID-19 pandemic, and the inflationary effects caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The National Bank of Ukraine was also awarded the Central Bank of the Year award. Central Banking is an international economic research journal.

14. **Tamil writer Sivasankari** has been selected for **Saraswati Samman for the year 2022** for her book **Survya Vamsam.**

Note: This is a book of memoirs in Tamil language and was published in 2019. **Saraswati Samman:** It was instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in 1991. It is recognized as the most prestigious and the highest literary award in the country. It carries an

award money of 15 lakh rupees, a Citation, and a Plaque.

15. **Bengaluru** won the '**Partnership for Healthy Cities**' award and a cash prize of \$ 150,000 for effectively enforcing smoke-free laws at a summit held in London.

Note: The focused effort from smoke-free Bengaluru resulted in a **reduction of public-place smoking from 18.2% (2017) to 13.3% (2021)**. The display of 'no-smoking' signs in the city also increased from 23.1% (2017) to 75%. The global summit brought together officials from over 50 cities to discuss public health concerns.

16. **Carnatic vocalist, Bombay Jayashri** has been selected for the **Sangita Kalanidhi award 2023** of the prestigious Music Academy, Chennai.

Note: Initially, she was trained under her parents and later under T R Balamani and violin maestro Lalgudi G Jayaraman. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2021. While the **Nritiya Kalanidhi award 2023** will be conferred to **Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancer, Vasanthalakshmi Narasimhachari**. The awards will be conferred to awardees in January 2023.

17. **Nepalese batsman Aasif Sheikh** was declared the winner of the **2022 Christopher Martin-Jenkins Spirit of Cricket Award**.

Note: Reason: For his sporting conduct shown in a Men's T20I between Nepal and Ireland in Feb 2022. The Award is presented every year by the **Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC)**, UK in conjunction with the BBC. his award was created in 2013 by MCC and the BBC in memory of former MCC President and BBC Test Match Special commentator Christopher Martin-Jenkins (CMJ).

18. US President Joe Biden has awarded the prestigious **2021 National Humanities Medal to Mindy Kaling**.

Note: Reason: For empowering the new generation to tell their stories with irreverence and sincerity. The **National Medal of Arts is the highest award**, given to artists, arts patrons, and groups by the US government. Other notable recipients: Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Bruce Springsteen, Vera Wang, Gladys Knight, Judith Francisca Baca

19. **Luis Caffarelli** was honored with the **2023 Abel Prize** for his seminal contributions to regularity theory for nonlinear partial differential equations including free-boundary problems and the Monge-Ampère equation.

Note: The prize includes a **monetary award of 7.5 million kroner** and a glass plaque (designed by Norwegian artist Henrik Haugan). It is awarded by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

20. **Isha Ambani** won the **GenNext Entrepreneur Award** at the **12th Forbes India Leadership Awards 2023**.

Note: She is the head of the \$800 billion Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd and launched the JioMart. CEO of the year: CK Venkataraman (MD of Titan). Lifetime Achievement Award: AM Naik (Chairman L&T). Emerging Innovator: Pawan Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka (founders of Skyroot Aerospace). Turnaround Star: Tata Communications

21. **Assam's Pathsala** NGO was conferred with the **Children's Champion Award 2023**.

Note: The Mission popularly known as **Tapoban** has been awarded in the **health and nutrition category**. The founder president of the Mission, Kumud Kalita, received the award that carries Rs 75,000, a certificate and a plaque. This award was instituted by the Delhi Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.

22. Sacred to the **Hopi Native** has been awarded a '**Water and Heritage Shield**' by the International Committee on Monuments and Sites International Science Committee.

Note: The Shield was awarded to the **Black Mesa Trust (BMT)**, a Hopi grassroots organization. Purpose of Shield: To aware public of the significance of water and indigenous sacred sites all over the world and the right to cultural and historical memory.

23. The **Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL)** conferred Special Literary Award 2023 to **Bangladesh's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** in its 63rd Literature Festival.

Note: He was awarded for his trilogy- The Unfinished Memoirs, The Prison Diaries, and New China 1952. In a citation issued by the Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature, he is compared to Mahatma Gandhi. SAARC Literary Award is an annual award conferred by the FOSWAL since 2001

24. **Alia Mir** has been honoured with the **Wildlife Conservation Award 2023** by the administration for her conservation efforts in the region.

Note: J-K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha facilitated her with the wildlife honour award. She is also the **first woman from Kashmir** who works for the charity Wildlife SOS organization which is part of the Wildlife Rescue Team. She was awarded for her achievements in bear rescue in Kashmir, rescue, and release of wild animals.

25. **Naveen Jindal** was honored with a **lifetime achievement award from the University of Texas at Dallas**.

Note: He was conferred in recognition of his accomplishments in industry, politics, and education. He was an alumnus of the University of Texas at Dallas' 1992 batch. He is the **second person** to receive this award from the University of

Texas, after Nobel Laureate Aziz Sancar. Currently, he is serving as the Chairman of Jindal

Steel and Power Ltd.

Sports News

1. **Asia's longest-ever cycle race** was flagged off from **Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar (J&K)** and will culminate at Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu).

Note: The race will cover the longest highway, **National Highway-44** distance of 3651 kilometers, passing through twelve major states, three major metropolitan cities, and over twenty major cities of the country. It has been accorded the status of Asian Ultracycling Championship by the World Ultracycling Association.

2. Russian tennis player, **Daniil Medvedev** defeated his Russian compatriot **Andrey Rublev** by 6-2, 6-2 to win the **2023 Dubai Tennis Championships title**.

Note: With this performance, he moved to sixth in the ATP rankings, while Rublev dropped to number seven. After winning the trophies in Rotterdam and Doha in February 2023, he is the third player to win three titles in as many weeks since 2021, joining Casper Ruud (July 2021) and Felix Auger-Aliassime (October 2022).

3. **Karnataka won its 5th Santosh Trophy** National Football Championship title after **defeating Meghalaya** by 3-2 in the final at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Note: Karnataka last won the title 54 years ago. Earlier, Services won third place beating Punjab 2-0 in the play-off match held before the final. Most successful team: West Bengal (32 titles). Santosh Trophy was founded in 1941 and organized by the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

4. **Red Bull's driver, Max Verstappen** has won the season-opening **Bahrain Grand Prix 2023**, held at Bahrain International Circuit.

Note: He defeated Red Bull's Sergio Perez, who placed second in the race. It was the first time he had won in Bahrain and also the first time he had triumphed in a Formula One opener. Fernando Alonso (Aston Martin's driver) placed third followed by C. Sainz Jr. (Ferrari's driver).

5. Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated **Khelo India Dus Ka Dum** Tournament at **Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi**.

Note: In the run-up to the International Women's Day 2023 celebrations, the Youth Affairs and Sports Ministry organized the Khelo India Dus Ka Dum

tournament from the 10th to the 31st of March. Nearly 15,000 women athletes participated in the contest in more than 50 cities of the country. The game features 10 sports.

6. **Spanish tennis player, Carlos Alcaraz (19)** has won his maiden **2023 Indian Wells title** after defeating Russian Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-2 in the final.

Note: With this feat, he has also dethroned Novak Djokovic to reclaim World No.1 spot. He also become the youngest world number one ever after his triumph and claimed his third Masters 1000 title. He joined Rafael Nadal as the only player to win at least three as a teenager. Nadal won six before turning 20.

7. **Sarabjot Singh** has clinched the **gold medal in the men's 10m Air Pistol** event at the ISSF Rifle and Pistol World Cup 2023 held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Note: While Varun Tomar secured bronze in the same event. In the women's 10m Air Pistol event, Li Xue from China won the gold and Germany's Doreen Vennekamp settled for silver. China's Qian Wei completed the podium with a bronze medal finish.

8. **Rani Rampal** has become the **first woman** in the sport to have a **stadium named after her**, in **Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh**.

Note: The MCF Rae Bareilly has renamed the hockey stadium as 'Rani's Girls Hockey Turf'. Earlier this year, she made a successful comeback to the Indian hockey team during the tour of South Africa, where she was selected as one of the 22 players in the squad.

9. **India** clinched both **men's and women's titles of the Asian Kho Kho Championship 2023** held at Tamulpur in Assam.

Note: In the **women's category**, Indian Eves defeated Nepal by an inning and 33 points. On the other hand, **the men's team also defeated Nepal** by an inning and six points. India remained unbeaten in both categories throughout the tournament. A total of nine countries participated in the event.

10. **Rudraksh Patil and R. Narmada Nitin** has secured the bronze in the **10m air rifle mixed team** event at the ISSF 2023, held in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Note: While **Varun Tomar and Rhythm Sangwan** won silver in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team

Competition. With these medals, India's medal tally to three including one gold, one silver, and one bronze. China topped the medal tally with three gold and two bronze medals.

11. **Nitu Ghanghas** has clinched **Gold in the 48-kg category** of the IBA Women's World Boxing Championship 2023 held at the K.D. Jadhav Hall IG Stadium New Delhi.

Note: She **defeated Altantsetseg Lutsaikhan from Mongolia** by 5-0. She became the only sixth Indian boxer (male or female) to win a World championship. In the semifinals, she defeated Kazakh Alua Balkibekova. International Boxing Association (IBA) Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland

12. India's men's doubles badminton pair, **Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty** won the **Swiss Open Super 300 title in 2023**, held in Basel, Switzerland.

Note: They **beat Ren Xiang Yu and Tan Qiang from China** by 21-19, and 24-22. Men's singles: Koki Watanabe (Japan). Women's singles: Pornpawee Chochuwong (Thailand). Women's doubles: Rena Miyaura and Ayako Sakuramoto (Japan). Mixed doubles: Jiang Zhenbang and Wei Yaxin (China)

13. **Mumbai Indians** have won the **inaugural Women's Premier League final**, held at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai from 4-26 March 2023.

Note: They **defeated Delhi Capitals** by 7 wickets. Mumbai Indians captain: Harmanpreet Kaur. Most valuable player of the tournament: Hayley Matthews. Orange cap: Meg Lanning. Purple Cap: Hayley Matthews. Emerging Player of the season: Yastika Bhatia. Fairplay award: Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals. Catch of the season: Harmanpreet Kaur

14. Indian Women Boxer, **Nikhath Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain** have managed to win a **gold medal at the Women's World Championships 2023**, was held in **New Delhi**.

Note: **Nikhath Zareen won gold in the 50kg** light flyweight division after defeating two-time Asian champion Nguyen Thi Tam of Vietnam by 5-0. **Lovlina Borgohain** has secured her first gold at the competition after settling for bronze in the 2018 and 2019 editions. She defeated Australia's Caitlin Parker in the **75kg middle-weight category**.

15. **Tamil Nadu's Archana Suseendran** has clinched two **gold medals in 100m and 200m at the AFI Indian Grand Prix 2**, held in Kerala on March 27, 2023.

Note: In the Women's 100m final, she **defeated Assam sprinter Hima Das** and completed her 100m race in 11.52 seconds. While she completed the 200m race in 23.21 seconds. In the Men's 100m race category Sanjeet from Haryana clinched the gold. The AFI Indian Grands Prix 3 and 4 will be held in Bengaluru on April 10 and 15.

Books and Authors

1. Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya released the **book 'India's Vaccine Growth Story- From Cowpox to Vaccine Maitri'** at World Book Fair in New Delhi

Note: Additional Secretary of Finance Ministry **Sajjan Singh Yadav has authored the book**. Dr. Mandaviya also urged the writers to inculcate research-based documentation. The research-based documentation reflects knowledge and science that have proven exemplary in times of crisis.

2. Supreme Court Judge Justice V. Ramasubramanian has released a book titled **India's Struggle for Independence – Gandhian Era**.

Note: It was **authored by a former Judge of Madras High Court, P. Jyothimani, and G. Balan**, former professor of history, Pachaiyappa's College. It was published by Vanathi Pathipagam. The book covers aspects such as the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi as of the date.

3. **"As Good as My Word," written by KM Chandrasekhar**.

Note: He served as the Cabinet Secretary from 2007 to 2011. The book provides knowledge of Indian politics and bureaucracy during the UPA era. In his book, Chandrasekhar gives a thorough overview of the UPA administration during one of its most difficult periods and talks about his own role in navigating India through many crises.

4. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar released of the book **"Mundaka Upanishad: The Gateway to Eternity"**.

Note: A former member of parliament, **Dr. Karan Singh** has written the book. He is a philosopher and politician from India. Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan initially released this book in 1987.

5. The **book "Snakes In the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0"** authored by **Rajiv Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan** has received considerable recognition in India.

Note: It sheds light on the various threats to India's national security from the United States, which is not typically perceived as a major risk by the average Indian.

6. **Rachna Biswat Rawat**, a journalist and writer from India, has recently written a book called **"Bipin: The Man Behind the Uniform"**.
Note: The book was presented to India's Minister of Defence, **Rajnath Singh**. The book is published by Penguin Veer, a Penguin Random House imprint. This book focuses on the life, personality, and principles of General Bipin Rawat.
7. The English translation of the **Nepali novel "Phoolange"** will be released on April 17, 2023.
Note: It was written by **Lekhnath Chhetri**. Published by: Penguin Random House India (PRHI). This book focuses on the failed Gorkha movement for a separate state. The original Nepali version of the novel was shortlisted for the Madan Puraskar, which is Nepal's most prestigious literary award, in 2021.
8. A new book titled **'Basu Chatterji: And Middle-of-the-Road Cinema'** has been released.
Note: **Aniruddha Bhattacharjee** is the author of this book. It is a chronicle of the life and times of the

veteran Indian filmmaker **Basu Chatterjee**.

Published by: Penguin Random House India (PRHI)

9. **Ghulam Nabi Azad**, a former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Minister, has written an honest and forthright **autobiography 'Azaad'**.
Note: It will be launched in New Delhi on April 5, 2023. This book chronicles Azad's political journey and provides insights into the significant political changes that India has undergone over the past five decades. Published by: Rupa Publications India
10. **Shrimant Kokate** has recently released his **first English book titled "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (illustrated)"**.
Note: It was translated by **Dilip Chavan**. The book was released by **Amol Kolhe**. He has written a total of 10 books on various subjects.
11. **Anurag Behar** has authored a new travel book titled **"A Matter of the Heart: Education in India"**.
Note: He is the **CEO of Azim Premji Foundation** and the founding vice-chancellor of **Azim Premji University**. The book has been published by **Westland Nonfiction**.

Science and Defence

1. **ISRO** has successfully conducted the **flight acceptance hot test of the CE-20 cryogenic engine** for the **Chandrayan-3 mission**.
Note: The test was successfully conducted on February 24 at the ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu. The hot test was carried out for a planned duration of 25 seconds at the High Altitude Test Facility. The engine will power the Cryogenic Upper Stage of the LVM3 launch vehicle of the mission.
2. The Indian government has **approved the procurement of 70 HTT-40 Basic Trainer Aircraft** from **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** for the **Indian Air Force**.
Note: Reason: It will meet the shortage of basic trainer aircraft of IAF for the training of newly inducted pilots. The HTT-40 is a turboprop aircraft designed to have good low-speed handling qualities and provide better training effectiveness. The aircraft will be supplied over six years.
3. The maiden joint **military exercise 'FRINJEX-23' between India and France**, will be scheduled to conduct at the Pangode military station in **Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala** from March 7 and 8, 2023.
Note: It is for the first time that both countries are engaging in this format with each contingent comprising a Company Group. The **theme for the exercise is based on "Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations in a Contested Environment"**.
4. **INS Trikand** has participated in the **International Maritime Exercise/ Cutlass Express 2023 (IMX/CE-23)**, which is being held in the **Gulf region** from 26 Feb to 16 Mar 23.
Note: INS will exercise with participants from over 50 nations and international maritime agencies. Common aim: To enhance maritime security and keep sea lanes in the region safe for maritime commerce. IMX/CE-23 is one of the largest multinational maritime exercises in the world.
5. The **first edition of the 2023 Naval Commanders' Conference** has been started on March 6, 2023.
Note: The first phase of the conference is held onboard India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, **INS Vikrant**, in the Arabian Sea off Goa. **Rajnath Singh** addressed the Naval Commanders onboard **INS Vikrant**. This conference serves as a platform for Naval Commanders to discuss important security issues at the military-strategic level and interact with senior government functionaries.
6. The US Air Force handed over **an earth observation satellite, NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** to ISRO on March 8, 2023.
Note: A US Air Force C-17 aircraft carrying the **NISAR has landed in Bengaluru, Karnataka**. It was jointly developed by **NASA and ISRO**. This

satellite will be used by ISRO for a variety of purposes including agricultural mapping, and landslide-prone areas. It is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) observatory. It will map the entire globe in 12 days.

7. **ISRO** has successfully carried out an "extremely challenging" controlled **re-entry experiment of the decommissioned orbiting Megha-Tropiques-1 (MT-1) satellite**.

Note: The final impact region estimated is in the deep Pacific Ocean within the expected latitude and longitude boundaries. The low Earth satellite was launched on October 12, 2011. It is a joint satellite venture of ISRO and the French space agency, CNES for tropical weather and climate studies.

8. **NASA** has partnered with the **Italian Space Agency, Agenzia Spaziale Italiana (ASI)** to build and **launch MAIA (Multi-Angle Imager for Aerosols) missions**.

Note: Aim: To investigate the **health impacts of air pollution in the world's most populated cities**. It is the first mission of the agency whose primary goal is to benefit societal health and will launch before the end of 2024. It will consist of the PLATiNO-2 satellite (provided by ASI), and a science instrument (NASA).

9. The **Indian Navy** successfully fired a **medium-range surface-to-surface missile (MRSAM) from INS Visakhapatnam**.

Note: Reason: To validate the capability of the anti-tank missiles. MRSAM was developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and produced at Bharat Dynamics Ltd. The DRDO has already handed over two other versions to Indian Army and Indian Air Force to augment the country's air defense power.

10. The **third edition** multi-lateral maritime **exercise La Pérouse 2023** started between the navies of India, Australia, France, Japan, and the United States in the **Indian Ocean Region** from 13-14 March 2023.

Note: It is a **biennial exercise, conducted by the French Navy**. Aim: To enhance maritime domain awareness and optimize maritime coordination amongst the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific Region. India's INS Sahyadri and fleet tanker INS Jyoti have participated.

11. According to the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report**, despite an 11% drop in arms import between 2013-17 and 2018-22, **India remained the world's largest arms importer from 2018 to 2022 followed by Saudi Arabia**.

Note: Russia was India's largest arms supplier in the periods between 2013-17 and 2018-22. But Russia's share of arms imports to India fell from 64

to 45%. While France emerged as the second-largest arms supplier to India followed by the US.

12. An apex body of the defense ministry for clearing weapons procurement, the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) met under the chairmanship of DM Rajnath Singh**.

Note: The DAC has accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for **capital acquisitions worth Rs 70,500 crore** under Buy Indian-IDDM (Indigenously Designed, Developed, and Manufactured) — a new procurement category. It includes 307 Advanced Towed Artillery Gun Systems and 60 indigenous marine utility helicopters.

13. The **Technology Innovation Institute in Abu Dhabi (UAE)** has launched Falcon LLM, a large language model (LLM) with 40 billion parameters.

Note: It was trained on one trillion tokens and **built by the AI and Digital Science Research Center's AI Cross-Centre Unit**. The model outperforms GPT-3 and requires only 75% of its training compute, as well as lower percentages of other large language models' training compute. LLMs have a wide range of applications, including chatbots.

14. The artificial intelligence research company, **OpenAI has unveiled** its new and more **advanced model called GPT-4**.

Note: The latest version is more creative and accurate in its response. It has better problem-solving capabilities than **ChatGPT (developed by OpenAI)**. GPT-4 is a large multimodal model, which cannot outperform humans in real-world scenarios but can exhibit "human-level performance on various professional and academic benchmarks.

15. **NASA** unveiled a new generation of **spacesuit for humanity's return trip to the Moon**.

Note: This spacesuit comes with specialist features to support astronauts as they conduct scientific experiments on the lunar surface. The prototype is said to be a better fit for female space travelers. NASA hopes to have the updated suit ready for the **Artemis III mission to the Moon in 2025**. A well-fitting suit is crucial to prevent excessive fatigue and at worst, physical harm.

16. The government has allocated a **budget of Rs. 9023 Crore** towards achieving the **objectives of Gaganyaan mission**.

Note: Scope of Gaganyaan program: To demonstrate human spaceflight capability to Low Earth Orbit and safe return. ISRO is also developing indigenous technologies for Human rated launch vehicle, Life Support System, Crew Escape System, Ground Station Network, Crew Training and Recovery. The Union MoS, S&T, Dr. Jitendra Singh informed in Lok Sabha.

17. The **Indian Space Research Organisation** is organizing a young scientist program named **Yuva Vigyani Karyakram (YUVIKA)**.
Note: Aim: To impart basic knowledge on space technology, space science, and space applications to **students of Class IX**. Registration for the program has been started on March 20, 2023. The YUVIKA program will be conducted between May 15 and 26 at seven centers. Interested students studying in Class 9 as on 1 January 2023 within India are eligible to apply.
18. **DRDO** has successfully conducted a **flight test of the Power Take Off (PTO) Shaft on Light Combat Aircraft (LCA Tejas)** Limited Series Production (LSP)-3 aircraft in Bengaluru.
Note: The PTO shaft is indigenously designed and developed by the Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (CVRDE), Chennai. The PTO shaft is a critical component in the aircraft. It supports the requirements of future fighter aircraft and their variants and offers competitive costs.
19. The **13th edition of a bilateral armour exercise, EX Bold Kurukshetra**, between **India and Singapore** was concluded on March 13, 2023, at Jodhpur Military Station, India.
Note: The ten-day-long joint training that commenced on March 5, fostered a common understanding of mechanized warfare in emerging threats and evolving technologies. It involved soldiers from the 42nd Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment and Armoured Brigade of the Indian Army.
20. The **third edition of the Sea Dragon** exercises is being started **in the USA (host)** from March 15-30, 2023.
Note: It is a coordinated multilateral anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise for long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft. In this exercise, **Indian Navy participated** with its P8I aircraft, which arrived at Guam, USA on 14 March 2023. Apart from India, US Navy with P8A, **Japan with P1, Canada with CP 140, and South Korea with P3C participated.**
21. **Inter-Services Organization (Command, Control and Discipline) Bill, 2023** has been introduced in Lok Sabha to empower designated military commanders to **take charge of soldiers and enforce discipline**, regardless of the service they belong to.
Note: It came ahead of the impending move to establish integrated or joint commands, where all the manpower and assets will be under the operational control of a single three-star general of the Indian Army, Navy, and IAF.
22. The 10-day **Africa-India Field Training Exercise (AFINDEX 2023)** will be **organized in Pune, India**

from March 21-30, 2023 to strengthen the military ties between the countries.

Note: The exercise will promote the idea of Africa-India Militaries for Regional Unity (AMRUT). A comprehensive validation exercise on the **theme "Humanitarian Mine Actions and Peace Keeping Operations"**.

23. **Indian Navy launched INS Androth**, the second in a series of eight indigenous ships **built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata**.
Note: It is an **Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASWSWC)**. It is a 77.6-meter-long and 10.5-meter-wide vessel, propelled by three diesel-driven water jets that will pack a punch. The ship is capable of a maximum 25 knots speed and will carry lightweight torpedoes, ASW rockets, and mines.
24. A joint maritime exercise, **Konkan 2023** was conducted **between the Royal Navy of Britain and the Indian Navy** from 20-22 March has concluded in **Arabian Sea**.
Note: It is a joint drill by the two navies to demonstrate operational readiness, enhancing interoperability and improving the ability to conduct joint operations. INS Trishul, a guided missile frigate, and HMS Lancaster participated. It covered all domains of maritime operations, air, surface, and subsurface.
25. The **Defence Ministry** signed two separate contracts with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** at a total cost of over Rs 3,700 crore.
Note: Reason: To enhance the operational capabilities of the Indian Air Force (IAF). **First contract:** Worth over Rs 2,800 crore, pertains to the supply of Medium Power Radars (MPR) 'Arudhra' for the IAF. **Second contract:** Worth over Rs 950 crore, relates to 129 DR-118 Radar Warning Receivers (RWR). Both projects are under Buy Indian- IDMM category.
26. The **Indian Army and Indian Air Force** have conducted a 96-hour multi-domain air and land exercise named **'Vayu Prahar' in the eastern sector**.
Note: The exercise was conducted in the second week of March 2023 to formulate plans that can lead to synergy in multi-domain operations. The scope of the joint exercise included the rapid mobilisation of a rapid reaction force from the hinterland.
27. **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** has conducted **Regional Search and Rescue (SAR) exercise** from 28 -29 March 2023 at **Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh**.
Note: Aim: To simulate a real-time maritime distress scenario and highlight the functioning of the SAR organization for a mass rescue operation. It involved all stakeholders with the effective use of

available resources towards M-SAR (Maritime Search and Rescue) contingency efficiently. **ICG founded: 1 February 1977**

- 28. The Defence Ministry** has signed **three contracts** worth of **5400 crore rupees** with **BEL and New Space India Limited** to **boost the defence capabilities**.

Note: Two contracts were signed with **Bharat Electronics Ltd** for the procurement of Automated Air Defence Control and Reporting System Project Akashteer and the acquisition of Sarang Electronic Support Measure systems. The **third was with New Space India Limited** for the procurement of an advanced Communication Satellite, GSAT 7B for the Indian Army.

- 29. Union MoS (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh** has inaugurated **Asia's largest 4-meter International Liquid Mirror Telescope (ILMT) in Devasthal, Uttarakhand**.

Note: It is situated at an **altitude of 2450 meters** at the observatory, which lies at the campus of Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences. The ILMT employs a 4-meter-diameter rotating mirror, which was made up of a thin layer of liquid mercury, to collect and focus light.

- 30. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** successfully launched **India's Launch Vehicle**

Mark (LVM) 3 -M3 satellite with 36 satellites of the One Web India-2 mission from the second launch pad from **Sriharikota**.

Note: With this launch, OneWeb will have 616 of its satellites in orbit. The 43m-tall launch vehicle has successfully completed the three stages in the prescribed time limit including the involvement of the ignition of the cryogenic engine.

- 31. Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** Researchers have **developed a three-dimensional (3D) paper-based portable device**.

Note: This device can detect adulteration in milk within 30 seconds. The test could be even performed at home. It can detect multiple substances commonly used as adulterating agents including Urea, detergents, soap, starch, hydrogen peroxide, sodium-hydrogen-carbonate, and salt, among others.

- 32. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** addressed the **'Rising India Conclave'**, which is held in **New Delhi** on March 30, 2023.

Note: During the event, he informed that India aims to achieve defence equipment **exports target worth 40 thousand crore rupees by 2026**. In the last few years, defence exports have witnessed a quantum jump from 900 crore rupees to 14 thousand crore rupees (FY23). He also highlighted the progress made by the country in all sectors.

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