

January 2024

BOLT

**Monthly Current Affairs with
Highlights of Interim Budget 2024-2025**

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Banking & Finance

1. RBI report finds debt fund AUM of '1.7-lakh crore in stress

• The study conducted by the SEBI has revealed that '1.7-lakh crore of asset under management of open-ended debt schemes of 17 mutual funds were under stress as of September quarter.

• The analysis revealed stress in the case of 17 mutual funds and in terms of schemes, however, only 24 out of a total of 299 schemes exhibited stress, as per the Financial Stability Report. The Financial Stability Report was recently published by the RBI.

2. RBI issues guidelines on bank classification of unclaimed deposits

• This move comes after RBI launched '100 Days 100 Pays' campaign in June last year, under which banks must trace and settle the top 100 unclaimed deposits of every bank in every district.

• The deadline for the scheme, which was to end on 8 September, has now been extended to **1st April 2024**.

• Under the new guidelines, RBI said banks shall undertake at least an annual review in respect of accounts where there is no customer induced transactions for more than a year. "In cases where there is no explicit mandate to renew the term deposit, the banks should review such accounts if the customers have not withdrawn the proceeds after maturity or transferred these to their savings/current account in order to prevent such deposits from becoming unclaimed," it said.

• **RBI also said banks shall not classify zero balance accounts as 'inoperative' if it remains non-operative for a period of more than two years.** "Central and State governments have been expressing difficulty in crediting cheques/Direct Benefit Transfer/Electronic Benefit Transfer/ scholarship amount in these accounts as they are also classified as inoperative due to non-operation for two years," it said.

• Banks shall ensure that amounts lying in inoperative accounts or unclaimed deposits and reactivated will be put under concurrent audit, according to the new norms. All transactions in these accounts, which are reactivated, will be monitored regularly for at least six months, at higher levels without the knowledge of the customers and dealing staff.

• The balance in savings or current accounts not operated for **10 years and term deposits not claimed for 10 years** from the date of maturity are classified by banks as unclaimed deposits.

These amounts are transferred to the depositor education and awareness (DEA) fund maintained by RBI.

3. UPI transactions hit a new record with '18.23 lakh crore in Dec; 54% higher

• The volume of UPI (Unified Payments Interface) transactions continues to rise month after month as the total monthly transaction amount touched '18.23 lakh crore in Dec last year, 54 percent higher than the corresponding data of 2022.

- In terms of the number of transactions, the figure reached 12.02 billion, witnessing 42 percent higher than the previous year figure.
- It is noteworthy that the transaction amount had hit '17.40 lakh crore in November and '17.16 lakh crore in October.
- Also, the number of UPI transactions hit 11.24 billion in November and 11.41 billion in October.

4. HDFC Bank goes live with NPCI-developed UPI in secondary market platform

• **HDFC Bank has executed transactions via the NPCI's UPI payments app as part of the 'UPI for secondary market' facility, which went live.**

• The move follows markets regulator Sebi allowing the facility through the UPI app developed by the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI). Clearing corporations will directly process payouts to these clients on a T+1 basis.

• **Effective January 1, Sebi and the stock exchanges permitted trading in the cash segment through block mechanism, on an optional basis, for the secondary market on the lines of Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA) for primary markets where investors' funds will continue to remain in their savings account with the required funds being blocked instead of the investor having to upfront transfer the amount to the broker's account for placing trades.**

• During this pilot stage, investors can block funds in their bank accounts, which will only be debited by the clearing corporations after trade confirmation during the settlement period.

• Initially, HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank customers will be able to avail of this facility and HDFC Bank, HSBC, ICICI Bank, and YES Bank are acting as sponsor banks for the clearing corporation and exchanges.

5. UPI transactions cross 100-billion mark in 2023

• **Transactions through the unified payments interface (UPI) platform crossed the 100 billion-mark in calendar year 2023 to close at around 118 billion, as per the data shared by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).**

- This marks a 60 percent growth as compared to 74 billion UPI transactions recorded in 2022.

- Visa, the world's largest card network, processes an average of 750 mn. transactions/day.

• UPI is expected to surpass Mastercard's daily transaction volume of 440 million sometime this year going by the 60 percent growth rate.

6. RBI proposes banks with less than 6% net NPAs to declare dividends

• The Reserve Bank of India proposed allowing banks having net non-performing assets (NPAs) ratio of less than 6 per cent to declare dividends.

• As per the prevailing norms last updated in 2005, banks need to have a NNPA ratio of up to 7 per cent to become eligible for declaration of dividends.

• RBI has proposed that the new guidelines should come into effect from FY25 onwards.

• The guidelines have been reviewed in the light of implementation of Basel III standards, the revision of the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework, and the introduction of differentiated banks, the RBI said.

• A commercial bank should have a minimum total capital adequacy of 11.5 per cent to be eligible for declaring dividend, while the same for a small finance bank and payment banks has been set at 15 per cent, and 9 per cent for local area banks and regional rural banks, the draft circular said.

• In what can be seen as a relaxation from the existing norms, the Reserve Bank has proposed increasing the upper ceiling on dividend payout ratio -- which is the ratio between the amount of the dividend payable in a year and the net profit -- to 50 per cent if the net NPA is zero from the earlier ceiling of 40 per cent.

• The draft also made it clear that the Reserve Bank shall not entertain any request for "ad-hoc dispensation on declaration of dividend".

• In the case of foreign banks, the RBI has proposed that they may remit net profit or surplus (net of tax) of a quarter or a year earned in from Indian operations without the central bank's prior approval.

7. Reserve Bank of India cancels the licence of The Faiz Mercantile Cooperative Bank Ltd., Nashik, Maharashtra

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), cancelled the licence of "The Faiz Mercantile Cooperative Bank Ltd., Nashik, Maharashtra.

• The bank does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. As such, it does not comply with the provisions of Section 11(1) and Section 22 (3) (d) read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also cancelled the licence of "Musiri Urban Co-operative Bank Ltd., Musiri" (Tamil Nadu).

• The bank does not have adequate capital and earning prospects. As such, it does not comply with the provisions of Section 11(1) and Section 22 (3) (d) read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

- The bank has failed to comply with the requirements of Sections 22(3) (a), 22(3) (b), 22(3)(c), 22(3) (d) and 22(3)(e) read with Section 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

8. RBI enhances bulk deposit limit for large UCBs 6.66 times to '1 cr and above

• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to enhance the bulk deposit limit for large urban co-operative banks (UCBs) to '1 crore and above from the current '15 lakh and above.

• Specifically, the new bulk deposit limit applies to UCBs in the Tier 3 (with deposits more than '1,000 crore and up to '10,000 crore) and Tier 4 (with deposits more than '10,000 crore) categories.

• RBI said for all other UCBs (that is, other than scheduled UCBs in Tiers 3 and 4), the definition of bulk deposit will continue to be "single rupee term deposits of '15 lakh and above."

9. India Ratings revises PNB Housing Finance NCD ratings from AA to AA+

• PNB Housing Finance, a housing finance company, said that India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has upgraded the rating of the company's non-convertible debentures (NCDs) to 'IND AA+' from 'IND AA' with stable outlook.

• Further, Ind-Ra said that NCDs limit has been split into bank loans and NCDs and 'IND AA+' rating has been assigned to the bank loans.

10. RBI grants payment aggregator licence to Tata Pay

• The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted a payment aggregator (PA) licence to Tata Payments, Tata group's digital payments app.

• This will help the firm facilitate ecommerce transactions through its platform. Tata Payments is held through Tata Digital, the group's subsidiary entity, which houses its digital businesses.

• Payment Aggregators are entities that enable e-commerce websites, mobile apps, and merchants to accept various payment instruments from customers for the completion of their payment obligations – without the need for merchants to create a separate payment integration system of their own.

11. RBI directs issuers to specify utilisation of funds raised via NCDs, CPs

- RBI has tweaked norms for the issuance of commercial papers (CPs) and non-convertible debentures of up to one year to

regulate short-term investments and ensure transparency in the market.

- One of the key changes, slated to take effect from **April 1** this year, was that the guidelines mandate issuers to mention the exact end use of the funds raised through the instruments.
- For better transparency, issuers are now required to disclose long-term and unaccepted credit ratings in the offer document. This information helps investors make informed decisions about the risks associated with the investment, said market participants.
- **The settlement period was capped at T+4, which means the transactions need to be settled within four days from the trade date. Individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUF) were restricted to investing a maximum of 25 per cent of their total income.**

• The guidelines specify that redemptions (repayment of the invested amount) need to be made before 3 pm on the maturity date.

13. Karnataka Bank, Satin Creditcare Network sign co-lending agreement

- Private sector Karnataka Bank (KBL) and Satin Creditcare Network Ltd (SCNL), a NBFC-Micro Finance Institution (MFI), have entered into a co-lending arrangement to provide financial support to Joint Liability Groups (JLG) of economically active women in both rural and semi-urban areas and to give impetus to the microcredit facilities segment of the country.

14. Fino Payments Bank applies to RBI for small finance bank license

- **Fino Payments Bank has applied to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), seeking a small finance bank license**, the regulator said in a release. RBI allows payments banks without corporate lineage to apply for a small finance bank license after completing five years of business.
- Fino has around Rs 600 crore of net worth while the minimum capital requirement for small finance banks is Rs 200 crore at present.

• FINO Payments Bank Limited has commenced operations as a payments bank with effect from June 30, 2017.

- The Reserve Bank has issued a licence to the bank under **Section 22 (1) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949** to carry on the business of payments bank in India.

15. SBI raises \$600 million via 5-year senior unsecured fixed rate notes

- State Bank of India (SBI) said it has concluded the issue of **USD 600 million senior unsecured fixed rate notes having maturity of 5 years at a coupon of 5 per cent, payable semi-annually, under Regulation-S.**

- This fundraising comes on the heels of the bank concluding placement of USD 250 million senior unsecured Green floating rate notes, referred to as 'The Green Notes.'

- Under Regulation-S, offers and sales of securities that happen outside the United States are exempt from SEC registration requirements.

• This "Green Notes" issuance, maturing on December 29, 2028, is part of SBI's USD 10 Billion medium-term note program and was conducted through a private placement facilitated by its London branch.

- The Green Notes rated BBB- by S&P, were issued on a floating rate basis of 1.20 per cent above SOFR (secured overnight financing rate) and have been listed on the India International Exchange, India's largest bank said in a statement issued on January 4.

16. FIDC to prepare model code of conduct for NBFCs

- **The Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) said it will continue its endeavour to act as an industry watchdog to prevent, reduce, and correct instances of questionable business practices through persuasion and consensus-building among member NBFCs.**

- The Council, which is a representative body of the RBI-registered NBFCs, underscored in its Vision document for the next two years, that it will play a significant role in ensuring a high degree of corporate governance, adherence to regulatory norms, and fair market practices among its members.

- FIDC will continue its endeavour to prepare a model code of conduct and encourage compliance among members, per the document.
- The Council observed that NBFCs have gained expertise in last-mile credit delivery.

17. Indian Bank launches 'Indian Bank One Co-Branded Credit Card'

- **Indian Bank has announced its partnership with FPL Technologies to launch the 'Indian Bank one co-branded credit card' powered by Visa and RuPay.**

- The partnership signifies a strategic shift as the One co-branded credit card will now be extended not just to existing Indian Bank customers but also to new customers, allowing a reach to a broader audience.

18. SBI raises \$600 million via 5-year senior unsecured bonds

- **State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest lender, on January 10 said it has concluded the issuance of \$600 million senior unsecured fixed rate notes with maturity of 5 years at a coupon of 5 percent, payable semi-annually, under Regulation-S.** This issuance comes after the bank concluded the placement of \$250 million senior unsecured green floating rate notes.

19. IndusInd Bank introduces the 'Samman RuPay Credit Card' exclusively for government employees.

- **IndusInd Bank recently introduced the 'IndusInd Bank Samman RuPay Credit Card', equipped with UPI functionality, in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).**

• Tailored for government sector employees, the card is designed to offer a variety of exclusive perks, aiming to elevate their banking experience.

20. RBI waives '5 crore penalty imposed on Bank of Baroda over shortfall in soiled note remittances

- **Bank of Baroda (BOB) said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to waive the '5 crore penalty that was previously imposed on it due to a shortfall in soiled note remittances.**

• The penalty was attributed to a shortfall in soiled note remittances, indicating issues with the handling of notes that had undergone normal wear and tear.
 • The penalties imposed by the RBI align with its Clean Note Policy, a stringent framework necessitating the immediate imposition of penalties upon identifying deficiencies in soiled note remittances or chest balances, irrespective of the quantity involved.

21. RBI imposes fine on Dhanlaxmi Bank, ESAF Small Finance Bank, Punjab and Sind Bank over non-compliances

- **RBI has imposed monetary penalties against ESAF Small Finance Bank, Dhanlaxmi Bank, and Punjab and Sind Bank over various non-compliances.**

• A penalty of **'1.20 crore has been slapped on Dhanlaxmi Bank** for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Loans and Advances' 'Statutory and Other Restrictions', KYC, and certain norms related to the interest rate on deposits.

• This penalty has been imposed in exercise of powers vested in RBI conferred under the provisions of **Section 47A(1)(c) read with Section 46(4)(i) of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.**

• Further, a fine of **'1 crore has been imposed on Punjab and Sind Bank** for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Loans and Advances' 'Statutory and Other Restrictions'.

• The central bank has also imposed a penalty of **29.55 lakh on ESAF Small Finance Bank** for non-compliance with its directions on 'Customer Service in Banks'.

• The RBI said that the actions against these banks were taken based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or

agreement entered into by the bank with its customers.

- Earlier on 11 January, RBI decided to waive the 5 crore penalty on state-owned lender Bank of Baroda (BOB) that was previously imposed on it due to a shortfall in soiled note remittances.

22. SBI launches Green Rupee Term Deposit

- **State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest Bank has launched a special fixed deposit (FD) scheme.**

• SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD) has been launched to mobilise funds to support environment-friendly initiatives and projects, thereby fostering the growth of a green finance ecosystem in India

About the Scheme:

- SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit scheme is open to resident individuals, non-individuals, and NRI customers.
- SGRTD offers investors the flexibility to choose from three distinct tenors: 1111 days, 1777 days, and 2222 days.
- Currently, the scheme is available through the branch network, and it will soon be made available through other digital channels such as YONO and Internet Banking Services (INB).
- SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD): Interest rate
 - According to the SBI's website, SGRTD will offer 10 basis points (bps) interest rates below the card rate for retail and bulk Deposits for respective tenor.
 - Interest rate for retail deposits
 - 1111 Days- 6.65 %
 - 1777 Days- 6.65 %
 - 2222 Days- 6.40 %
 - Interest rate for bulk deposits
 - 1111 Days- 6.15 %
 - 1777 Days- 6.15 %
 - 2222 Days- 5.90 %
- Senior Citizens/ Staff/ Staff Senior Citizens are eligible for an additional interest rate over the applicable rate for the public. (NRI Senior Citizens / NRI Staff not eligible).
- TDS is applicable as per income tax rules
- Green deposit means an interest-bearing deposit, received by the regulated entities (RE) for a fixed period the proceeds of which are earmarked for being allocated towards green finance as per RBI's notification dated April 11, 2023.
- Recently, the RBI released a document giving detailed replies to a set of queries investors may have concerning green deposits.
- The deposits raised under the framework are covered by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation.

23. SpiceJet's Rs 2,242-crore fund infusion plan gets BSE nod

- SpiceJet has received a BSE nod to issue equity shares and warrants convertible into equity shares on a preferential basis as part of the company's Rs 2,242-crore fund infusion plans.

• The in-principle approval from BSE allows SpiceJet to proceed with the process of fund infusion, providing the airline with the necessary financial impetus for its growth initiatives. Ajay Singh, Chairman, and Managing Director of SpiceJet.

24. RBI releases draft norms for fintech self-regulatory organisations

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) draft norms for self-regulatory organisations for the fintech sector (SRO-FT) have proposed that such entities should have a robust IT infrastructure and the ability to deploy technological solutions within a reasonable timeframe.

• The applicant for such an entity should have sufficient net worth and demonstrate the capability of establishing the necessary infrastructure to fulfil the responsibilities of an SRO-FT effectively, RBI said.

• The draft framework said that to maintain credibility, the SRO-FT should operate independently, free from the influence of any single member or group of members.

The SRO should be set up as a not-for-profit company registered under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

• The norms said the applicant should represent the fintech sector with membership across entities of all sizes, stages and activities. If representation is inadequate at the time of application, the application should include a roadmap for achieving this within a reasonable timeline.

• The draft norms left it to the sector to decide whether there should be one SRO for fintechs, or multiple SROs.

25. IndusInd Bank ties up with EazyDiner to launch credit card

• IndusInd Bank has launched the 'EazyDiner IndusInd Bank Platinum Credit Card' in association with EazyDiner. The credit card offers an additional discount of '500 while paying through the EazyDiner App via PayEazy for both dining and take-away at select restaurants.

26. Working Group suggests tighter norms for States while giving guarantees

• A Working Group constituted during the 32nd Conference of the State Finance Secretaries held in July 2022, to prescribe a uniform guarantee ceiling for States among others, recommended that the word

'Guarantee' should include all instruments, which create an obligation, contingent or otherwise, on part of the State Government.

• As per the recommendations, the State Governments must clearly define the purpose for which Government guarantees are issued.

State Governments may consider fixing a ceiling for incremental guarantees issued during a year at 5% of Revenue Receipts or 0.5% of Gross State Domestic Product, whichever is less.

• The State Governments may consider charging a minimum guarantee fee for guarantees extended and additional risk premium may be charged based on the risk category and the tenor of the underlying loan," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said while making the recommendations public.

• As per the recommendations the State Governments should publish/disclose data relating to guarantees, as per the Indian Government Accounting Standard (IGAS).

• The RBI said that the implementation of the recommendations made by the Working Group should facilitate better fiscal management by the State Governments.

The Working Group comprised members drawn from the Ministry of Finance, Government of India; Comptroller and Auditor General of India; and some State Governments.

• The terms of reference of the Working Group included, *inter alia*, prescribing a uniform guarantee ceiling for the States; uniform reporting framework for the guarantees given by the State Governments and assessing the adequacy of States' contribution to the Guarantee Redemption Fund.

27. Karnataka Bank and NBFC Clix Capital enter co-lending partnership

• Karnataka Bank (KBL), a leading Private Sector Bank and Clix Capital, one of India's fastest-growing new-age NBFCs, have entered into a strategic digital co-lending partnership through Yubi Co.lend Platform.

• This partnership is focused on providing loans to the Indian MSME sector which is one of the biggest contributors to India's GDP and employment growth.

28. Yes Bank deploys Veefin's SmartFin supply chain finance solution

• Yes Bank has unveiled SmartFin, an advanced digital Supply Chain Finance (SCF) platform developed in collaboration with Veefin Solutions to support Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

• The move reflects Yes Bank's commitment to fostering innovation and amplifying its digital offerings, particularly in the realm of working capital efficiencies.

- SmartFin, powered by Veefin Solutions, presents an end-to-end digital SCF platform, ushering in a new era of efficiency for businesses in the supply chain.

29. HDFC Bank seeks Singapore bank

license to grow overseas

- HDFC Bank Ltd, India's biggest private sector lender, is seeking to open its first branch in Singapore, signaling its overseas ambitions after sewing up a landmark merger with mortgage financier Housing Development Finance Corp. last year.**

- The bank has applied to the **Monetary Authority of Singapore** for a banking license and is awaiting approval, according to sources familiar with the matter.

- It is not clear what kind of banking license HDFC Bank is seeking in Singapore, said one of the people, who declined to be identified as the information is confidential.

- State Bank of India and ICICI Bank Ltd. hold qualifying full banking licenses, alongside eight other banks like Bank of China Ltd. and BNP Paribas SA.** Such licenses are open only to foreign banks and allow them to have additional branches and/or off-premise ATMs as well as to share ATMs among themselves, according to the Association of Banks in Singapore's website.

- Besides Singapore, HDFC Bank also has presence in markets like London, Hong Kong and Bahrain.**

30. Indian Stock Market Surpasses Hong Kong To Become 4th Biggest Equity Market Globally

- The Indian stock market has pipped Hong Kong to become the fourth-highest equity market globally.**

- The combined value of shares listed on Indian exchanges reached USD 4.33 trillion as of Monday's close, versus USD 4.29 trillion for Hong Kong, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.
- That makes India the fourth-biggest equity market globally. Its value crossed \$4 trillion for the first time on Dec. 5, with about half of that coming in the past four years.

- The top three stock markets are the U.S., China, and Japan. Currently, the US is the world's biggest market with a mcap of \$50.86 trillion, followed by China with a mcap of \$8.44 trillion and Japan at \$6.36 trillion.**

- Indian stocks reached new highs in 2023 due to bullish investors and increased domestic participation.

31. Central Bank of India plans offer for sale to reduce govt's stake

- Public-sector lender Central Bank of India has approached the government with a proposal for an offer for sale (OFS) instead of a fresh issue of equity through routes like**

qualified institutional placement (QIP) or a rights issue.

- It has chosen to take the OFS route to avoid dilution of its equity capital base while increasing the public float of shares.

- The government has a little over 93 per cent in the Mumbai-based bank at the end of December 2023.**

- In October 2017, the government outlined a recapitalisation package of Rs 2.11 trillion for public-sector banks over FY18 and FY19. Central Bank of India received Rs 5,158 crore in FY18 and Rs 6,592 crore in FY19, Rs 3,353 crore in FY20 and Rs 4,800 crore in FY21.

- Thus, over the past few fiscal years, the government has infused Rs 19,903 crore into Central Bank of India, helping improve its capital ratios, according to rating agency CRISIL.

32. Government allows direct listing of securities by Indian companies on GIFT IFSC

- The Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, has amended Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) Rules, 2019, and notified the 'Direct Listing of Equity Shares of Companies Incorporated in India on International Exchanges Scheme'.**

- Simultaneously, the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has issued Companies (Listing of Equity Shares in Permissible Jurisdictions) Rules, 2024.**

- These, together, provide an overarching regulatory framework to enable public Indian companies to issue and list their shares in permitted international exchanges. As of now, the framework allows unlisted public Indian companies to list their shares on an international exchange.

- SEBI is in the process of issuing the operational guidelines for listed public Indian companies. The international stock exchanges at GIFT-IFSC under the regulatory supervision of IFSCA namely, India International Exchange and NSE International Exchange have been, currently, prescribed as permitted stock exchanges under the Rules and the Scheme.

- Earlier, through the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2020, enabling provisions were included in the **Companies Act, 2013**, to allow direct listing of prescribed class (es) of securities of prescribed class (es) of public companies incorporated in India on permitted stock exchanges in permissible foreign jurisdictions or other prescribed jurisdictions. The enabling provisions of the Companies (Amendment) Act, 2020 were, accordingly, brought into force with effect from 30th October, 2023.

33. HDFC becomes 1st bank to hit 2 crore credit cards milestone

- **HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector bank, said it has become the first lender in the country to achieve the milestone of 20 million credit cards in force.**
- **The lender forayed into the credit card business in 2001 and hit the 10-million mark in 2017.**
- HDFC Bank is the largest issuer of card issuers in the country, which commands over a fourth of the overall card market.
- According to the Reserve Bank of India data for November 2023, HDFC Bank's cards in circulation stood at nearly 19.51 million as compared to 19.18 million cards in October 2023.
- HDFC Bank is followed by SBI Card, ICICI Bank, and Axis Bank, in terms of the number of credit cards issued.

34. Four companies get Sebi's nod to launch IPOs

- **Enter Healthcare Solutions, JNK India, Exicom Tele-Systems and Akme Fintrade (India) have received markets regulator Sebi's approval to raise funds through initial public offerings.**
- However, the Securities and Exchange Board of India has returned the IPO papers of Stallion India Fluorochemicals.
- As per the processing status of draft offer documents till January 19, the watchdog has approved the initial public offering (IPO) of the four companies.
- These four firms, which had filed their preliminary papers with the markets watchdog between June and October, obtained observation letters on January 16-19, an update with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed on 26 January.
- In Sebi's parlance, obtaining observation letters means its go-ahead to launch an IPO.

35. Bank of Baroda's arm rebranded as 'BOBCARD Limited' with 'Credit Reimagined' tagline

- **Bank of Baroda's wholly-owned subsidiary for cards, 'BOB Financial Solutions Limited', has been rebranded as 'BOBCARD Limited' with the tagline 'Credit Reimagined'.**
- Accordingly, the NBFC has also unveiled a new logo called '**Baroda Sun**', which comprises dual 'B' letterforms that hold the rays of the rising sun.
- BOBCARD offers an array of consumer and commercial credit cards and caters to all segments of customers with varied needs, including shopping, travel and business cards for large corporates and MSMEs.
- The company also has exclusive credit cards for Defence Personnel including the Indian Army, Indian Navy, the Indian Coast Guard, Assam Rifles, professionals like ICAI, ICMAI & ICSI, co-

branded cards with HPCL, Snapdeal, IRCTC, Premium Lifestyle cards like Eterna, Premier, among others.

- It is also the merchant payment processing partner of Bank of Baroda's merchant acquiring business.

36. Yes Bank becomes first Indian bank to conduct export finance transaction on RXIL's ITFS platform

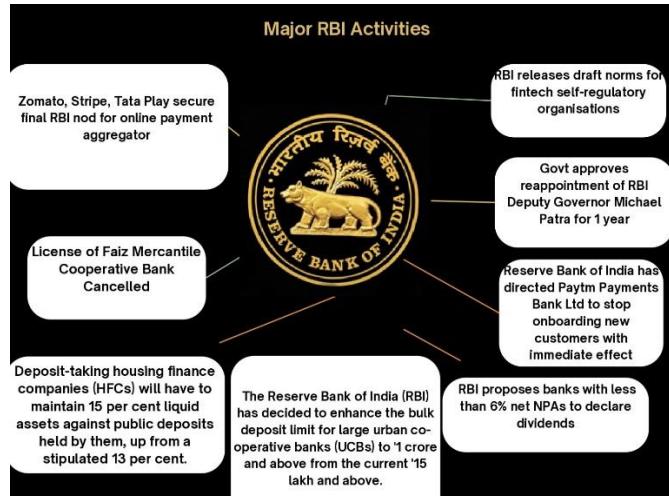
- **Yes Bank became the first Indian bank to execute an export finance transaction on the International Trade Financing Services Platform (ITFS) of RXIL Global IFSC Limited (RXIL), a leading cross-border fintech company registered under the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA).**

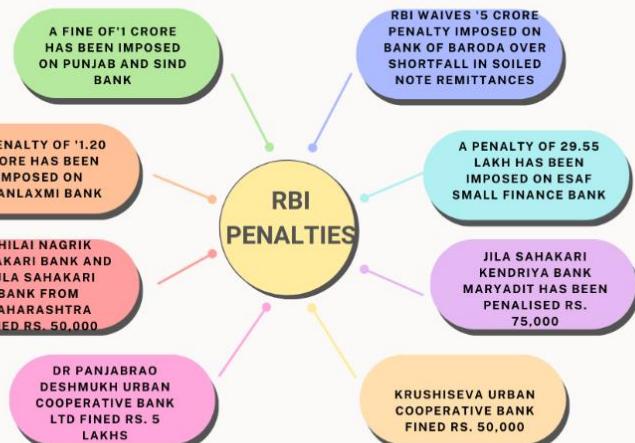
- This strategic partnership facilitates arranging credit for exporters and importers from both Indian and Global Institutions through Factoring, Forfaiting, and other trade financing services at competitive pricing with quick turnaround using a digital platform, the bank said in a press release.
- This is the first transaction on the ITFS platform in collaboration with any bank in India.

• RXIL, a joint venture between the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and the National Stock Exchange, is promoting the International Trade Finance Service (ITFS),

an initiative that aims to democratise the trade finance space by providing an electronic platform to connect exporters, importers and financiers across the world.

- RXIL Global aims to improve financing opportunities for Indian firms, particularly MSMEs that export.
- A subsidiary of Receivables Exchange of India (RXIL) — an RBI-regulated trade receivable discounting system (TReDS) platform that facilitates invoice discounting for MSMEs — RXIL Global says this facility will ease the cash crunch small businesses often face.





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Economy

1. Government of India constitutes Sixteenth Finance Commission with Dr. Arvind Panagariya as its Chairman

• The Government of India, with the approval of the President of India, has constituted the Sixteenth Finance Commission, in pursuance to Article 280(1) of the Constitution.

• Dr Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, and Professor, Columbia University will be the Chairman.

• Dr Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, and Professor, Columbia University will be the Chairman. Members of the Sixteenth Finance Commission would be notified separately. Shri Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey has been appointed as Secretary to the Commission.

The Sixteenth Finance Commission shall make recommendations as to the following matters, namely: —

(i) The distribution between the Union and the States of the net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them under Chapter I, Part XII of the Constitution and the allocation between the States of the respective shares of such proceeds;

(ii) The principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the States out of the Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to the States by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues under article 275 of the Constitution for the purposes other than those specified in the provisos to clause (1) of that article; and

(iii) The measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State.

The Sixteenth Finance Commission may review the present arrangements on financing Disaster Management initiatives, with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (53 of 2005), and make appropriate recommendations thereon.

The Sixteenth Finance Commission has been requested to make its report available by 31st day of October, 2025 covering a period of five years commencing on the 1st day of April, 2026.

Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to e-commerce exports.

• The RoDTEP scheme, which came into effect three years ago, refunds the embedded non-creditable central, state, and local levies paid on inputs to exporters.

3. GST collection in December rises 10% YoY to '1.65 lakh crore

• Central and state governments collected '1,64,882 crore ('1.65 trillion) in goods and services tax (GST) revenue in December, a notch below the average so far this year of '1.66 trillion per month, but still a 10.3% jump from a year ago.

• The Centre and states had collected around '1.5 trillion in December 2022.

4. Goldman Sachs cuts India's CAD forecast, sees improving external balances

• Goldman Sachs has lowered its projection for India's current account deficit in 2024 to **1.3% of GDP** from 1.9% earlier as the US bank expects services exports to continue surprising on the upside while crude oil prices are expected to decline, improving external balances.

5. PMI Manufacturing drops to 18-month low of 54.9 in December

• India's manufacturing activities continued to expand in December 2023.

• **As per data released by S&P Global, the HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) slipped to an 18-month low of 54.9 in December last year from 56.0 in the previous month.**

• A PMI print below 50 means contraction, while one above it indicates expansion.

• The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers by a panel of around 400 manufacturers. The panel is stratified by detailed sector and company workforce size based on contributions to GDP.

6. Ind-Ra raises India's FY24 growth forecast to 6.7 pc from 6.2 pc

• **India Ratings and Research upped GDP growth estimate for current fiscal to 6.7 per cent, from 6.2 per cent, citing resilient economy, sustained government capex and prospect of a new private corporate capex cycle.**

• It flagged weak global growth and trade as risks which weighed down the growth estimates, besides volatile geopolitical situation.

• **The RBI also expects a sequential slowdown in the GDP growth in the remaining two quarters and expects the overall FY24 GDP to come in at 7 per cent.**

2. Govt to extend RoDTEP benefits to e-commerce exports

• Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that the government has decided to extend the benefits of the export-boosting scheme Remission of Duties and

7. UN report revises India's GDP projection downward to 6.2% for 2024

- The United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects Report 2024 revised India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth estimate for the 2024 calendar year to **6.2 per cent**, compared to **6.7 per cent** earlier.
- Despite revising the growth estimates for 2024 downward by 0.5 percentage points, the report projects a rebound in 2025, with a GDP growth projection of 6.6 per cent.

8. World Bank keeps India's FY25 GDP growth estimate unchanged at 6.4%

- The World Bank kept its FY25 economic growth projection for India unchanged at **6.4 per cent**, mainly on account of strong domestic demand, rising public infrastructure spending and strong private-sector credit growth.

• However, it projected that the private consumption growth might taper off due to high food inflation and diminishing pent-up demand.

• In its biannual '**Global Economic Prospects**' report, the World Bank said **India was anticipated to maintain the fastest growth rate among the world's largest economies, but its post-pandemic recovery was expected to slow, with estimated growth of 6.3 per cent in FY24, before recovering gradually to 6.5 per cent in FY26.**

• The multilateral development bank's forecast did not take into account the National Statistical Office's (NSO's) the first advance estimates, released, which had projected 7.3 per cent growth for India in FY24 — higher than the Reserve Bank of India's estimate of 7 per cent — assuming an investment-led recovery.

9. India's outward FDI nosedives to \$2.25 billion in December: RBI data

- India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments fell sharply to **\$2.25 billion** in December 2023, compared to over **\$4.12 billion** in December 2022.

• Sequentially, they were also down from \$4.0 billion in November 2023, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

• **Outbound FDI, expressed as a financial commitment, comprises three components: equity, loans, and guarantees.**

• The equity commitments declined to \$646.7 million in December 2023 from \$1.38 billion in December 2022. It was also significantly lower than the \$1.09 billion recorded in November 2023.

• **Debt commitments decreased to \$625.91 million** in December 2023, down from **\$1.15 billion** a year ago.

• However, it was higher than \$190.05 million in November 2023. Guarantees for overseas units

declined to \$978.19 million in December 2023 from \$1.58 billion in December 2022. They were down substantially compared to \$2.72 billion in November, RBI data showed.

10. India's industrial production grew 2.4 % in Nov 2023 ; Retail inflation inches up marginally to 5.69 % in December 2023

- **India's industrial production grew 2.4 per cent** in November 2023.

• Factory output measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had grown by 7.6 per cent in November 2022.

• The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew by **1.2 per cent** in November 2023.

• The mining production rose 6.8 per cent during the month under review while the Power output rose 5.8 per cent.

• **Retail inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), inched up marginally to 5.69 percent in December 2023** mainly on account of higher food prices but stayed within the Reserve Bank of India's target range for a fourth consecutive month.

• Retail Inflation was at 5.55 percent in November 2023 and 5.72 percent in December 2022.

• As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), retail inflation in the food basket was at 9.53 percent in December 2023, up from 8.7 per cent in the preceding month and 4.9 percent in the same month preceding year.

• **The Reserve Bank of India has been tasked by the government to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 percent with a margin of 2 percent on either side.**

11. Trade deficit falls to three-month low of \$19.8 billion in December

- India's trade deficit in December narrowed to a three-month low of **\$19.8 billion** amid an import slowdown due to falling commodity prices.

• Merchandise exports during the month grew 0.97 per cent over a year earlier to \$38.45 billion, contrary to the trend of a slowdown so far this financial year showed data by Commerce Ministry.

• Merchandise imports, meanwhile, grew 8.45 per cent to \$58.25 billion, boosted by gold imports.

12. Mahindra Group, Ontario Teachers' co-sponsor InvIT in renewable energy space

- **Mahindra Group and global institutional investor Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board have co-sponsored an infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) holding assets of 1.54 GW in the renewable energy space in India.** The offer was subscribed by global and Indian investors, including Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

- The InvIT, Sustainable Energy Infra Trust (SEIT), is India's largest InvIT in the renewable energy space and has raised primary capital of Rs 1,365 crore as part of the initial offer of units (offer).

About Infrastructure Investment Trust

- An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs) is like a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of small amounts of money from possible individual/institutional investors in infrastructure to earn a small portion of the income as return.
- InvITs work like mutual funds or real estate investment trusts (REITs) in features.
- InvITs can be treated as the modified version of REITs designed to suit the specific circumstances of the infrastructure sector.
- Sebi notified the Sebi (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014** on September 26, 2014, providing for registration and regulation of InvITs in India.
- The objective of InvITs is to facilitate investment in the infrastructure sector.
- InvITs are like mutual funds in structure. InvITs can be established as a trust and registered with Sebi.**
- An InvIT consists of four elements: 1) Trustee, 2) Sponsor(s), 3) Investment Manager and 4) Project Manager.**
- The trustee, who inspects the performance of an InvIT is certified by Sebi and he cannot be an associate of the sponsor or manager.
- 'Sponsors' are people who promote and refer to any organisation or a corporate entity with a capital of Rs 100 crore, which establishes the InvIT and is designated as such at the time of the application made to Sebi, and in case of PPP projects, base developer.**
- Promoters/sponsor(s), jointly, have to hold a minimum of 25 per cent for three years (at least) in the InvIT, excluding the situations where an administrative requirement or concession agreement needs the sponsor to hold some minimum percent in the special purpose vehicle. In these cases, the total value of the sponsor holding in the primary special purpose vehicle and in the InvIT should not be less than 25 per cent of the value of units of InvIT on post-issue basis.
- Investment manager is an entity or limited liability partnership (LLP) or organisation that supervises assets and investments of the InvIT and guarantees activities of the InvIT.
- Project manager refers to the person who acts as the project manager and whose duty is to attain the execution of the project and in case of PPP projects. It indicates that the entity is responsible for such execution and accomplishment of project landmark with

respect to the agreement or other relevant project document.

13. Fitch says India poised to remain one of fastest-growing economies in world for next few years

- Fitch Ratings has said that India is poised to remain one of fastest-growing economies in the world in next few years. The rating agency has also affirmed India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB (minus)' with a stable outlook.**
- Fitch has made an upward revision to India's growth forecast for fiscal year ending March 2023, with the growth rate now seen at 6.9 percent**, as compared to a forecast of 6 percent issued in May last year. The GDP growth rate will, however, ease to 6.5 percent in fiscal year 2024-25, it said.
- Fitch stated that investment is likely to remain a key growth driver, as the government's capex drive is likely to continue and private investment should accelerate gradually.

14. Indian economy expected to grow at 7.3% in current fiscal, says RBI Governor at World Economic Forum in Davos

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das stressed that according to the first advance estimate, released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), India's economy is expected to grow at 7.3 percent in FY2024.**
- He said this at a chat as part of World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. Mr Das said that India's growth momentum will be maintained in the future years.
- He said that durable signs of India's growth momentum being maintained are visible. He said, it is not a one-off comment but is based on a lot of 'in-house' research and analysis. Mr Das informed that after a contraction of 5.8 percent in FY2021, the Indian economy grew by 9.1 percent in FY2022 and 7.2 percent in FY2023.
- Notably, global rating agency Fitch Ratings affirmed India's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook.**

15. Goods & services exports marginally up at \$765.6 bn in 2023: Govt

- The country's exports of goods and services rose marginally by 0.4 per cent to \$765.6 billion in 2023 despite global economic uncertainties, according to the commerce ministry data.**
- Goods exports in the last calendar year, however, contracted by 4.71 per cent to \$ 431.9 billion while services exports are estimated to have risen by 7.88 per cent to \$ 333.8 billion.

- Sectors which helped keep India's exports afloat include electronics, pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn, fabrics and made-ups; ceramic products, meat, dairy and poultry products, fruits and vegetables and information technology.

- The merchandise imports also dipped by 7 per cent to \$ 667.73 billion last year as against \$ 720.2 billion in 2022.

- The latest data for the services sector released by the RBI is for November 2023. The data for December 2023 is an estimation by the ministry.

The main export destinations for India are the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, the UK and Germany.

- Goods shipments are impacted due to the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict and the Red Sea trade route crisis due to attacks by Yemen-based Houthis on cargo ships.

- According to international trade experts, if these challenges are prolonged, it will have major implications on global trade.

- Economic think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India's exports and imports have dipped by 2.6 per cent to \$ 1609 billion in 2023 compared to \$ 1651.9 billion in 2022.

- The negative trade balance the difference between exports and imports decreased from \$ 141.3 billion in 2022 to \$ 75.2 billion in 2023.

The data for the current fiscal shows that the goods exports during April-December 2023 dipped by 5.7 per cent to \$ 317.12 billion.

- Imports contracted by 7.93 per cent to \$ 505.15 billion, leaving a trade deficit of \$ 188.02 billion in the first three quarters as against \$ 212.34 billion in April-December 2022.

16. Direct tax-to-GDP ratio at 23-year high in FY23: CBDT

The government's direct tax-to-GDP ratio stood at a 23-year high of 6.11% in FY23, data released by the Central Board of Direct Taxes.

- The Centre's direct tax collections rose 17.8% year-on-year at Rs 16.6 trillion in FY23.

- Corporate tax collections during the year stood at Rs 8.26 trillion, up 16% on year, and income tax collections stood at Rs 8.33 trillion, 19.6% higher on year.

- Direct tax buoyancy 'rate of growth of tax mop-up in comparison to nominal GDP growth', however, stood at 1.2 in FY23 as compared to 2.5 in FY22. Statistically, the buoyancy of a tax system gauges the overall responsiveness of tax revenue to variations in the GDP, and tax policies over time.

- In H1 of FY24, the direct tax buoyancy stood at 3.0, due to sharp growth in income tax collections. Income tax buoyancy came in at 3.6 and corporate tax at 2.3.

- Further, the government's direct tax collections contribution to total tax mop-up stood at a four-year high of 54.62% in FY23 from 52.27% in FY22, the CBDT data showed.

- Also, the cost of collection with respect to direct tax mop-up reduced to the lowest in 23 years at 0.51%. In FY23, total number of income tax returns filed stood at 77.82 million as compared to 73.05 million in FY22.

17. India business growth at four-month high in January: PMI

- India's business activity expanded at the fastest pace in four months in January on stronger demand, according to a private survey that also showed input costs rising at the quickest rate since August. The findings indicate Asia's third-largest economy would continue to hold onto its title as the fastest growing major economy in the near-term at least.

- India will grow 6.9% in the current fiscal year, as per Reuters poll.

- HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), compiled by S&P Global, rose to 61.0 this month, its highest since September, from December's final reading of 58.5.

18. Indian Railways cuts SUV mass transport rates by 33%

- According to officials aware of the matter, the new rates for transporting SUVs is 33% lower than the existing charges for moving large passenger vehicles.

- There was a demand from automobile transporters to rationalise rates since demand for large cars has risen in the Indian market.

- SUVs have become the rage with the share of such vehicles rising to 49% in the domestic passenger vehicle market in calendar year 2023. In comparison, the share of small cars, once the dominant category, fell to about 30% in the same period.

19. Gap between credit and deposit growth widens: RBI

- The gap between credit and deposit growth as of the first fortnight of January 2024 has widened vis-a-vis the last fortnight of September 2023 even as the former continues to outpace the latter on year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, going by RBI data.**

- As on January 12, 2024, credit and deposit growth stood at 19.93 per cent and 12.84 per cent y-o-y, respectively, resulting in a gap of 7.09 percentage points between the two, per RBI data on scheduled banks' statement of position in India.

- In the last fortnight of September (22nd), the gap between credit growth (19.42 per cent y-o-y) and deposit growth (12.94 per cent) was relatively lower at 6.48 percentage points.

20. Policy consistency needed to expand production choices for farmers: FinMin

- Indian farmers can be encouraged to adopt technologies and practices through policy consistency and continuity, a finance ministry review of the Indian economy said.
- That will expand their market and production choices, keeping in view ecological considerations, natural resource availability, and demand, according to the review.
- The review stressed the need for continuous innovation in crop varieties, technology adoption, and farming to meet the growing demand for a diversified and nutritious food basket.
- **Meanwhile, the review said the agricultural sector, which is estimated to constitute 18 per cent of India's gross value added (GVA) in FY24 and is the bedrock of the economy**, had demonstrated remarkable tenacity and resilience by contributing significantly to economic recovery and development despite the challenges posed by the global health crisis and variability in climate conditions.
- "Agriculture grew at a higher average annual rate of 3.7 per cent from FY15 to FY23 compared to 3.4 per cent from FY05 to FY14. For the year FY23, the sector grew at 4.0 per cent as compared to the previous year," the review said.
- **In FY24, the first advanced estimate estimated GVA for agriculture and allied sector at a seven-year low of 1.8 per cent due to weak kharif output and initial weakness in rabi sowing.**
- Planting has been affected due to the uneven monsoon in 2023.
- "India's global dominance extends across agricultural commodities, making it the largest producer of milk, pulses, and spices worldwide. Given opportunities and an appropriate policy setting, India's farmers have demonstrated their capability to meet food demand of the rest of the world. The potential is still huge," the review said.
- The review talked of the various policy initiatives that the Narendra Modi government had initiated for farmers since 2014 and how effective they had been.
- "The policy initiatives, such as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), have played a pivotal role in providing financial and income support to farmers," the review said.
- It added **PM-KISAN**, launched in 2019, supplemented the financial needs of landholding farmers by transferring Rs 6,000 per year in three equal four-monthly instalments.
- "As of December 12, 2023, over Rs 2.8 lakh crore (Rs 2.8 trillion) have been transferred to

more than 11 crore (1110 million) beneficiaries," the review said.

21. Household consumption to revive in FY25, growth at 6.3%: Standard Chartered

- **Standard Chartered revised its FY25 forecast to 6.3% from 6%, projecting muted inflation and higher food spending to drive growth.**

- The report expects a revival in consumption to offset the impact of lower commodity prices, slower global growth, and moderation in government capex.

22. India's employable youth up from 33.9% in 2014 to 51.3% in 2024: DEA

- The Department of Economic Affairs, in its January 2024 review of the economy, said there is ample scope to mainstream skilling into education curriculum and upskilling a large chunk of the existing workforce into future-relevant skills on the back of a transformative journey in skill development in India in the last decade.

- According to the report, the push to mass skilling since 2014 has begun to pay dividends. **"The employable percentage of final-year and pre-final-year students increased from 33.9% in 2014 to 51.3% in 2024,"** it said citing the findings of the online Wheebox National Employability Test.

- Further, the across-the-board progress in skilling has manifested in India's rising position in WorldSkills Competitions, from 39 in 2011 to 11 in 2022, it said.

- "Combined with the rising enrolment in higher education (from 3.2 crore in 2013-14 to 4.1 crore in 2020-21), rising employability implies that India's young workforce is both expanding and becoming increasingly employable," it said.

• According to the report, India has 50.2% of men and 41% of women with ten or more years of schooling in the 15-49 age group.

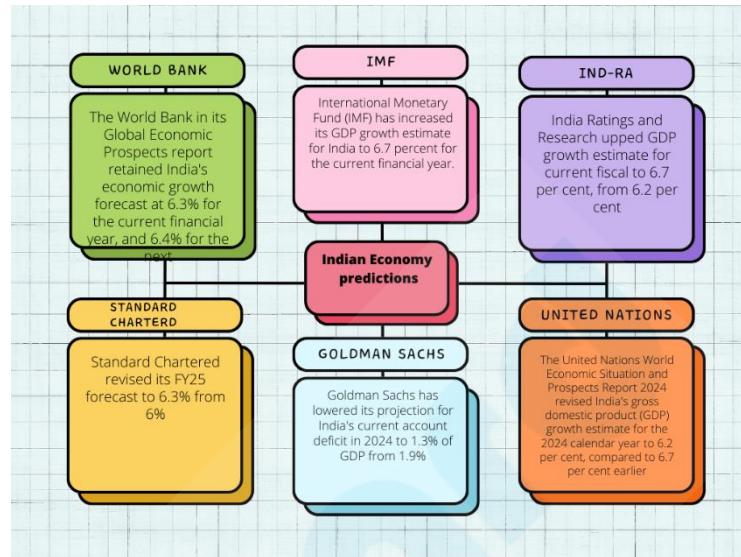
- "There is an opportunity to make the education-skill continuum the greatest weapon in the Indian Miracle by reaching out to each of these youth who only need to attend finishing schools for employability," it said.

- Under the National Education Policy, 2020, there is a special focus on vocational education and skill development. "Integration of vocational education with general education and mainstreaming of vocational education have been identified as key reforms in the country's education system," the report said.

• As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey 2022-23, 72.6% of workers aged 15-59 years did not receive any formal or informal vocational or technical training.

- The report further said that the recent launch of the Skill India Digital platform as the digital public infrastructure for the skilling, education, employment, and entrepreneurship ecosystem

marks another step towards the "ease of acquiring skill" in India.





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National

1. NIA registers conviction rate of 94.70 per cent and attached assets worth around 56 crore rupees during 2023

• In its fight against terrorism, **the National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered stupendous conviction rate of 94.70% and attached assets worth around 56 crore rupees during 2023.**

• As compared with 490 accused arrested in 2022, the total number of arrests made by the NIA this year stood at 625 - a nearly 28% increase over the previous year.

4. Indira IVF on global expansion spree, eyes overseas centre in Nepal first

• **Infertility treatment centre chain Indira IVF, is setting its sights on global expansion, starting with Nepal.**

• The company, which currently boasts of over 120 centres in India, plans to add 200-250 more in the next two years, both organically and through partnerships.

• The company has previously treated numerous couples from Nepal, who sought treatment in India.

5. Drinking water access have reached 72% households in India: Union minister

• **Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said drinking water facilities have reached 72 per cent households in the country and the remaining will be completed by December 2024.**

• When the **Jal Jeevan Mission started in 2019**, a little over 16 per cent of the households had access to drinking water facilities.

6. Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurates the country's 1st Healthy & Hygienic Food Street, 'P'

• **Country's 1st Healthy & Hygienic Food Street, 'PRASADAM,' inaugurated at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.**

• The Union Health Minister launched the official website for the Healthy & Hygienic Food Street initiative.

• The Union Health Minister commended the development of infrastructure and facility near food streets including training and capacity building of street food vendors on food safety and hygiene.

• Dr. Mandaviya explored the vibrant stalls at the Eat Right Millets Melas and interacted with trained food handlers as well.

7. Health Ministry notifies revised Pharma manufacturing rules under schedule M to ensure quality control

• **The Union Health Ministry notified revised rules under Schedule M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945.**

• Schedule M prescribes the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for pharmaceutical products and the revised Schedule M has been notified as rules to ensure GMP is adhered to, and requirements of premises, plant, and equipment for pharmaceutical products.

• **GMP is mandatory standards which builds and brings quality into a product by way of control on materials, methods, machines, processes, personnel, and facility/environment, etc.** GMP was first incorporated in Schedule M of the **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945** in the year 1988 and the last amendment was done in June, 2005.

• The revised rules is to be implemented on the basis of company turnovers where the medium and small manufacturers include those with an annual turnover of less than '250 crore who will have to implement the revised rules within 12 months from its date of publication, whereas large manufacturers with an annual turnover of over '250 crore will be given six months to do so.

• The revised Schedule M has 13 parts which provide GMP guidelines for the specific requirements for manufacturing pharmaceutical drugs. The revised rules has five new categories of drugs including pharmaceutical products containing hazardous substances such as sex hormones, steroids (anabolic and androgenic), cytotoxic substances, biological products and radiopharmaceuticals.

8. India's GDP likely to grow by 7.3% in FY24: NSO data

• **India's economy is projected to grow at 7.3% in the ongoing financial year, as per the initial advance estimate report released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).**

• At that pace, India will retain its crown as the fastest-growing major economy, following its 7.2% GDP growth in FY2022-23.

• In nominal terms, though, the projected growth for FY24 is 8.9%.

• The government anticipates a year-on-year Gross Value Added (GVA) growth of 6.9% for fiscal year 2024, slightly lower than the 7% recorded in fiscal year 2023.

9. DGCA Implements New Rules Flight Duty Time Rules for Flight Crew

• **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has increased weekly rest periods from 36 hours to 48 hours for flight crew.** As per the revised flight duty time rules issued by DGCA, night duty will now cover the period from midnight to 6 am in the morning as compared to five am earlier.

• **The maximum flight time and maximum flight duty period for flight operations encroaching night have been restricted to 8 hours flight time and 10 hours flight duty**

period respectively. DGCA said that the changes in the regulations have been done to address pilot fatigue, enhance overall flight safety and balance growth in aviation sector.

- According to the new rules, the number of landings has been limited to only two landings as compared to maximum permissible six landings under previous regulations during night operations. DGCA has mandated that all airline operators shall submit quarterly fatigue reports after analysis, including the Action Taken on such reports. **Airline operators are required to comply with revised regulations latest by 1st June, this year.**

- DGCA further said that it aims to transition towards a new regime of Fatigue Risk Management System (FRMS) that will be a data-driven approach to enhance monitoring of flight crew fatigue. Hailing the reforms, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya M. Scindia said that the introduction of the new regulations are in line with international best practices. He said that it will ensure that India has the necessary arsenal as it prepares to clinch the largest domestic aviation market title in the future.

• Directorate General of Civil Aviation is an attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation is the regulatory body in the field of Civil Aviation primarily dealing with safety issues. It is responsible for regulation of air transport services to/from/within India and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety and airworthiness standards.

10. ONGC starts oil production from its flagship deep-sea project in Krishna Godavari basin in Bay of Bengal

- State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has started oil production from its flagship deep-sea project in Krishna Godavari basin in Bay of Bengal.**
- ONGC has started producing from the Cluster-2 project in KG-DWN-98/2 block and will slowly ramp up output
- The project is expected to add 7 percent to current national oil production and 7 percent to national Natural Gas production. It is situated offshore the Godavari river delta in the Bay of Bengal. It is located 35 kilometres off the coast of Andhra Pradesh in water depths ranging from 300-3,200 metres.
- The discoveries in the block are divided into three clusters -- Cluster-1, 2 and 3. Cluster 2 is being put to production first.

11. GI tags for over 17 products from Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and J&K

- The traditional Lanjia Saura paintings, the exquisitely embroidered Dongaria Kondh**

shawl, the delicious Khajuri Guda from Odisha and the Handmade Carpets and Wancho Wooden Craft from Arunachal Pradesh

were among the 17 products that bagged the Geographical Indications (GI) tag.

- The Lanjia Saura paintings are a style of wall mural art. Those paintings also called *ekons* or the *idital*, and have a significant spiritual importance for the tribe. The Lanjia Sauras are an indigent society today, and labour in preserving their culture – the *iditals* being an important part of it.
- The traditional knitted shawls of the hill tribe Dongaria Kondh are both unique and ancient. Their culture, tradition, faith, and beliefs, as well as the biodiversity of their forests are reflected in the shawls. Dharanipenu, the much adored goddess of the Dongaria, has a home in every village. The art and drawings made in the Dharanipenu residence are reflected in their shawls. Although the modern world has had significant impact on their traditional apparel, the Dongaria shawl continues to be popular with the tribe.

• Odisha's Khajuri Guda (date palm jaggery) is a natural sweetener produced from the sweet juice of palm called neera. The jaggery is prepared by the tribal populations, including the Lanjia Saura, of Gajapati, Boudh, Angul, and Dhenkanal districts in Odisha.

- From Arunachal Pradesh, the **Wancho Wooden Craft** intimately weaves into the socio-cultural fabric of the skilful Wancho of Longding and Changlong districts. This rare ethnic art has been practiced by these Wancho tribes since many a generation. It is used both to decorate their own drawing rooms and also as a gift to beloved friends. In the past, the Wanchos would make wood carvings to decorate the posts and log drums in the *paa* or *paang* (boys' dormitory) or to decorate the village chief's house.

- Apart from that, GI tag has also given tags to three products from West Bengal – the **Tangail Saree of Bengal, Garad Saree and Korial saree. Odisha's Dhenkanal Magji, a milk product and Similipal Kai Chutney also got a GI tag.** The 'Kai' is indigenous to Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar which are found in abundance in the jungles of every block areas of the districts. The Kai Chutney prepared from these Kai is the main source of protection to the health and safety measures of the local tribes. The tribes in the Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar District commonly use the chutney as a delicious food and traditional medicine to treat different ailments in their daily life.

- The Nayagarh Kanteimundi Brinjal, a vegetable crop with lots of prickly thorns on the flesh as well as the whole plant grown**

in whole of Nayagarh district of Odisha also received a tag.

- The other products that were given a GI tag are West Bengal's Kalonunia Rice, West Bengal's Sundarban Honey, Gujarat's Kachchhi Kharek; Jammu Kashmir's Ramban Anardana; Koraput Kalajeera Rice and the Arunachal Pradesh Adi Kekir (Ginger).

12. Launch of the Traditional Medicine Morbidity codes of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani Chapter

- The data and terminology relating to diseases based on Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani systems will now be included in the WHO's ICD11 classification. ICD 11 TM Module 2, Morbidity Codes, World Health Organization launch event will be held in New Delhi on 10th January, 2024.
- The data and terminology relating to diseases based on Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani systems will now be included in the ICD11 classification of WHO.
- This effort will lead to global uniformity in **ASU (Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha) medicine** as a code of vocabulary defining diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a classification series called International Classification of Diseases (ICDs) to classify diseases internationally.

• The global data on diseases currently available is mainly based on healthcare practices to be diagnosed through modern biomedicine. The classification of data and terminology relating to diseases based on Ayush systems such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani etc. is not yet included in the WHO ICD series.

• Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) is an agency under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that serves as the WHO Collaboration Centre for ICD-related activities.

• It facilitates the collection and dissemination of data on various diseases and mortality. **The Ministry of Ayush has already developed the Code for Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani Medicine through the National Ayush Morbidity and Standardized Electronic Portal (NAMSTE).**

• The Ministry of Ayush in collaboration with WHO has prepared a categorization of data and terminology related to diseases based on Ayush - Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani systems under TM2 module of ICD11 series. The Ministry of AYUSH has also signed a Donor Agreement with the World Health Organization for the same.

• Infectious diseases like Malaria and lifestyle diseases like chronic insomnia are included in this classification.

• Ayurveda, Siddhas, and Unani, Vertigo Guidance Disorder (parent name), commonly recognized by the three traditional systems, as a

nervous system disorder known in Ayurveda as 'Bhramaha' siddha as 'Ajal Kirkippu' and in Unani as 'Sadra-o-Dwar'.

13. DoT makes mandatory M2M, WPAN/WLAN registration to all entities

- Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), has extended machine-to-machine (M2M) and Wireless Personal Area Network/Wireless Local Area Network (WPAN/WLAN) registration to all entities engaged in the businesses.

• All business entities including companies, government departments, organizations, partnership firms, LLPs, institutions, undertakings, proprietorship firms, societies and trusts engaged in M2M service provisioning and WPAN/WLAN connectivity provisioning are advised to register with DoT through a simple and transparent online process via SaralSanchar portal.

• **WPAN:** A small-scale wireless network that requires little or no infrastructure and operates within a short range. A WPAN is typically used by a few devices in a single room instead of connecting the devices with cables.

• **WLAN:** A wireless local-area network (WLAN) is a group of colocated computers or other devices that form a network based on radio transmissions rather than wired connections. A Wi-Fi network is a type of WLAN; anyone connected to Wi-Fi while reading this webpage is using a WLAN.

• **'SARALSANCHAR'(Simplified Application For Registration and Licenses)** a Web based Portal, for Issuing of various types of Licenses and Registration certificates is part of various Digital initiatives being taken by Department of Telecommunications. It is a unified portal to issue various types of Licenses and registrations in a digitized manner which will not only ensure transparency but also make the process more efficient. This will pave the way for a paperless, secure and hasslefree platform for various applicants.

• The Portal in its present form covers receipt of applications from applicants for issue of new **Unified Licenses and WPC Licenses .**

14. PFC gets Reserve Bank nod to set up finance company in GIFT City

- Power Finance Corporation (PFC) received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to set up a wholly-owned finance company in the GIFT City in Gujarat.

• The entity at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) will present new business opportunities for PFC and contribute to the growth of the country's power sector. PFC Chairman and Managing Director: Parminder Chopra.

15. Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, India's longest sea bridge, inaugurated

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's longest bridge over the sea, the 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, officially the Atal Setu Nava Sheva Sea Link.

- The bridge that was first conceptualised six decades ago will cut the travel time between Sewri and Chirle to under 20 minutes.

The Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) is a 22-km-long twin-carriageway six-lane bridge over the Thane Creek in the Arabian Sea, connecting Sewri in the island city of Mumbai to Chirle in Raigad district on the mainland.

- The MTHL includes a 16.5 km sea link and viaducts on land at either end with a cumulative length of 5.5 km.

- The idea of a bay crossing connecting Mumbai to the mainland was first floated in 1963 by the American construction consultancy firm Wilbur Smith Associates, but no follow-up action was initiated. The plan was revived in the late 90s, and the first tenders were floated in 2006.

16. L&T wins Rs 10,000 crore electrification order for high-speed rail project

- Larsen & Toubro (L&T) announced it has secured a mega contract from an authorised Japanese agency to construct an electrification system for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed rail project in India.

- Valued in the range of Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 15,000 crore, the project, according to company executives, is the largest single rail-electrification order in India.

- The company said this would be the first of its kind railway project in India involving the implementation of Japanese Shinkansen.

17. Haldia Petrochemicals becomes India's first BSI Certified ISO 27001:2022

Petrochemical firm

- Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd (HPL), a leading petrochemicals company in India, is proud to announce its achievement of becoming the first ISO 27001:2022 certified petrochemical organisation in the industry by BSI (British Standards Institution), a renowned certification body.

- **British Standards Institution (BSI) is the world's first Standards Body and founding member of ISO from the United Kingdom.**

- BSI produces technical standards on various products, services, and supplies certification and standards-related services to businesses.

- They are among the most respected and reputable management systems certification bodies globally and are accredited by around 20 local and international bodies.

18. MeitY Secretary launches India's First Graphene Centre, IoT CoE in Kerala

- MeitY Secretary S Krishnan launched a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Intelligent Internet of Things (IIoT) Sensors and India's first graphene centre - India Innovation Centre for Graphene (IICG) in Kerala.

- **The India Innovation Centre for Graphene (IICG) has also been established at Makers Village Kochi by MeitY and Government of Kerala along with Tata Steel Limited.**

- Digital University Kerala (DUK) (formerly IIITMK) and Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (CMET), Thrissur are the technical partners for setting up these centres.

19. Cabinet approves creation of posts for 16th Finance Commission

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the creation of three posts at the level of Joint Secretary i.e. two posts of Joint Secretary and one post of Economic Adviser for the 16th Finance Commission, which was constituted in pursuance of Article 280 of the Constitution.

- The newly created posts are required to assist the Commission in carrying out its functions. All other posts in the Commission have already been created as per the delegated powers.

- As per provisions given in Article 280 of the Constitution of India, the President of India can constitute the Finance Commission and give its recommendations on the distribution of tax between the State Governments and Union Government and also amongst the states themselves.

20. Scindia inaugurates Asia's largest Aviation Expo 'Wings India 2024'

- Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya M Scindia inaugurated Asia's largest Aviation Expo "Wings India 2024". at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad.

- Spanning across commercial, general, and business aviation, the theme for the show is 'Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for India Civil Aviation @2047."

Seven major announcements were made at Wings India 2024:

- Release of the joint knowledge paper on civil aviation by FICCI and KPMG
- Launch of UDAN 5.3
- Launch of the Airbus-Air India Training Centre, with the purchase of more airplanes and the setting of a flight training center in Gurugram with 10 flight simulators and 10,000 pilots being trained in the coming years
- Airbus manufacturing contracts with TATA ASL and Mahindra Aerospace Structures Pvt. Ltd. to foster more pilots.
- GMR and IndiGo also signed a consortium to collaborate with multiple partners in developing sustainable training in the aerospace industry

- Inauguration of the GMR School of Aviation
- Deal announcement of Akasa Air with a triple order of 200 aircrafts in a period of 17 months

21. Centre's new guidelines bar coaching centres from enrolling students below 16 years of age

- Ministry of Education has issued '**Regulation of Coaching Centers 2024**', saying that no coaching center shall enroll students below 16 years of age.
- The Guidelines stressed that student enrolment should be done only after secondary school examination. Coaching Centres have been directed not to make misleading promises or guarantee of rank or good marks to parents & students
- Education Ministry said, these guidelines prioritize mental well-being, fair practices, and inclusivity.
- The guidelines stress the need for State and UT governments to regulate these centers and refer to legal actions, such as the PIL in the Supreme Court and letters sent to states and UTs. Fair and reasonable fee, a proper grievance redressal system and infrastructure requirements are some of the rules coaching centres must follow. The Guidelines also proposes a model framework for coaching centers and outlines the procedures for registration, renewal, and cancellation of coaching center certificates, along with an appeal process.
- Coaching centres cannot engage tutors who do not have qualifications less than the graduation level.
- The Guidelines stated that the number of unregulated private coaching centers in the country continues to grow in the absence of any laid down policy or regulation.
- There are instances of such centers charging exorbitant fees from students, causing undue stress on students resulting in students committing suicides.

22. Ather Energy announces its new family-oriented electric scooter 'Rizta'

- Ather Energy, the Bangalore-based electric vehicle manufacturer announced the upcoming launch of its new family-oriented electric scooter, named "**Ather Rizta**".
- Rizta embodies a new direction for Ather, catering specifically to families' needs as opposed to the previous focus on sporty and youthful models like the 450 Series.

23. Luxury car major Rolls-Royce launches its first EV Spectre in India

- Rolls-Royce launched its first-ever electric car, the **Spectre**, in India.
- This two-door coupe, with a global debut in 2022, now holds the title of the most expensive

electric car available in the market at a starting price of Rs 7.5 crore.

- Powered by a 102 kWh battery pack, it offers a range of 530 km on a single charge.

24. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launches first pilot project to make jet fuel from alcohol in pune

- **The first pilot technology project to make jet fuel from alcohol was inaugurated by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Pune.**
- This project will produce sustainable biological aviation fuel or SAF.
- This pilot project has been set up in the research and development department of Praj Udyog Group in Pirangut Industrial Estate near Pune.

25. World's tallest Ambedkar statue unveiled in Andhra Pradesh

- **Chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy unveiled BR Ambedkar statue at Swaraj Maidan in Vijayawada.**
- The **125 ft statue** was installed on an 81 ft three-storey pedestal.
- The statue is made of 400 tonnes of stainless steel and 120 tonnes of bronze.
- It is the world's tallest statue of Ambedkar and it is made in India.

26. NHAI Takes 'One Vehicle One FASTag' Initiative to Enhance National Highway Experience

- **To enhance efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection system and provide seamless movement at the Toll Plazas, NHAI has taken 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative that aims to discourage user behavior of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.**
- NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines. FASTags with valid balance but with incomplete KYC will get deactivated/blacklisted by banks post 31st January 2024.
- **FASTag operated by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) is an electronic toll collection system.**
- Laced with **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology**, the tag is affixed on the windscreen of the vehicle and enables you to drive through toll plazas without stopping for transactions.
- NHAI launched two mobile Apps – **MyFASTag and FASTag Partner** to facilitate the availability of FASTags.
- The tag is valid for **5 years** from the date of issuance and comes in seven different colour codes
- **The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is a government agency established**

in 1988 under the National Highways

Authority of India Act, 1988.

- NHAI operates under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India.

27. Ram Mandir Inauguration: Pran Pratishttha done; PM Modi unveils Ram Lalla idol in Ayodhya

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached the Shri Ram Janmaboomi Temple in Ayodhya to participate in the Ram Temple Pran Pratishttha ceremony.

• The 3-storey Mandir is built in the traditional **Nagara style Pink sandstone** from Mirzapur and the hills of Bansi-Paharpur area in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan has been used in the construction of the temple.

• It has been built at an estimated cost of Rs 1,800 crore and has an overall area of 71 acres.

• **The total width is 250 feet and height is 161 feet.**

• The main temple area spans 2.67 acre. The temple has 390 pillars, 46 doorways and 5 mandaps.

• In the main Garbh Griha, there are idols of Ram Lalla. The temple also has multiple mandaps, including Rang Mandap & Nritya Mandap.

• Devotees will enter the temple after climbing 32 steps, scaling a height of 16.11 ft from the ground before entering through Singh Dwar.

• **Mysuru sculptor Arun Yogiraj crafted the idol of five-year-old Ram Lalla, now installed in the 'Garbh Griha'. The idol is 51 inches tall.**

• No iron has been used in the construction of the temple. The temple is built to last at least a 1,000 years.

• The temple is surrounded by a rectangular parikrama called Parkota.

• Four temples stand on the periphery of the Parkota, of Goddess Bhagwati, Lord Shiva, Lord Surya & Lord Ganesh. A temple to Lord Hanuman is on the southern arm and one to Maa Annapurna on the northern arm.

• Construction giant **Larsen and Toubro (L&T)**, which had also built the Sardar Patel statue in Gujarat, is behind the design and construction of the Ram Mandir.

28. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar to inaugurate 'Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman' campaign to commemorate 75th Republic Day

• Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar will inaugurate a year long pan India campaign **Hamara Samvidhan, Hamara Samman to commemorate the 75th Year of India as Republic, in New Delhi.**

• Ministry of Law and Justice said, the campaign aims to reaffirm the collective commitment to the principles enshrined in the Constitution of India and celebrate the shared values that bind the nation.

• This nationwide initiative envisage to instill a sense of pride and responsibility to uphold the ideals outlined in the constitutional framework. It will also give opportunity to every citizen to participate in various ways, empower them to contribute in meaningful way in the democratic journey.

• **The Ministry said, some of the themes to be covered during the Campaign include Sabko Nyay -Har Ghar Nyaya, Nav Bharat Nav Sankalp and Vidhi Jagriti Abhiyan.**

• **Sabko Nyay - Har Ghar Nyaya** aims to connect the villagers through the Village Level Entrepreneurs of the Common Service Centers and exalt them to read Sabko Nyay pledge.

• Nyaya Sahayaks will spearhead awareness about the various citizen- centric legal services to the masses, at their door steps across aspirational blocks and districts.

• At the State and UT level, Nyaya Seva Mela would be organized which would serve as platforms for individuals to seek guidance, information and support on various legal as well as other services and schemes of the government.

• **Nav Bharat Nav Sankalp** aims to encourage the masses to embrace the resolutions of Panch Pran by reading the Panch Pran Pledge.

• The citizens would get the opportunity to showcase their talent and creativity by participating in Panch Pran Rangotsav (Poster Making competition) and Panch Pran Anubhav (Reel/Video making competition).

• The citizens will also get the chance to test their knowledge on Constitution in engaging way. The activities would be hosted at the My Gov platform.

• **Vidhi Jagriti Abhiyan** aims to involve the students to carry the message Panch Pran in the villages adopted by the Law colleges, under the Pro Bono Club scheme.

• It aims to disseminate the legal information of the rights responsibilities and entitlements in very engaging, entertaining and memorable way. It also aims to touch the vulnerable sections of society through Gram Vidhi Chetna, Vanchit Varg Samman, and Nari Bhagidari initiatives.

29. 14th All India Police Commando Competition Begins in Visakhapatnam

• **The 14th All India Police Commando competition, organised at the A.P. Police Greyhounds training facility, Visakhapatnam began on 22 January 2024.**

• Commissioner of Police, Visakhapatnam, A. Ravi Shankar inaugurated the event in the presence of Additional Di- rector General of Grey- hounds, R.K. Meena.

• Around 16 states have sent their elite commando forces for the competition including forces such as the Special Operations Group (SOG) from Odisha and Chhattisgarh, C- 60 from

Maharashtra, the paramilitary forces such as BSF, CRPF, Assam Rifles, ITBP, RPF, SSB and CISF, among others.

- Each team will comprise 13-15 commandos and the competition will be held in five phases in a week, wherein the participants' skill, endurance and teamwork will be tested.
- The commandos will be judged by an expert team from the Intelligence Bureau (IB).

30. DGCA slaps Rs 1.10 crore penalty on Air India for safety violations

• Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 1.10 crore on Air India for safety violations amid a series of incidents of flight irregularities.

- The safety violations took place on certain long-range terrain critical routes, the DGCA said.
- More details of the penalty and the specific incident for which the penalty has been imposed are yet to be disclosed by the DGCA.
- Recently, **IndiGo was fined Rs 1.20 crore as the passengers of one of its flights came out on the tarmac and started eating food.** Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia strongly reacted to the incident and said it was unacceptable.

31. Cabinet approves setting-up of two coal gasification plants in West Bengal and Odisha with a target of 100 metric ton coal

• The Government has approved that Coal India Limited (CIL) will set up two Coal Gasification Plants with a view to achieve the target of 100 MT coal gasification by the year 2030 and to fulfil India's dual objectives of self-reliance and energy independence.

- Briefing media after the Union Cabinet meeting, Union Minister for Coal Pralhad Joshi said that total investment in the **joint venture of CIL and GAIL for the proposed Coal-to-Synthetic Natural Gas at Sonepur Bazari Area of Eastern Coalfields Limited in West Bengal will be of 13 thousand 52 crore rupees.**
- Mr Joshi informed that for **CIL and BHEL Joint Venture for the proposed Coal-to-Ammonium Nitrate at Mahanadi Coalfields Limited in Jharsuguda district of Odisha will be 11 thousand 782 crore rupees.** He informed that by 2028 - 29 these projects will be operationalised.

- The Centre has also approved a proposal for equity investment for setting up of Coal-to-Synthetic Natural Gas Project through a Joint venture of Coal India Limited - CIL and Gas Authority of India Limited- GAIL. It has also approved for setting up of the Coal-to-Ammonium Nitrate Project through a Joint venture of CIL and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited- BHEL.

32. Investment Forum for Advancing Climate Resilient Agrifood Systems in India Launched

• NITI Aayog, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), Government of India, and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations jointly launched the 'Investment Forum for Advancing Climate Resilient Agrifood Systems in India' in New Delhi.

- This initiative aims to develop an investment and partnership strategy to advance climate resilient agrifood systems among the government, private sectors, and farmers' organizations and financial institutions in India.

33. India's first indigenously designed and manufactured aircraft seat launched at Wings India 2024

• In a groundbreaking event for the Indian aviation industry, Bengaluru based Engineering Company Timetooth has launched India's first-ever aircraft passenger seat at Wings India 2024.

- Amitav Chaudhuri, Co-Founder and Director of Timetooth said the company has launched this seat in collaboration with DGCA after identifying a gap in the Indian aviation industry.

34. ONGC receives petroleum ministry nod to form green energy subsidiary

• Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) said it has received approval from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry for the formation of a subsidiary company for green energy and gas business.

- The subsidiary will engage in businesses related to green hydrogen, hydrogen blending, renewable energy including solar, wind and hybrid, bio-fuels and bio-gas business and LNG.

• The proposed name of the company is 'ONGC Green Limited' subject to the approval of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India.

- ONGC board also gave its in-principle nod for the formation of a joint venture with NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL).

• The Board has accorded its in-principle approval for the formation of a Joint Venture Company (JVC) either directly by ONGC or through its Affiliate/Subsidiary, with NGEL – a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited, subject to necessary Government/ regulatory approval(s) including from NITI Aayog, DIPAM and Administrative Ministry

• On January 18, ONGC said its overseas investment unit ONGC Videsh received a five-year \$420 million loan from DBS Bank and Bank of Baroda.

- The new loan is the refinancing of a \$500 million loan ONGC Videsh had received in 2019 for a project in Mozambique.

35. Oil regulator PNGRB launches drive to increase piped gas adoption

- Oil regulator PNGRB has launched a two-month long nationwide drive to increase adoption of piped natural gas as a cooking fuel in household kitchens in an attempt to cut dependence on imported fossil-fuels.
- "The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) along with city gas distribution entities will run a campaign from January 26 to March 31.
- **This aims to promote the adoption of piped natural gas (PNG) among households and to expand PNG consumer base across a broader segment of the population,".**
- While PNG has gained currency in the last few years after PNGRB expanded city gas networks to most parts of the country, sizable households continue to use either LPG or conventional fuels like firewood and cow dung for cooking.
- While India is about 50 per cent dependent on imports to meet cooking gas LPG needs, use of conventional fuels is considered a health hazard.
- Promotion of natural gas is part of the Prime Minister's vision to increase its share in India's energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030, from the current 6.2 per cent to transform the country into a gas-based economy.
- Indraprastha Gas Ltd is partnering with PNGRB for the drive in the national capital. Other CGD entities are doing the same in other cities.

36. THDC dedicates India's largest Green Hydrogen pilot project

- THDC India Limited, a leading Power Sector PSU, has also established a benchmark in Green Hydrogen production, by successfully implementing India's one of the first pilot project aligned with the "National Green Hydrogen Mission" on the auspicious occasion of 75th Republic Day.
- The Project will be India's largest electrolyser and fuel cell based pilot project.
- **THDC India Limited is under the ownership of National Thermal Power Corporation Limited, Ministry of Power, Government of India.**

• It was incorporated in **July 1988** to develop, operate and maintain the Tehri Hydro Power Complex and other Hydro Projects. THDC India Limited is a **Mini Ratna Category-I Enterprise.**

37. Tableau of Ministry of Culture secures first prize at Republic Day Parade 2024

- **The tableau of the Ministry of Culture has secured the first prize at the Republic Day Parade 2024.**

• The tableau, a stunning blend of tradition and innovation, captivated audiences with its

masterful use of the anamorphic technique alongside a rich display of Bharat's cultural heritage - often hailed as the mother of democracy.

38. Centre allows woman employees to nominate son, daughter for family pension

- In a path-breaking decision with far-reaching socio-economic impact, the Centre has allowed woman employees to nominate her son or daughter for family pension, instead of her husband, according to an official statement issued.
- Previously, family pension was granted to the spouse of a deceased government servant or pensioner, while other family members became eligible only after the spouse's ineligibility or demise.
- Union Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said that the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) has introduced an amendment to the **Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 2021**, allowing female government employees or pensioners to grant family pension to their eligible child/children after their own demise, in place of of their spouse.
- If the female government servant or pensioner passes away during the proceedings, the family pension will be disbursed accordingly, the statement said.
- If a woman employee is survived by a widower with no eligible child, the family pension will be payable to the widower, it said.

39. Union Home Minister launches computerization scheme for offices of ARDBs, RCSs of states

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah launched the computerization scheme for the offices of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCSs) and Agriculture and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) of the states in New Delhi.
- It also aims to reduce transaction costs, facilitate loan distribution to farmers, and enable real-time data access for better monitoring
- The Computerization Project of Agricultural and Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) aims to computerize 1851 units of ARDBs located in 13 States and UTs and link them with NABARD through Common National Software.
- This initiative of the Ministry of Cooperation will work to enhance the operations, efficiency, accountability, and transparency of ARDB by standardising business processes through the Common Accounting System and Management Information System.

International

1. France becomes first European country to issue digital Schengen visas

• France will become the first European country to issue digital Schengen visas to visitors for the upcoming Paris Olympics.

- France has announced plans to shift entirely to online procedures for 70,000 French Schengen Visas, in a move that aligns with the EU's digitalization plans.
- France began operations of the "Olympic Consulate" system from January 1, 2024.
- Last year, the European Union announced plans to turn the Schengen visa digital. In November, European Union foreign ministers adopted a change to shift the process of applying for visas to visit the Schengen area to an online platform.
- Once enforced, this will eliminate the need for visa applicants to obtain a sticker in their passport, streamlining the application process and doing away with consulate or service provider appointments.

• The Schengen area includes 23 of the 27 EU member countries, along with associated neighbours Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and Liechtenstein.

- Upon approval following cross-verification with databases, applicants will be provided with a cryptographically signed barcode for either printing or storing on a device. However, individuals applying for the first time or those with new passports or modified biometric data may still necessitate an in-person appointment.
- Every individual entering the European Union, regardless of possessing visas or visa waivers, will go through processing via the automated EU Entry/Exit System (EES), expected to be in operation by the conclusion of 2024. The EES will record individuals' particulars, biometric data, entry and exit dates, facilitating the monitoring of overstays and instances of refused entries.

2. Kyrgyzstan declares snow leopard national symbol

• Kyrgyzstan has officially declared the snow leopard as its national symbol, underscoring its commitment to conservation and ecological balance.

• A decree signed by President Sadyr Zhaparov of the Kyrgyz Republic, states: The snow leopard is not only a symbol of natural wealth and cultural prosperity, but also an indicator of the stability and health of the mountain ecosystem.

• In ancient Kyrgyz culture, *Panthera uncia*, or the snow leopard, held significance as a totem animal linked to the legendary hero of the Kyrgyz people, Manas.

• Within Kyrgyz culture, the snow leopard symbolizes greatness, nobility, courage, bravery, and resilience.

• Kyrgyzstan has taken a leading role in snow leopard conservation at the international level, hosting the inaugural Global Snow Leopard Forum in 2013 in the capital, Bishkek.

• During this event, the Bishkek Declaration on Snow Leopard Protection was unanimously adopted. Additionally, the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP) was initiated with the collaboration of representatives from 12 snow leopard range countries and the global environmental community to safeguard these majestic mountain cats.

• **Snow Leopard:** Cloaked in a dense white-gray fur spotted with prominent black rosettes, snow leopards are inhabitants of high mountainous terrain. Often referred to as the 'ghosts of the mountains,' these elusive creatures effortlessly blend into their surroundings, becoming nearly indistinguishable in their natural habitat.

• Known for their climbing prowess, snow leopards navigate steep slopes with ease due to their powerful build. Their hind legs grant them the ability to leap six times the length of their bodies, while a long tail provides agility, balance, and acts as protection against the cold, wrapping around the resting snow leopard.

• The habitat of snow leopards spans the mountainous regions of 12 countries in Asia, including Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

• According to the World Wildlife Organization, this extensive range covers approximately 772,204 square miles, with China hosting 60% of the habitat. Notably, over 70% of the snow leopard's habitat remains unexplored.

3. World Bank raises GBP 1.5 billion in 5-year sustainable development bond

• The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), representing the World Bank, has successfully priced a 5-year bond in Great British Pound sterling (GBP) set to mature in October 2028.

• The Sustainable Development Bond aims to raise GBP 1.5 billion from investors, contributing to financing sustainable development initiatives in World Bank member countries.

4. IIT Madras to open new campus at Kandy in Sri Lanka

• Sri Lanka's Education minister Dr. Susil Premajayanththa has said that a new campus of IIT Madras would be started in Kandy in Sri Lanka.

• The minister said that the proposal was part of the Budget 2024 presented by Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremasinghe in his capacity as Finance Minister.

- IIT Madras has previously established a presence in Zanzibar.
- Earlier in December it was announced that IIT Delhi is scheduled to inaugurate a campus in Abu Dhabi, while IIT Madras has established a presence in Zanzibar**, focusing on addressing the educational needs of African countries. This initiative underscores the internationalization efforts within the Indian education sector.

5. Bhutan's Tshering Tobgay to become PM for second time

- Bhutanese voters have elected Tshering Tobgay to become Prime Minister for a second time after his party won nearly two-thirds of seats, the election commission said in results released on January 10.**

Mr. Tobgay, head of the liberal People's Democratic Party (PDP), who served as prime minister of the Himalayan kingdom from 2013 to 2018, won 30 of 47 seats.

6. US and UK carry out strikes against Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen

The US and UK militaries launched strikes against Houthi targets in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, marking a significant response after the Biden administration and its allies warned that the Iran-backed militant group would bear the consequences of its attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

7. Sweden set to become NATO member as Turkey approves its membership bid

- Turkey's parliament ratifies Sweden's NATO membership bid, clearing the biggest remaining hurdle to expanding the Western military alliance after 20 months of delay.**
- Turkey's general assembly, where President Tayyip Erdogan's ruling alliance holds a majority, voted 287-55 to approve the application that Sweden first made in 2022. All NATO members need to approve applications from countries seeking to join the alliance.

Member countries of NATO: -

- Belgium (1949)
- Canada (1949)
- Denmark (1949)
- France (1949)
- Iceland (1949)
- Italy (1949)

- Luxembourg (1949)
- Netherlands (1949)
- Norway (1949)
- Portugal (1949)
- United Kingdom (1949)
- United States (1949)
- Greece (1952)
- Trkiye (1952)
- Germany (1955)
- Spain (1982)
- Czechia (1999)
- Hungary (1999)
- Poland (1999)
- Bulgaria (2004)
- Estonia (2004)
- Latvia (2004)
- Lithuania (2004)
- Romania (2004)
- Slovakia (2004)
- Slovenia (2004)
- Albania (2009)
- Croatia (2009)
- Montenegro (2017)
- North Macedonia (2020)
- Finland (2023).

8. Burkina, Mali, Niger quit West African bloc ECOWAS

- The military regimes in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their immediate withdrawal from the West African bloc ECOWAS, saying it has is a threat to member states.**

All three -- founding members of the bloc in 1975 -- were suspended from ECOWAS with Niger and Mali facing heavy sanctions as the bloc tried to push for the early return of civilian governments with election

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

- Established on May 28 1975 via the treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries.
- Member countries making up ECOWAS are **Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo**

Sports

1. In Squash, Indian teenager Anahat Singh bags girls' under-19 2023 Scottish Junior Open title at Edinburgh

• Talented Indian teenager Anahat Singh produced a dominant performance, bagging the girls' under-19 title at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh.

• Anahat claimed a 11-6, 11-1, 11-5 victory over home favourite Robyn McAlpine in the final.
• It capped off a spectacular year for Delhi's Anahat, who recorded the under-19 and senior National championship double and won the mixed doubles bronze along with Abhay Singh both at the Asian Games and in the inaugural Asian Mixed Doubles Championships.

2. Australian batter David Warner announces retirement from One Day International cricket

• Australian batter David Warner has announced his retirement from One Day Internationals (ODIs).

• The 2 time ODI World Cup Winner had previously announced that he would be ending his Test career after Australia's upcoming Test against Pakistan in Sydney.
• However, the opener has said that he will keep himself available for selection in the Champions Trophy in 2025.
• Warner is Australia's sixth-highest run scorer in the ODI format and is only second to former captain Ricky Ponting's tally for most Centuries for Australia in ODIs.

3. BCCI announces Campa and Atomberg Technologies as official partners for India Home Cricket Season 2024-26

• The Indian home appliances entity, Atomberg, and the soft drink brand, Campa Cola, have teamed up with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as central sponsors in a long-term deal for the home series.

• The multi-year lucrative agreement will cover a total of 48 fixtures and the combined investment by both Indian brands per match will be between INR 75-85 lakh. Mr Roger Binny, President, BCCI.

4. Madhya Pradesh emerges overall champion of first ever Beach Games held in Diu

• The first multi-sports beach games in India were organized at the pristine blue flag-certified Ghoghla Beach in Diu from the 4th to the 11th of this month.

• Madhya Pradesh emerged as the overall champion by winning 18 medals including 7 gold. Maharashtra won 14 medals, while Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and hosts Dadra, Nagar Haveli, Diu & Daman secured 12 medals each.

5. Rohit Sharma becomes first player to feature in 150 T20Is

• India skipper Rohit Sharma on January 14 became the first player in the history of cricket to play 150 T20 internationals when he featured in the second T20 match against Afghanistan at the Holkar Stadium in Indore.

• Among the Indians, Virat Kohli is in the second position with 116 T20Is to his name.
• He is followed by MS Dhoni, who played 98 matches for the Indian team.
• Rohit has so far played the most number of T20Is among all players and Paul Stirling of Ireland is at the second position in the list of most matches played in T20Is by all players.
• The Irish skipper has played 134 matches. Following him is yet another Irish George Dockrell, who has featured in 128 matches.

• [The first players to play 150 matches in each format](#)
150 Tests: Allan Border (Dec 1993)
150 ODIs: Allan Border (Feb 1987)
150 T20Is: Rohit Sharma (Jan 2024)

6. Pat Cummins, Deepti Sharma Win ICC Player Of The Month Awards For December

• Australia skipper Pat Cummins wins ICC Men's Player of the Month award for bowling heroics in the Test triumph against Pakistan.

• Meanwhile, Deepti Sharma of India won the maiden ICC Women's Player of the Month award thanks to her multi-format brilliance against England and Australia, according to a release from the International Cricket Council (ICC).

7. Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa surpasses Viswanathan Anand to become India's number one Chess player

• India Chess Wizard Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa defeated World Chess Champion Ding Liren in the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee, in the Netherlands.

• As a result of this victory, Praggnanandhaa became only the second Indian after **Vishwanathan Anand** to defeat a reigning champion. He also overtook Anand to become India's new number one Chess player in terms of live ratings.

8. Khelo India Youth Games declared open at Chennai in Tamil Nadu

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 6th edition of Khelo India games at Chennai.

• The opening ceremony of the national sports event took place in a grand fashion with several cultural programmes exhibiting the traditional and cultural practices of Tamil Nadu.

• The Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) is the flagship event under the government of India's **Khelo India** initiative, which promotes sports at the grassroots levels in the country.

• Squash is all set to make its KIYG debut in this edition while Silambam - a form of indigenous martial arts - will make an appearance as a demonstration sport.

• Maharashtra are the defending KIYG champions while Haryana are the only other team to have won the title.

9. Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy end up as men's doubles Runners-up of India Open tournament losing to Korean pair

• In the India Open Badminton, the Indian duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty lost in the finals of the men's doubles this evening. South Korea's Seo Seung-jae and Kang Min-hyuk won the title 21-15; 11-21, 18-21.

• Earlier in the day, China's Shi Yu Qi defeated Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu to clinch the men's singles title.

• On the other hand, Chinese Taipei's Tai Tzu Ying won the women's singles title after defeating China's Chen Yu Fei.

10. India's Man Singh bags Gold medal at Asian Marathon Championships 2024 in Hong Kong

• **India's Man Singh claimed the gold medal at the Asian Marathon Championships 2024 with a personal best timing of two hours 14 minutes and 19 seconds in Hong Kong.**

• The 34-year-old Indian marathon runner comfortably beat runner-up Huang Yongzheng of China with a time difference of 65 seconds in the men's event. Kyrgyzstan's Tiapkin Ilya came third in 2:18:18.

11. TATA Group secures IPL title sponsorship rights for five years

• **Indian conglomerate Tata Group has bagged the title sponsorship of the Indian Premier League (IPL) for 2024-28 for a "record-breaking" \$300 million.**

• Backed by celebrity franchise owners and featuring the best players in international cricket, IPL has become the world's richest T20 tournament with an estimated brand value of \$8.4 billion.

• It has been a cash cow for the Indian cricket board (BCCI) with the 10-team league's 2023-27 media rights fetching \$6.2 billion.

• Tata Group has been the title sponsor of both the men's IPL and the Women's Premier League, which took off last year.

• According to recent report, The total brand value of the Indian Premier League (IPL) grew a whopping 28% after the 2023 season, reaching \$10.7 billion (roughly '89,232 crore), brand valuation consultancy Brand Finance has said in a report. The brand value of India's flagship sports event has grown 433% since its launch in 2008.

• **The consultancy judged Mumbai Indians to be the most valuable franchise brand in**

the Indian Premier League, valued at \$87 million.

• **Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led Chennai Super Kings is second on the list with a brand value of \$81 million.**

• **Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) and RCB follow CSK at \$78.6 million and \$69.8 million respectively.**

• Gujarat Titans is the biggest gainer as far as the brand value is concerned -- it jumped from 8th position last year to 5th this time. Its brand value increased 38% this year.

12. Ravi Kumar Dahiya wins bronze medal at Grand Prix De France 2024

• **Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Ravi Kumar Dahiya, who missed the entire 2023 international season due to injuries, marked his return with a bronze medal at the Grand Prix De France Henri Deglane 2024 wrestling tournament in Nice, France.**

• The star Indian wrestler won his men's 61kg freestyle bronze medal bout 10-4 against Kairat Amirtayev of Kazakhstan.

13. Haryana Tops in 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team, Maharashtra Shines in Rhythmic Gymnastics at Khelo India Games

• In Khelo India games today, Haryana won the gold medal and Rajasthan silver in the 10m air pistol mixed team event. Tamil Nadu clinched bronze.

• In the rhythmic gymnastics Hoop event, Maharashtra's Kimaya Karle and Sanyukta Kale took first and second places, while Muskan Rana from J&K took the third place.

• In the rhythmic gymnastics Ball event, Sanyukta Kale took the first place, Muskan Rana took the second place and Life Adlakha from Haryana took third place.

• In the Club event of the same sport, Muskan Rana ended up at the top of the podium. Parina Madanpotra from Maharashtra stood second and Life Adlakha from Haryana came third.

14. Rohan Bopanna makes tennis history, becomes oldest player to claim No. 1 spot

• **Indian tennis veteran Rohan Bopanna, 43, has made history as the oldest player to reach the men's doubles tennis World No. 1 spot. Partnering with Australian Mathew Ebden, they secured a semi-final spot at the Australian Open.**

• Starting with a career-high No. 3 ranking, their recent win against 6th-seeded Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni highlighted their teamwork.

• Bopanna's consistent success, including winning the 2023 Indian Wells tournament, sets a new record, making him the oldest first-time World No. 1.

15. Australian Open: India's Rohan Bopanna and his Australian partner Matthew Ebden win Men's Doubles title

- In the men's doubles final of the Australian Open, India's Rohan Bopanna won his first Grand Slam title in men's doubles as he, along with Matthew Ebden, beat the all-Italian duo of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 7-6, 7-5 in the Australian Open final.**

- Rohan Bopanna, who made his Grand Slam debut in 2006, finally won his maiden tennis major at the 2017 French Open after clinching the mixed doubles crown with Canadian partner Gabriela Dabrowski. The win puts Rohan Bopanna in an elite list of four Indians, besides Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi and Sania Mirza, to have won a Grand Slam.

- The Indian tennis star also made the mixed doubles finals of the 2018 and 2023 Australian Opens with Timea Babos and Sania Mirza, respectively, and played in the US Open 2023 men's doubles decider with Matthew Ebden. Unfortunately, he lost all three.

Rohan Bopanna represented India at the London 2012 and Rio 2016 Olympics.

- Matthew Ebden is an Australian professional tennis player.

16. Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra wins intercontinental title in U.S.

- Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra won the U.S.-based National Boxing Association's intercontinental super featherweight title after defeating American Gerardo Esquivel at Toppenish City, Washington.**

- Jangra had a decent run in the amateur circuit as well and won a Commonwealth Games silver medal in the 2014 Glasgow edition.

17. Sanjana rewrites her record; Tamil Nadu second in medals table

- Weightlifter A. Sanjana of Haryana was the toast of the sixth Khelo India Youth Games as she broke her own National record in snatch, clean and jerk and total in the girls' 76Kg category.**

- She had created the record at the Asian Youth and junior championships in Greater Noida in August last year.

- Maharashtra continues to lead the medals tally with 37 gold, 32 silver, 40 bronze medals while

Tamil Nadu is in second position with 29 gold, 18 silver and 30 bronze medals.

18. Khelo India Winter Games 2024 mascot, snow leopard 'Sheen-e She' (Shan) reveals

- The first part of the Winter Games, a mouth-watering event for winter sports athletes, will be held in Union Territory of Ladakh for the first time from February 2-6.**

- In keeping with the tradition and bio-diversity of the region, the mascot of the Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is a snow leopard. It has been named '**Sheen-e She' or Shan**' in Ladakh region. The second portion is scheduled in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir from February 21-25

ABOUT KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES

2024:

- The Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is the fourth edition of the annual event in the Khelo India calendar.
- The Union Territory of Ladakh is making its debut as hosts this year alongside the UT of Jammu & Kashmir, which has organised the Games from 2020. Leh will be the venue for the first part of the Games from February 2-6.
- The Games are scheduled to move to Gulmarg between February 21-25.
- While Ladakh will be conducting games -- ice Hockey and speed skating -- Jammu and Kashmir will conduct ski mountaineering, Alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic ski and gondola.
- The Khelo India Winter Games are part of the Khelo India Mission, a brainchild of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- It is the PM's endeavor to give importance to all types of Olympic sports and produce a feeder channel of talented sportspersons who can shine for India at the highest levels of sporting excellence

19. Sonam Maskar wins air rifle silver in Cairo World Cup

- Sonam Maskar won the women's air rifle silver as she was beaten by 0.9 point by Anna Janssen of Germany in the shooting World Cup in Cairo, Egypt.**

- Nancy Mandhotra also made the final with an impressive qualification score of 633.1 but missed the chance to win a medal by 0.2 point.

Agreements & MoUs

1. REC Limited and Bank of Baroda join hands to finance Power, Infrastructure and Logistics Projects

• **REC Limited has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bank of Baroda in order to facilitate joint sanctions of loans to fund power, infrastructure and logistics projects in the country over the next three years.**

• REC Limited and Bank of Baroda unite with a shared vision of advancing sustainable growth and bolstering the nation's infrastructural backbone.

• **REC Limited**, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise established in 1969, under Ministry of Power, provides long-term loans and other finance products for Power-Infrastructure sector comprising Generation, Transmission, Distribution, Renewable Energy and new technologies like Electric Vehicles, Battery Storage and Green Hydrogen. More recently, REC has also diversified into the Non-Power Infrastructure sector comprising Roads & Expressways, Metro Rail, Airports, IT Communication, Social & Commercial Infrastructure (Educational Institution, Hospitals), Ports and Electro-Mechanical (E&M) works in respect of various other sectors like Steel, Refinery, etc. The loan book of REC exceeds Rs 4.74 Lakh Crore.

• Founded on 20th July, 1908 by Sir Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, **Bank of Baroda** is one of the leading commercial banks in India. At 63.97% stake, it is majorly owned by the Government of India.

2. GAIL inks 10-year LNG deal with trading company Vitol

• **GAIL (India) Limited and Vitol Asia Pte Ltd announced the signing of a Long Term liquefied natural gas (LNG) deal into India for a supply of approximately one million metric tonnes of LNG per annum for a period of about 10 years, commencing 2026.**

• Under this deal, Vitol will deliver LNG from its global LNG portfolio to GAIL in India on a pan-India basis.

3. India, Saudi Arabia sign Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024

• **India and Saudi Arabia have signed the Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024, further solidifying their ties and prioritizing the well-being of pilgrims.**

• Union Minister Smriti Zubin Irani presided over the signing alongside Saudi Minister of Haj and Umrah Affairs Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah in Jeddah.

• The agreement highlights India's commitment to inclusivity, with discussions exploring ways to

encourage women's participation in Haj without a male guardian (Mehram).

• It also marks a significant step towards smoother pilgrimage experiences for Indian Muslim pilgrims, while also promoting inclusivity and mutual respect between the two nations.

4. MoU between India, USAID/India to help Railways achieve net-zero carbon emission gets Cabinet nod

• **The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, was apprised of signing of Memorandum of Understanding between India and United States for International Development/India (USAID/India) on June 14, 2023 for supporting Indian Railways to achieve Mission Net Zero Carbon Emission by 2030.**

• The MoU provides a platform for Indian Railways to interact and share the latest developments and knowledge in the railway sector. The MoU facilitates utility modernization, advanced energy solutions and systems, regional energy and market integration and private sector participation and engagement, training and seminars/workshops focusing on specific technology areas like Renewable Energy, energy efficiency and other interactions for knowledge sharing.

• **Earlier, USAID/India had also worked with IR focused on deployment of rooftop solar across railway platforms.**

• The MoU signed by Indian Railways with United States Agency for International Development/India is for enabling energy self-sufficiency with the following understanding:

- Both the Participants intend to jointly work broadly on the following key activity areas with details to be agreed separately:
 - Long-term energy planning including clean energy for Indian Railways.
 - Develop an Energy Efficiency Policy and Action Plan for Indian Railway Buildings.
 - Planning for clean energy procurement to achieve Indian Railway's net-zero vision.
 - Technical support for addressing regulatory and implementation barriers.
 - Bid design and bid management support for system-friendly, large-scale renewable procurement.

- Supporting Indian Railways in the promotion of e-mobility.
- Collaboratively host event, conferences, and capacity-building programs in the mentioned identified areas.
- Either participant may request in writing a revision, modification or amendment to all or any part of this MoU. Any revision, modification or amendment approved by the Participants will form part of the revised MoU. Such revision,

modification or amendment will come into effect on such date as may be determined by the Participants.

- This Memorandum of Understanding is effective as of the date of signing and is expected to continue for a period of five year or until the effective end of South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) whichever period is shorter.

5. Infibeam Avenues inks MoU with Gujarat govt to invest Rs 2,000 cr by FY30

- **Infibeam Avenues inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Gujarat Government, with a proposed investment of Rs 2,000 crore by the financial year 2030 (FY30).**

• The company said it aims to develop its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Hub for developing AI technology for payments and platforms aimed at servicing retailers.

- **The company has officially named its AI-Hub located at GIFT city as 'Phronetic.ai'.**

6. Rural development ministry signs pact with SBI to facilitate loans for SHGs

- **The Rural Development Ministry and State Bank of India signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to facilitate enterprise financing for rural self-help groups (SHG).**

• State Bank of India introduced a specialised financial product Svyam Siddha, exclusively tailored for SHG women entrepreneurs seeking loans up to Rs 5 lakhs.

• State Bank of India introduced a specialised financial product Svyam Siddha, exclusively tailored for SHG women entrepreneurs seeking loans up to Rs 5 lakhs. This initiative is designed to alleviate the challenges associated with extensive documentation requirements for bank loan applications and reduce the turnaround time (TAT).

- It does away with the requirement of burdensome documents like quotations and detailed project reports (DPRs), allowing an easy application process where a simple loan application with KYC details can be submitted at local SBI bank branches. DAY-NRLM will facilitate the loan application process and oversee loan repayment through its dedicated field cadre.
- A training toolkit package was also launched at the event to promote access to formal finance by SHG women entrepreneurs.

• Developed in collaboration with the **International Finance Corporation (IFC) under the World Bank-funded National Rural Economic Transformation Project (NRETP)**, this toolkit aims to enhance the capacities of State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) to facilitate increased access to formal finance by SHG members for their economic enterprises.

7. India, U.K. ink 2 deals

- **India and U.K. on January 9 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for bilateral international cadet exchange programme and also a Letter of Arrangement (LoA) on defence collaboration in Research and Development.**

• These were signed after the bilateral talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his British counterpart Grant Shapps in London.

• This is the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to U.K. since 2002.

8. FIH inks four-year media rights deal with Viacom18

- **The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has signed a major media rights agreement with Viacom18.** This agreement runs for a four-year cycle (2023-2027) and includes all FIH events, except the FIH Nations Cup.

• As part of the partnership, Viacom18 will broadcast and stream the upcoming FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cup, the FIH Hockey Pro League, and the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup on Sports18 and JioCinema, respectively.

9. DLabs at ISB launches 'Build for Billions' jointly with RBI Innovation Hub, Union Bank of India

- **HyderabadDLabs at the Indian School of Business (ISB) launched 'Build for Billions', a startup accelerator programme, themed around financial inclusion for the informal economy, in partnership with Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) and Union Bank of India.**

• Gig workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, street vendors, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and construction labourers — representing the informal economy -- face multifaceted challenges.

• These include low and volatile income; irregular income streams; limited access to credit and savings; and a lack of social security nets. Recognising these hurdles, Build for Billions is poised to support visionary fintech startups dedicated to addressing these issues.

• The 50-day equity-free accelerator by the business incubator DLabs, offers comprehensive support, including mentorship, capacity building, resources, networking opportunities, the chance to pitch to banks and investors, and a unique piloting opportunity with Union Bank.

• Startups building towards enhancing access, usage and quality of financial services, including payments, credit and savings, for the informal economy are encouraged to apply for this programme by January 21, 2024. After the submission period, applications will be evaluated; and tailored goals will be set for each selected startup.

- **The Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve**

Bank of India, focuses on promoting and facilitating an environment that accelerates innovation across the financial sector, while **DLabs, a business incubator at the Indian School of Business (ISB)**, specialises in incubation, acceleration, and funding for startups.

10. Adani Group to invest Rs 50,000 cr to set up data centre in Maharashtra

- Adani Group will invest Rs 50,000 crore over the next 10 years in setting up a 1 GW data centre in Maharashtra, the apples-to-airport conglomerate.
- **Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship company of the group, and the Maharashtra government**, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for setting up the 1 GW (gigawatt) hyperscale data infrastructure.
- The MoU was signed in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani at the World Economic Forum 2024 in Davos.

11. Google Pay signs agreement to expand UPI for international payments

- **Google Pay and NPCI International Payments** signed an agreement to expand the scope of Unified Payments Interface payments outside India.
- It will enable Indian travellers to transact digitally abroad while establishing systems similar to UPI in other countries.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed at a time when India is simplifying cross-border payments. So far France, Bhutan, Nepal, UAE & Canada have accepted UPI.

- In July 2023, **NPCI signed an MoU with France's Lyra for UPI and Rupay cards being accepted in the European country.**
- Bhutan, Nepal, United Arab Emirates and Canada have also accepted UPI as a payment mechanism.
- Axis Bank, DBS Bank India, ICICI Bank, Indian Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, and State Bank of India provide international functionality for UPI through their apps.

12. IIT Madras partners with technology firm Altair for e-mobility lab

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has partnered with Altair, a company providing solutions in simulation and high-performance computing and artificial intelligence, to start a laboratory for e-mobility.

- The eMobility Simulation Lab at the department of engineering design, IIT Madras, will have the latest tools along with financial support from Altair.

13. IREDA and Indian Overseas Bank join hands in co-lending for Renewable Energy Projects

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Overseas Bank (IOB), setting the stage for collaborative efforts in co-lending and loan syndication for a diverse spectrum of Renewable Energy projects across the nation.

- Encompassing a range of services, the MoU includes provisions for co-lending and co-origination support for all Renewable Energy projects.
- The partnership aims to streamline loan syndication and underwriting processes, management of Trust and Retention Account (TRA) for IREDA borrowers, and work towards fixed interest rates over a 3–4-year period for IREDA borrowings.
- This collaboration builds upon IREDA's successful partnerships with other prominent financial institutions, including Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Union Bank of India, India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited and Bank of Maharashtra. T

14. Cabinet Approval for MoU's between India and other Countries

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Central Drugs standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Social Assistant of Dominican Republic on cooperation in the field of Medical Products Regulation.

- The MoU will promote exchange of information and cooperation in areas pertinent to medical products and relevant administrative and regulatory matters within the jurisdiction of the parties.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Intent (MoI) signed between the Central Drugs standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of Medicines Evaluation Board, Health and Youth Care Inspectorate, Central Committee on research Involving Human Subjects "on cooperation in the field of Medical products Regulation"

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 5th December, 2023 between the Government of the Republic of India through the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Government of the Republic of Kenya through the Ministry of Information,

Communications and digital Economy on cooperation in the field of sharing successful Digital Solutions implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation.

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 07th November 2023 between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSO), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of the Republic of India and Agencia Nacional de Regulacion, Control Y Vigilancia Sanitaria – ARCSA, Doctor Leopoldo Izquieta Perez, The Republic of Ecuador on cooperation in the field of Medical Products Regulation.

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on 21st November, 2023 between the Government of Republic of India and the European Commission on Working Arrangements on Semiconductors Ecosystems, its supply chain and innovation under the framework of EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC).
- The MoU intends to strengthen cooperation between India and EU towards enhancement of semiconductor for the advancement of Industries and digital technologies.

15. India, Cuba sign MoU on digital public infrastructure

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology signed an MoU with the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of Cuba on Cooperation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions Implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation in New Delhi.

- The MoU intends to promote digital transformation through capacity-building programs, exchange of best practices, and other collaborative activities to mutually benefit the digital ecosystems of both countries.
- The Ministry of Electronics and IT said that India will collaborate with Cuba by building upon development partnership on digital transformation leading to a smooth adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure in Cuba.

16. Tripartite MoU signed between the National Farmers' Welfare Programme Implementation Society, IndiaAI and Wadhwan Foundation

- The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, is leveraging cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence technologies for the benefit of farmers and to increase overall productivity. As a pioneering force in the integration of AI, the Ministry is setting a precedent for leveraging advanced technologies to address the challenges faced by the farmers in India.

- It is championing the India Digital Ecosystem Architecture (InDEA) 2.0's network approach, designed by the Ministry of Electronics & IT, Government of India.

- A significant milestone in this journey is the development of 'Kisan e-Mitra,' an AI-powered chatbot addressing farmers' queries about the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

- This comprehensive solution, available in Hindi, Tamil, Odia, Bangla, and English, is evolving to support other government programs and has been accessed by more than 21 lakh farmers within 2 months.

- Additionally, the Ministry is developing a National Pest Surveillance System in collaboration with the private sector. AI and Machine Learning (ML) models detect crop issues, offering timely information to farmers for swift action. This initiative is expected to result in healthier crops, potentially boosting yields and improving farmers' livelihoods.

On 17th January 2024, a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Farmers' Welfare Programme Implementation Society, IndiaAI under Digital India Corporation, and Wadhwan Foundation.

- Per the MoU, Wadhwan Foundation will provide critical support in formulating and executing an AI strategy. The Foundation commits to assisting the Ministry in establishing India as a global leader in AI-driven digital agriculture transformation, aligning with the MeitY's National Plan for AI. This collaboration marks a pivotal moment in India's agricultural landscape, where Ministry has institutionalized the use of AI in transforming digital agriculture through the creation of an AI cell within the Ministry.

17. Cabinet approves signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Oman on cooperation in the field of IT

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding, signed on 15th December, between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of the Sultanate of Oman on cooperation in the field of Information Technology.

- The MoU intends to promote comprehensive cooperation between the Parties through mutual support, sharing of technologies, information and investments in the field of Information Technology.

- The MoU shall come into effect from the date of signature of the Parties and shall be remain in force for a period of 3 years.

- Both G2G and B2B bilateral Cooperation in the field of Information Technology will be enhanced.
- MoU envisages improved collaboration leading to employment opportunities in the field of IT.

18. UNICEF join hands with NIUA to empower young people for urban governance through civic participation

- **The Urban Youth Unit at NIUA and YuWaah - UNICEF have come into a partnership to solidify their commitment to empowering young people for urban governance.** Over the next three years, the organizations will co-create and implement scalable youth-driven solutions to address the challenges faced by cities.
- **The primary focus of this partnership is enhancing youth leadership, participation and action research towards strengthening civic behaviours and urban governance.**
- The collaboration aims to ensure youth-centric development by utilizing interactive and gamified civic leadership modules.
- The goal is to enhance civic awareness and social responsibility of the youth and equipping them with 21st-century skills and progressive ideas. This will enable them to actively participate in co-creating innovative solutions for urban governance through engagement in innovation challenges.
- Additionally, UNICEF's U-Report chatbot will be used to capture real time data and insights from young people on 'cities for youth' to support NIUA's action research outcomes on youth participation and to further co-create innovative solutions that address the unique needs of young people in India.

• **About NIUA:** The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) is India's leading national think tank on urban planning and development. NIUA was established as an autonomous body in 1976 under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA). Then the institute was registered as a society under the **Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860**.

19. Tata group, Airbus team up to make helicopters; Thales' MRO on cards

- **The Tata group and European aerospace company Airbus have signed an agreement to manufacture H125 civilian helicopters together in India.** This announcement came as India and France adopted a joint defence production road map and an agreement on defence space partnership, following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.
- The partnership would include air and space tech, maritime tech, including underwater domain awareness, and equipment and systems related to land warfare. It also heavily focuses on

cutting-edge technology, including robotics, artificial intelligence, cyber-defence, and autonomous vehicles and platforms.

- Also, in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL), Airbus Helicopters will set up a final assembly line (FAL) for H125 civilian helicopters.
- This will be India's first private helicopter manufacturing facility.
- **"The FAL will take 24 months to set up and deliveries of the first 'made-in-India' H125s are expected to commence in 2026.**

• The location of the FAL will be jointly decided by Airbus and the Tata group," Airbus said in a statement.

20. ADNOC Gas Inks 10-Year Deal to Supply 0.5 MMTPA LNG to GAIL India, Enhancing Asian Market Presence

- **ADNOC Gas announced a 10-year agreement to supply 0.5 million metric tons per annum (mmtpa) of Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) to GAIL India Limited, reinforcing its position in the Asian LNG market and enhancing UAE-India relations.**

• This agreement adds to ADNOC Gas' portfolio of international LNG sales agreements with partners such as JAPEX, Total Energies Gas and Power, IOC.

• Natural gas, recognized as a transitional fuel with lower carbon emissions, plays a crucial role in ADNOC Gas' contributions to the UAE's integrated gas masterplan

21. NGEL signs MoU with Government of Maharashtra for development of Green Hydrogen Projects; ~ ' 80, 000 crores investment expected

- **NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government of Maharashtra for development of Green Hydrogen and derivatives (Green Ammonia, Green Methanol) of up to 1 million Ton capacity per annum, including Pumped Storage Projects of 2 GW and development of renewable energy projects with or without storage up to 5 GW in the state.**

• The MoU has been signed as a part of Government of Maharashtra's Green Investment Plan for the next five years. The agreement envisages a potential investment of approximately ' 80, 000 crores

- NTPC is in the path of building renewable energy capacity of 60 GW by 2032.
- NGEL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC and aims to be the flag bearer of NTPC's Renewable Energy journey with an operational capacity of over 3.4 GW and 26 GW in pipeline including 7 GW under implementation.

Schemes

1. Sagar Parikrama (Phase X) event being organized from 1st January 2024 to 6th January 2024

• Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Shri Parshottam Rupala along with Minister of State Dr. L Murugan will participate in the **Sagar Parikrama (Phase X) event being organized from 1st January 2024 to 6th January 2024 at various locations of Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry.**

• Journey of 1st phase of 'Sagar Parikrama' started from Mandvi, Gujarat on 5th March 2022. • The journey of first phase of "Sagar Parikrama" started from Mandvi, Gujarat on 5th March 2022 and so far, the total nine phases of Sagar Parikrama have been covered in the coastal States/UTs of Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Andaman & Nicobar, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and part of Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh during initiation of its tenth phase. Sagar Parikrama Phase-X will continue and cover the remaining coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh namely Nellore, Prakasam, Bapatla, Krishna, West Godavari, Konaseema, Kakinada, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, SriKakulam and Yanam (Union Territory of Puducherry).

• In Andhra Pradesh, under Govt of India Flagship Scheme **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**, total investment envisaged in the fisheries sector for 5 years is Rs. 2300 Crore.

2. Ola Electric Becomes First Indian EV Company To Get PLI Nod

• **The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) has certified that Ola Electric is eligible to receive subsidies under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.**

• With this, Ola Electric has become the first e2W (electric two-wheeler) company to be certified under the scheme, which includes several other applicants such as Hero MotoCorp, TVS Motor Company, and Bajaj Auto, etc.

3. 37 more products brought under Simplified Certification Scheme

• **The Telecommunication Engineering Centre TEC of Department of Telecommunications DoT has brought 37 more products under Simplified Certification scheme SCS.**

• These products include media gateway, IP security equipment, IP terminals, optical fibre or cable, transmission terminal equipment, etc. With this, the total products under SCS have now gone up to 49 from 12.

• **Presently, there are 60 telecom and networking products** that have been notified under the Mandatory Testing and Certification of Telecommunication Equipment (MTCTE) regime.

4. J&K becomes first UT to implement PM Vishwakarma Yojana

• **Jammu and Kashmir has become the first Union Territory (UT) to implement the PM Vishwakarma Yojana (PMVY)**, an initiative that aims to empower and enhance the skills of the craftsman community, officials said. The inauguration of the training programme for the first batch of 30 trainees (Viswakarmas) in 'darzi craft' was virtually conducted.

About PM Vishwakarma :

• PM Vishwakarma, a Central Sector Scheme, was launched on **17th September, 2023** by the Prime Minister to provide end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople who work with their hands and tools.

• The Scheme covers artisans and craftspeople engaged in 18 trades, viz. Carpenter (Suthar/Badhai), Boat Maker, Armourer, Blacksmith (Lohar), Hammer and Tool Kit Maker, Locksmith, Goldsmith (Sonar), Potter (Kumhaar), Sculptor (Moortikar, stone carver), Stone breaker, Cobbler (Charmkar)/ Shoesmith/Footwear artisan, Mason (Rajmistri), Basket/Mat/Broom Maker/Coir Weaver, Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional), Barber (Naai), Garland maker (Malakaar), Washerman (Dhobi), Tailor (Darzi) and Fishing Net Maker. BENEFITS TO THE ARTISANS AND CRAFTS PERSONS The Scheme envisages provisioning of the following benefits to the artisans and crafts persons:

• **Recognition**: Recognition of artisans and craftspeople through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card.

• **Skill Upgradation**: Basic Training of 5-7 days and Advanced Training of 15 days or more, with a stipend of Rs. 500 per day.

• **Toolkit Incentive**: A toolkit incentive of upto Rs. 15,000 in the form of e-vouchers at the beginning of Basic Skill Training.

• **Credit Support**: Collateral free 'Enterprise Development Loans' of upto Rs. 3 lakh in two tranches of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 2 lakh with tenures of 18 months and 30 months, respectively, at a concessional rate of interest fixed at 5%, with Government of India subvention to the extent of 8%. Beneficiaries who have completed Basic Training will be eligible to avail the first tranche of credit support of upto Rs. 1 lakh. The second loan tranche will be available to beneficiaries who have availed the 1st tranche and maintained a standard loan account and have adopted digital transactions in their business or have undergone Advanced Training.

• **Incentive for Digital Transaction**: An amount of Re. 1 per digital transaction, upto maximum 100 transactions monthly will be

credited to the beneficiary's account for each digital pay-out or receipt.

- Marketing Support:** Marketing support will be provided to the artisans and craftspeople in the form of quality certification, branding, onboarding on e-commerce platforms such as GeM, advertising, publicity and other marketing activities to improve linkage to value chain.

The Ministry said a batch of 20 selected students (10 boys and 10 girls) will attend the programme, every week from various parts of the country. The programme will run from a Vernacular School, established in 1888, in Vadnagar, Gujarat.

7. Govt amends PM-eBus Sewa tender, adds 100 low-floor buses

- The Union government has recently amended a tender for the procurement of 3,600 electric buses, first batch under the PM-eBus Sewa scheme launched in 2023, to include 100 low-floor buses that are more accessible to persons with disabilities compared to the ones with standard floor.**
- Under this scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), 10,000 e-buses are likely to be procured for cities that lack adequate public transportation.

8. Raksha Mantri approves proposal to launch Group Insurance Scheme for Casual Labourers engaged by Border Roads Organisation

- Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal to launch a Group (Term) Insurance Scheme for Casual Paid Labourers (CPLs) engaged by Border Roads Organisation or General Reserve Engineer Force for the ongoing project works.**

- This scheme will provide the insured value of 10 lakh rupees as insurance in any kind of death to CPLs family or Next of Kin.**

9. PM Modi releases first instalment of benefits to one lakh people under tribal welfare scheme

- PM Narendra Modi has released the 1st instalment of Rs 540 crore to one lakh beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) rural housing scheme.**

About PM-JANMAN:

- PM-JANMAN, launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), aims to improve their conditions by providing basic facilities like safe housing among others.
- The budget of many welfare schemes for the Scheduled Tribes has risen by five times and the scholarship for tribal students has grown by two-and-a-half times in the last 10 years, he said, adding that the work is on to construct more than 500 Eklavya model school for them while only 90 existed earlier.
- PM-JANMAN was launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) on November 15 on the occasion of Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.
- PM-JANMAN, with a budget of approximately Rs 24,000 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine ministries and is

5. Government approves PRITHVI VIGYAN scheme worth nearly 4,800 crore rupees

- The government has decided to implement the overarching scheme PRITHVI VIGYAN (PRITHVI) for 4,797 crore rupees.**
- The Prithvi Scheme is aimed at the augmentation and sustenance of long-term observations of the atmosphere, ocean, geosphere, cryosphere, and solid earth to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change.
- The scheme encompasses five ongoing sub-schemes namely Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems and Services (ACROSS), Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART), Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER), Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE) and Research, Education, Training and Outreach (REACHOUT).

6. Ministry of Education launches PRERANA program

- Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India has launched '**Prerana: An Experiential Learning program**', aiming to offer a meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to all participants, thereby empowering them with leadership qualities.
- Prerana is driven by a strong commitment to integrate principles of Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education which is a corner stone of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

- Prerana is a week-long residential program for selected students of class IX to XII. It is an experiential and inspirational learning program for students with the best-in-class technology where heritage meets innovation.

- A batch of 20 selected students (10 boys and 10 girls) will attend the program, every week from various parts of the country.

• The curriculum of Prerana School was prepared by IIT Gandhi Nagar.

- It is rooted in nine value-based themes - **Swabhiman and Vinay, Shaurya and Sahas, Parishram and Samarpan, Karuna and Sewa, Vividhta and Ekta, Satyanishtha and Shuchita, Navachar and Jigyasa, Shraddha aur Vishwas, and Swatantrata and Kartavya.**

aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of PVTGs by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

10. Government Extends Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Automobile Industry

- Ministry of Heavy Industries is organising an Auto PLI Conclave on 16th January, 2024 at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, to discuss and highlight the salient features of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Component Industry.
- PLI is providing financial incentives to boost domestic manufacturing of Advanced Automotive Technology products and attracting investments in the automotive manufacturing value chain.
- Ministry of Heavy Industries has also extended the scheme till the Financial Year 2027-28 and the disbursement of the incentives for the year 2023-24 will commence from April 2024 onwards.**
- This extension would also benefit companies to apply for new models of EVs or new technologies that are planned for introducing in the Indian market.

11. Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launches first batch of VAIBHAV fellowship

- Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launched first batch of VAIBHAV fellowship bestowed upon 22 Indian origin scientists from across the globe.**
- Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh said that the scientific capabilities of the Indian diaspora has a pivotal role in making India developed by 2047.
- The Government has launched a new fellowship programme to connect the Indian STEMM diaspora with Indian academic and R&D institutions for collaborative research work leading to sharing of knowledge, wisdom, and best practices in the frontier areas of science & technology.

The Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik(VAIBHAV) fellowships programme to be implemented by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology, would be awarded to outstanding scientist/technologists of Indian origin (NRI/OCI/PIO) who are engaged in research activities in their respective countries. The 75 selected fellows would be invited to work in 18 identified knowledge verticals including quantum technology, health, pharma, electronics,

agriculture, energy, computer sciences, and material sciences amongst others.

- The VAIBHAV Fellow would identify an Indian Institution for collaboration and may spend up to two months in a year for a maximum of 3 years.
- Fellowship would include fellowship grant (INR 4,00,000 per month), international and domestic travel, accommodation and contingencies.** The VAIBHAV fellows are expected to collaborate with their Indian counterparts and help initiate research activities in the host institution in the cutting-edge areas of Science and Technology.

12. 1 crore households to get rooftop solar system under 'PM Suryodaya Yojana' announces Prime Minister

In a significant move towards enhancing renewable energy usage, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the launch of the 'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana'. This ambitious initiative aims to install rooftop solar systems in 1 crore households across the nation.

- Solar energy plays a crucial role in India's aspirations to generate 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030.
- It is a vital component in the country's efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and combat climate change. Rooftop solar energy holds great promise for consumers, as it has the potential to contribute significantly to overall power cost reduction and enhance energy security.

13. Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana: REC Ltd made nodal agency; to lend Rs 1.2 lakh cr

REC Ltd, a Maharatna power finance company, on January 23 said it will lend up to Rs 1,20,000 crore for the installation of rooftop solar panels under the Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana.

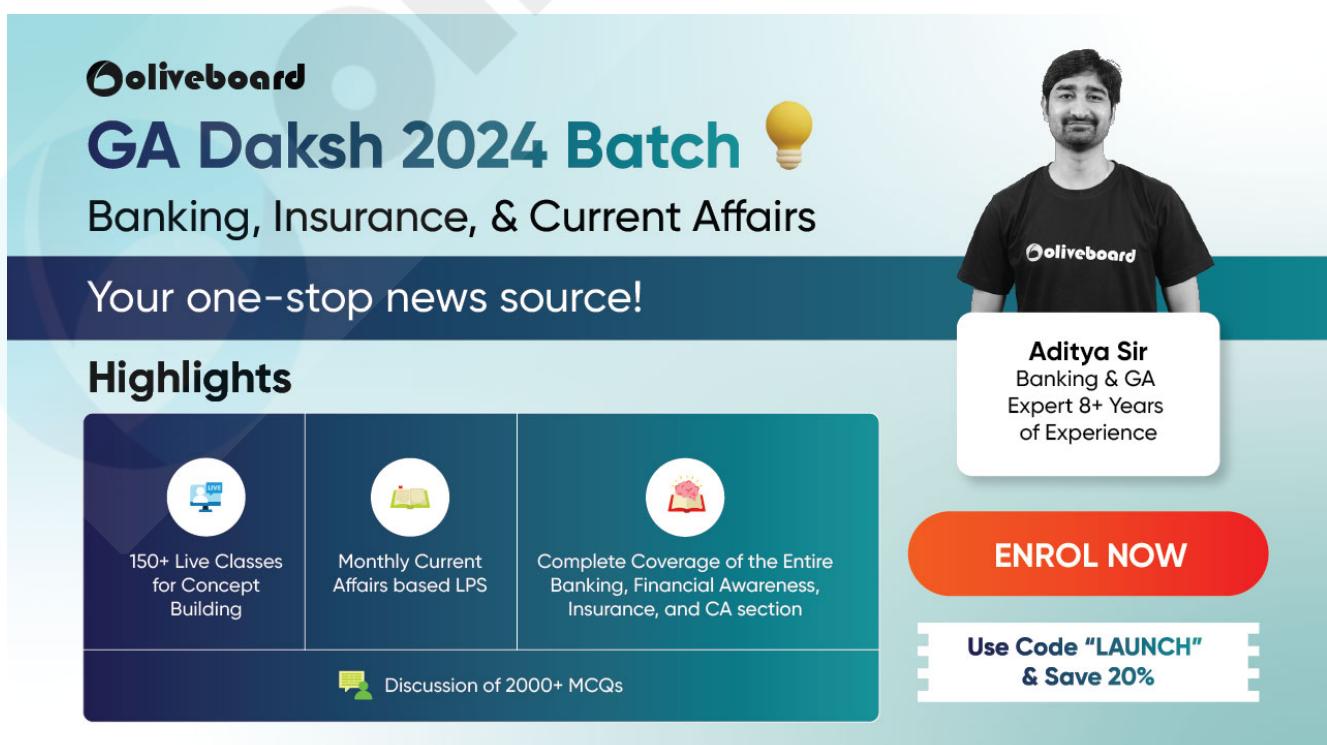
- The MNRE has designated REC as the overall programme implementation agency for the rooftop solar scheme.
- REC's Board has authorised the management to issue a Line of Credit to eight central public sector undertakings which are going to act as renewable energy services companies to the tune of about Rs 15,000 crore each.

REC will be able to give line of credit up to Rs 1.20 lakh crore for the rooftop solar mission

- For implementation of the scheme, states and union territories have been divided between eight central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) under the Ministry of Power.
- These include NTPC, NHPC, EESL, PowerGrid, SECI, THDC, SJVN and NEEPCO. These CPSEs will also be proactively doing rooftop solar installation under the RESCO model (renewable energy service company).

• Until 2026, REC has been given a target of getting 40 GW of rooftop solar installations sanctioned. With this latest rooftop solar scheme

for households announced by PM Modi on January 22, the company expects upwards of 10 GW of this 40 GW target to be achieved within a year.



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Appointments & Resignations

1. Kia India names Gwanggu Lee as new MD, CEO

• **Kia India has appointed Gwanggu Lee as the new Managing Director and CEO** with immediate effect. Lee succeeds Tae Jin Park, who retires after a 36-year journey with Kia Corporation including a four year stint with Kia India.

- Kia currently sells five models, including Seltos, Sonet and Carens, in the Indian market.

- Ho-Sung Song, CEO at Kia Global.

- Kia and Kia Motors Corporation, is a South Korean multinational automobile manufacturer.

2. Chadian opposition leader Succes Masra appointed transitional PM

• **Chad's transitional President Gen. Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno appointed former opposition leader Succes Masra as prime minister.**

- Masra will replace Saleh Kebzabo, who along with his government resigned on Dec. 29 following the promulgation of the new constitution.

- Masra will serve through the transition to civilian rule. Chad: Capital- N'Djamena Currency- Central African CFA franc

3. Randhir Jaiswal takes over as MEA spokesperson from Arindam Bagchi

• **Randhir Jaiswal has officially assumed the position of the Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs,** succeeding

Arindam Bagchi, who has been appointed as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organisations in Geneva.

- Arindam Bagchi took over as the spokesperson in March 2021.

4. All India Rubber Industries Association Elects Shashi Singh as the President of AIRIA

• **Mr. Shashi Singh will be succeeding Mr. Ramesh Kejriwal as the President of AIRIA.**

- Prior to assuming the role of President, Mr. Shashi Singh held the position of Senior Vice President within AIRIA.

- Mr. Zafar Ahmed, Managing Director of New India Rubber Works Pvt. Ltd. has been elected as the Senior Vice-President of AIRIA for the year 2023-24.

- Mr. Indra Parekh has been elected as the Vice President of the All India Rubber Industry Association.

5. NIIFL appoints Actis' Sanjiv Aggarwal as chief executive officer

• **Government-backed National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited has appointed Sanjiv Aggarwal as its chief executive officer and managing director.**

- The National Infrastructure and Investment Fund (NIIF) is India's first-ever sovereign wealth fund (SWF). The state-owned fund was set up by the Indian Government in the year 2015. At NIIFL, Aggarwal succeeds Rajiv Dhar, who served as interim CEO and MD.

- NIIF, which is 49% owned by the government, manages over \$4.9 billion of equity capital commitments across its four funds—master fund, fund of funds, strategic opportunities fund, and India-Japan Fund.

6. Sebi appoints G Ram Mohan Rao as executive director for a period of 3 years

• **The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has appointed G Ram Mohan Rao as Executive Director (ED) for a period of three years.**

- Rao will be handling the investigation department and the internal inspection department. Prior to the appointment, Rao was the regional director of the Eastern Regional Office of Sebi.

7. Canara Bank CGM P Santhosh appointed as MD of NARCL, Sundar resigns as MD

• **P Santhosh, chief general manager at Canara Bank has been appointed as managing director and chief executive officer of National Asset Reconstruction of India Ltd (NARCL).**

- Natarajan Sundar, MD and CEO of NARCL resigned from the post.

- Canara Bank is the sponsor bank of NARCL with over a 10 per cent stake. Public sector banks are major shareholders of NARCL.

- **NARCL a government entity, has been incorporated on 7th July 2021** with majority stake held by Public Sector Banks and balance by private banks with Canara Bank being the sponsor bank. It is registered with the Reserve Bank of India as an Asset Reconstruction Company under **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.**

8. Indian Olympic Association appoints Raghuram Iyer as Chief Executive Officer

• **The Indian Olympic Association announced the appointment of Raghuram Iyer as the Chief Executive Officer of the sports body.**

- Iyer comes with the experience of having served as CEO for Indian Premier League teams Rajasthan Royals, Lucknow Super Giants and Rising Pune Supergiant.

- **PT Usha is the first woman president of the Indian Olympic Association.**

9. Sh. Vikas Sheel appointed Executive Director Asian Development Bank

- **Senior bureaucrat Vikas Sheel has been appointed as Executive Director, Asian**

Development Bank in Manila, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

- He has been appointed as ED, Asian Development Bank (ADB) for a period of three years.
- Smita Sarangi has been appointed to the post of Adviser to the Executive Director, ADB, Manila, Philippines for a period of three years.
- Tanu Singh has been named as First Secretary, Permanent Mission of India (PMI), World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva for a period of three years.

10. Ashwani Gupta, former global COO of Nissan, appointed CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone

Ashwani Gupta has been appointed as CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone.

- He was the former global Chief Operating Officer at Nissan Motors.
- This appointment is part of Adani Port's internal restructuring that also elevated Karan Adani to the role of Managing Director and Gautam Adani has been re-designated as 'Executive Chairman' of APSEZ.

11. Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey assumes the charge of 4th Secretary General of BIMSTEC

Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, a senior diplomat of India, assumed today the position of Secretary General (SG) of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

- He is the 4th SG of BIMSTEC and will remain its SG for a period of three years. He has succeeded H.E. Tenzin Lekphell of Bhutan.

About Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC):

- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand brings together 1.5 billion people – 21% of the world population, and a combined GDP of over US\$ 2.5 trillion.
- BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand - Economic Cooperation) was formed at a meeting in Jun 1997 in Bangkok.
- Myanmar was admitted in Dec 1997 and the organization was renamed as BIMST-EC. The grouping expanded when Nepal and Bhutan were admitted in Feb 2004.
- The grouping's name was changed to BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) at 1st Summit Meeting held in Bangkok in Jul 2004.

12. Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League secures majority in national elections

In Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina led Awami League secured majority in the national elections. With the resounding victory, Awami League President and the incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will form the government for the fourth straight term.

- According to media reports, Awami League won two-third majority in the parliament and fourth term in a row by winning 223 out of 299
- Bangladesh Cricket Team Captain Shakib Al Hasan Wins Parliament Seat

13. Gabriel Attal becomes France's youngest Prime Minister

Gabriel Attal has been named next Prime Minister of France, as Emmanuel Macron aims to revive his presidency with a new government.

- Gabriel Attal is currently working as an education minister. At 34, he is the youngest Prime Minister in modern French history, outranking even Socialist Laurent Fabius who was 37 when he was appointed by François Mitterrand in 1984.

14. Senthil Pandian C to be India's next ambassador to WTO

The government has appointed IAS officer Senthil Pandian C as ambassador to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva after Brajendra Navnit's tenure as India's ambassador to the global trade watchdog ends on March 31, 2024.

- He will replace Brajendra Navnit after his tenure ends by March-end and will continue to lead India's negotiations until the ministerial meeting.
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.
- The WTO has over 160 members representing 98 per cent of world trade.
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala is the seventh Director-General of the WTO. She took office on 1 March 2021, becoming the first woman and the first African to serve as Director-General. Her term of office will expire on 31 August 2025.
- India has been a WTO member since **1 January 1995** and a member of GATT since 8 July 1948.

15. Former CISF Chief Sheel Vardhan Singh Appointed As UPSC Member

Sheel Vardhan Singh, the former Chief of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), has been appointed as a member of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

- The UPSC, led by a chairperson, can have up to 10 members, each serving a term of six years or until reaching the age of 65.
- He served as Director General of the CISF from November 2021 to December 2023. Sh. Manoj

Soni is the current Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

16. Govt appoints Rajay Kumar Sinha as new member finance at IRDAI

• The government has appointed Rajay Kumar Sinha as member finance and investment at Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, or IRDAI.

• The appointment is for a period of three years from the date of assumption of charge of the post. Sinha at present is the MD and CEO of SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAPS).

• This appointment comes as the term of the previous member, Rakesh Joshi, came to an end.

17. Govt approves reappointment of RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra for 1 year

• The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the reappointment of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Deputy Governor Michael Patra for one year.

• Patra was appointed as RBI Deputy Governor in January 2020, and last year he got an extension of one year.

• The three other Deputy Governors of the bank are M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar and Swaminathan J.

18. Denmark's King Frederik X Takes Throne As Mother Abdicates

• Denmark's King Frederik X acceded to the throne, ushering in a new era after his mother Queen Margrethe abdicated, with more than 100,000 Danes turning out for the unprecedented event. Queen Margrethe, 83, is the first Danish monarch to voluntarily relinquish the throne in nearly 900 years. Mette Frederiksen is the Prime Minister of Denmark since 2019.

19. RBI approves Praveen Achuthan Kutty's appointment as DCB Bank MD & CEO

• The Reserve bank of India (RBI) approved the appointment of Praveen Achuthan Kutty as the managing director and chief executive officer of DCB bank.

• The appointment is for a period of three years with effect from April 29, 2024.

• Praveen Achuthan Kutty has over 32 years of experience in all aspects of Retail & SME banking

20. Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary appointed SSB chief

• Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary was on appointed as the director general of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).

• Chaudhary, a 1990 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, is presently working as Special Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

• The SSB guards India's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan

• The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the DG, SSB

for a period up to November 30, 2025 i.e. the date of his superannuation, the order said

21. India elected as First Vice Chair of COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management

• India has been elected as the First Vice Chair of the Food and Agriculture Organization FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management. India will serve as a member of the FAO Fisheries Bureau on Capture Fisheries for the first time in 57 years.

About Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management:

• The primary functions of the Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management are to provide essential technical and policy guidance on fisheries governance and management, to advance the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries

• The Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management is a forum for discussing fisheries management issues at national, regional and global levels. It deals with technical and policy matters in line with FAO's mission and actively collaborates with relevant regional and international organisations, countries, stakeholder groups, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), forging new collaborations where needed.

• The Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management was established during the Thirty-Fifth session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI), held in Rome, Italy, from September 5 to 9, 2022.

• The Committee on Fisheries (COFI), a subsidiary body of the FAO Council, was established by the FAO Conference at its Thirteenth Session in 1965.

22. PepsiCo India appoints marketing chief Jagruti Kotecha as new CEO

• PepsiCo India appointed Jagruti Kotecha as its chief executive officer (CEO), saying he will take over from Ahmed El Sheikh, who held the position for seven years.

• Kotecha is the company's chief marketing officer in Africa, Middle East, and South Asia (AMESA).

• He will assume the CEO's role in March 2024. Sheikh will become the CEO for the Middle East business unit.

23. RBI clears appointment of Praveen A Kutty as MD of DCB Bank

• Private sector DCB Bank said the Reserve Bank approved the appointment of Praveen Achuthan Kutty as its Managing Director and CEO.

• The appointment for a period of three years is effective from April 29, 2024, DCB Bank said in a regulatory filing.

- DCB Bank Limited formerly Development Credit Bank is one of the new generation private sector banks in India.

- It is amongst the new generation banks that received the scheduled commercial bank license from the bank regulator, Reserve Bank of India. DCB Bank received the licence on **31 May 1995**.

24. Colliers' Sankey Prasad appointed Chairman and Managing Director for India and Colliers Project Leaders Middle East

- **Global diversified professional services and investment management company has appointed Sankey Prasad as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) for India and Middle East Engineering and project management business, which is under the name of Colliers Project Leaders Middle East.**

- According to sources, Prasad has bought a 30% stake in Colliers Project Leaders in the Middle East.

25. Samina Hamied of Cipla steps down from her executive role

- **Samina Hamied, executive vice-chairperson of Cipla, announced her decision to step down from her executive role due to personal and family commitments. She will continue to serve as a non-executive director of the company.**
- Hamied in a company's statement to stock exchanges said she will continue to serve as non-executive director of the company.
- The company said the transition will be effective from March 31, 2024.

26. Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal exits board, launches new startup OppDoor

- **Flipkart Co-Founder Binny Bansal has officially exited the board of the Walmart-owned e-commerce firm, which he founded along with Sachin Bansal 16 years ago. The move comes months after he sold his remaining stake in the firm.**

- Binny Bansal recently also floated his new startup, **OppDoor**, to provide end-to-end solutions to e-commerce firms. Sachin Bansal, the

other co-founder, left the board in 2018. After leaving Flipkart, Sachin founded Navi, a financial services firm.

27. Nitish Kumar takes oath as Bihar chief minister for record ninth time

- **JD(U) president Nitish Kumar took oath as Chief Minister of Bihar for a record ninth time. Kumar was sworn in by Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar at Raj Bhavan.**

- BJP leaders -- Samrat Choudhary and former Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha- were among those who took oath of office. The two are named as Deputy Chief Ministers.

Nitish Kumar's previous eight terms as Chief Minister:

- First term (2000): March 3, 2000 – March 10, 2000
- Second term (2005–2010): November 24, 2005 – November 24, 2010
- Third term (2010–2014): November 26, 2010 – May 17, 2014
- Fourth term (2015): February 22, 2015 – November 19, 2015
- Fifth term (2015 - 2017): November 20, 2015 – July 26, 2017
- Sixth term (2017 - 2020): July 27, 2017 – November 2020
- Seventh term (2020-2022): November 16, 2020 – 2022
- Eighth term (August 9, 2022 - January 28, 2024)

28. ACC approves Sanjay Mudaliar as Bank of Baroda Executive Director

- **The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the Department of Financial Services (DFS) proposal to post Sanjay Vinayak Mudaliar as Executive Director at Bank of Baroda.**

- Mudaliar is currently the Executive Director at Indian Overseas Bank.
- Mudaliar will serve his new post from the day he assumes charge for the remainder of his term, i.e. up to Dec 31 ,2025.

Awards

1. Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University's Vice Chancellor Prof B R Kamboj honoured with M S Swaminathan Award

- Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University's Vice Chancellor **Prof. B.R. Kamboj has been honoured with the prestigious M.S. Swaminathan Award** in recognition of his contributions as a scientist and extension specialist in the field of agronomy.
- Thawar Chand Gehlot, the Governor of Karnataka, presented him this award.
- A special committee, constituted for the M.S. Swaminathan Award, selected Prof. B.R. Kamboj for his excellent achievements in the field of education, research, technology development and extension in agricultural science.

2. SVAMITVA Scheme wins Best Innovation Award

• SVAMITVA Scheme wins Best Innovation Award for Innovation Sandbox presentation during Public Policy Dialogues'2024 at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad.

- SVAMITVA Scheme has been saturated with generation of property cards of all inhabited villages of Haryana, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Goa.

3. Italy's Marchesi Antinori wine dynasty named 'World's Most Admired Wine Brand'

• Italy's renowned Marchesi Antinori wine dynasty, one of the oldest wine companies, based in Florence recently received the title of 'World's Most Admired Wine Brand.'

- Determined by experts across six continents, this honour is the first time an Italian wine has topped the list in 13 years.
- Besides their internationally popular wines, the Marchese also broke the patriarchal tradition of passing the business to male heirs.
- In 1980, Antinori assumed that none of his three daughters would be interested in pursuing winemaking which led him to selling the company to a brewing operation.
- Upon realising that this assumption couldn't have been any far from the truth, 10 years later, he bought back the company which continues to bear the family name even today.

4. 81st annual Golden Globes Awards: 'Oppenheimer' wins 'Best Drama' movie award, Cillian Murphy bags Best Actor award

- Film 'Oppenheimer' won Golden Globe Award for best drama movie. Additionally, Cillian Murphy won a Golden Globe for best drama film actor for his role as the father of the atomic bomb in Christopher Nolan's blockbuster.
- Oppenheimer's eight nominations at the Golden Globes were only topped by Barbie's nine.

- Christopher Nolan bagged the 'Best Director - Motion Picture' for Oppenheimer while Robert Downey Jr. won Golden Globes in the 'best supporting actor' category. So far, Oppenheimer has bagged four Golden Globes Awards 2024.
- The movie follows scientist Oppenheimer throughout his life and involvement with the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos, New Mexico, during World War II. It also touches on his political activities after the war and alleged ties to the Communist Party at the height of the Cold War.

List of 2024 Golden Globe winners:

- **DIRECTOR:** Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"
- **BEST MOVIE DRAMA:** "Oppenheimer"
- **BEST MOVIE MUSICAL OR COMEDY:** "Poor Things"
- **FEMALE ACTOR IN A MOVIE MUSICAL OR COMEDY:** Emma Stone, "Poor Things"
- **ACTOR IN A MOVIE DRAMA:** Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"
- **FEMALE ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING MOVIE ROLE:** Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"
- **MALE ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING MOVIE ROLE:** Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"
- **SUPPORTING FEMALE ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES:** Elizabeth Debicki, "The Crown"
- **SUPPORTING MALE ACTOR IN A TELEVISION SERIES:** Matthew Macfadyen, "Succession"
- **BEST SCREENPLAY:** Justine Triet, Arthur Harari, "Anatomy of a Fall"
- **MALE ACTOR IN A TELEVISION COMEDY:** Jeremy Allen White, "The Bear"
- **STAND-UP COMEDY TELEVISION SPECIAL:** Ricky Gervais, "Armageddon"
- **ANIMATED FILM:** "The Boy and the Heron"
- **SCORE:** "Oppenheimer," Ludwig Göransson
- **ORIGINAL SONG:** "What Was I Made For?" from "Barbie," music and lyrics by Billie Eilish O'Connell and Finneas O'Connell
- **BEST SCREENPLAY:** "Anatomy of a Fall," Justine Triet and Arthur Harari
- **CINEMATIC AND BOX OFFICE ACHIEVEMENT:** "Barbie"

5. CNN-News18 Indian of the Year 2023 Awards

- The 13th edition of the CNN-News18 Indian of the Year was held to recognise exceptional contributions of remarkable individuals across seven categories 'Business, Entertainment, Sports, Youth Icon, Rising Sports Star, Social Change, and Climate Warriors.

• **Bollywood Actor Shah Rukh Khan won the CNN-News18 Indian of the Year (IOTY) 2023 award.**

• **Arun Krishnamurthy and Saalumarada Thimmakka won the cliamte warriors award, presented by Afroz Shah.**

• Arun Krishnamurthy is the founder of the Environmentalist Foundation of India (EFI), which works in the field of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration. He founded EFI in 2007 and initiated a campaign to clean lakes and revive dying water bodies in India. Through his initiative, which is currently supported by 47 CSR partners, he has restored 460 waterbodies across 18 states.

• Saalumarada Thimmakka is a 112-year-old climate warrior from Karnataka's Tumkur district and is known as the "Mother of Trees" for planting 8,000 trees. She is best known for planting 385 banyan trees along a 45-kilometre stretch of the highway between Hulikal and Kudur in Karnataka. This not only transformed the barren stretch of road into a lush green corridor but also helped improve the air quality. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2019 for her contributions to environmental conservation.

• **State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Dinesh Khara won the prestigious Indian of the Year 2023 award in the business category.**

Khara joined SBI as a probationary officer in 1984 and has risen through the ranks over the years at India's largest public sector lender. The award was presented by Sanjiv Goenka.

• **The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) was honoured with the Indian of the Year 2023 award for outstanding achievement.**

• **Ravi Kannan, a distinguished oncologist, was named the CNN-News18 Indian of The Year 2023 in the social change category.**

• **Neeraj Chopra clinched the Indian of the Year award in the Sports category in recognition of his remarkable achievements and significant contribution to Indian sports.**

• **Chess Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa was conferred with the CNN-News18 Rising Sports Star at the Indian of The Year 2023.**

6. Indore and Surat win Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023

• **Indore and Surat have been awarded with the prestigious 'cleanest cities' of the 2023 title.**

Indian President Draupadi Murmu presented the Swachh Survekshan Awards, declaring the two cities as the joint cleanest cities in the country.

• **Varanasi and Prayagraj were recognized as the cleanest Ganga Towns.**

• This also marks the seventh consecutive win for Indore in this category. Navi Mumbai, securing the third position last year, maintained its rank.

• **Saswad in Maharashtra received the cleanest city award for urban centers with a population of less than 1 lakh, while Patan in Chhattisgarh and Lonavala in Maharashtra were on the second and third positions, respectively.**

• MHOW Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh earned the award for the cleanest cantonment town.

• Swachh Survekshan, organized by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) under the Swachh Bharat Urban Mission since 2016, stands as the world's largest survey on urban sanitation and cleanliness.

• Acting as a competitive platform for towns and cities, the initiative aims to enhance cleanliness and waste management services.

• In its eighth year, the survey involved over 3000 assessors evaluating more than 4,500 cities based on 46 indicators. These indicators encompass various aspects, including segregated door-to-door waste collection, zero waste events, disabled-friendly toilets, and improved plastic waste management.

7. REC wins ICAI Award for excellence in financial reporting for FY 2022-23

• **REC Limited, an eminent Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) under the Ministry of Power, India, has earned the 'ICAI Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting 2022-23'.**

• This distinguished tribute was conferred by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) at a ceremony in Raipur.

• REC Limited claimed the title of the 'Best Central PSU' in the Financial Services category at the Dun & Bradstreet PSU Awards 2023. This award underscores the company's exceptional performance and its substantial contributions to the financial services sector.

8. Lionel Messi named FIFA's best men's player for 2023; Aitana Bonmati shines in women's category

• **Lionel Messi was crowned FIFA's best men's player for 2023, claiming the prestigious award for the third time in a surprising turn of events at the FIFA awards ceremony in London.**

• Messi retained the award by beating Manchester City's treble-winning Norwegian striker Erling Haaland in a tie-break. France's Paris Saint-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe finished 3rd.

• **Aitana Bonmati, the 25-year-old Spain playmaker added to her Ballon d'Or award last October, which followed a UEFA award in August and the Golden Boot award at the World Cup.**

- Bonmati edged out Spain teammate Jenni Hermoso and Colombia star Linda Caicedo.
- Pep Guardiola was named best coach after masterminding City's first-ever Champions League success.
- Haaland was joined by five of his club teammates ' Kyle Walker, John Stones, Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva and Kevin De Bruyne ' in the team of the year.
- Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois, Jude Bellingham and Vinicius Junior, Messi and Mbappe made up the 11.

9. EIL conferred with SCOPE Eminence Award

• Engineers India Limited (EIL) has been conferred with the prestigious SCOPE Eminence Award in the category of Women Empowerment for the period 2019-20.

- The award recognises EIL's exemplary commitment to fostering an inclusive & diverse work environment and celebrates the outstanding achievement of its women workforce. The award has been presented to EIL by the Vice-President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar.

10. Assam's highest civilian award for ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi

• Former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi will be honored with Assam's highest civilian award 'Assam Baibhav'.

- Ranjan Gogoi was the 46th CJI of India and the first judge from the Northeast to hold the post.
- During his tenure, the Supreme Court had given a historic verdict on the decade old Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case. While athlete Hima Das will be awarded the Assam Saurav Samman.
- It is one of the highest civilian awards given by the state of Assam. As an award, Gogoi will be given a citation, certificate, medal and a cash prize of **Rs 5 lakh**.

11. Thiruvananthapuram airport bags excellence award

• Thiruvananthapuram International Airport has been selected for the prestigious Excellence Award by Quality Circle Forum of India in the recent National Convention on Quality Concepts 2024 in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

- The TIA was selected for the recognition based on its continuous improvement initiatives undertaken for airport operations.
- The award jury praised Thiruvananthapuram Airport's initiatives in establishing an effective mechanism to maintain the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces (OLS) free from obstacles for safe aircraft operations and sustenance of the biodiversity through its sustainability initiatives.

12. Padma Awards 2024

• Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma

Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

- These Awards are conferred by the President of India at ceremonial functions which are held at Rashtrapati Bhawan usually around March / April every year.
- The Awards are given in various disciplines / fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.
- 'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; 'Padma Bhushan' for distinguished service of high order and 'Padma Shri' for distinguished service in any field. The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

Padma Vibhushan: -

- Ms. Vyjayantimala Bali (Art) (Tamil Nadu)
- Shri Konidela Chirnajeevi (Art) (Andhra Pradesh)
- Shri M Venkaiah Naidu (Public Affairs) (Andhra Pradesh)
- Shri Bindeshwar Pathak (Posthumous) (Art) (Tamil Nadu)
- Ms. Padma Subrahmanyam (Art) (Tamil Nadu)

Padma Bhushan: -

- Ms. M Fathima Beevi (Posthumous) (Public Affairs) (Kerala)
- Shri Hormusji N Cama (Literature & Education - Journalism) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Mithun Chakraborty (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Sitaram Jindal (Trade & Industry) (Karnataka)
- Shri Young Liu (Trade & Industry) (Taiwan)
- Shri Ashwin Balachand Mehta (Medicine) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Satyabrata Mookherjee (Posthumous) (Public Affairs) (West Bengal)
- Shri Ram Naik (Public Affairs) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Tejas Madhusudan Patel (Medicine) (Gujarat)
- Shri Olanchery Rajagopal (Public Affairs) (Kerala)
- Shri Dattatray Ambadas Mayaloo alias Rajdutt (Art) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Togdan Rinpole (Others-Spiritualism) (Ladakh)
- Shri Pyarelal Sharma (Art) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Chandreshwar Prasad Thakur (Medicine) (Bihar)
- Ms. Usha Uthup (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Vijaykanth (Posthumous) (Art) (Tamil Nadu)
- Shri Kundan Vyas (Literature & Education-Journalism) (Maharashtra)

Padma Shri: -

- Shri Khalil Ahamad (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Badrappan M (Art) (Tamil Nadu)
- Shri Kaluram Bamanji (Art) (Madhya Pradesh)

- Ms. Reswana Choudhary Bannya (Art) (Bangladesh)
- Ms. Naseem Bano (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Ramlal Bareth (Art) (Chhattisgarh)
- Ms. Gita Roy Barman (Art) (West Bengal)
- Ms. Parbati Baruah (Social Work) (Assam)
- Shri Sarbeshwar Basumatary (Others-Agriculture) (Assam)
- Shri Som Datt Battu (Art) (Himachal Pradesh)
- Ms. Takdira Begum (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Sathyanarayana Beleri (Others-Agriculture) (Kerala)
- Shri Drona Bhuyan (Art) (Assam)
- Shri Ashok Kumar Biswas (Art) (Bihar)
- Shri Rohan Machanda Bopanna (Sports) (Kerala)
- Shri Smriti Rekha Chakma (Art) (Tripura)
- Shri Ram Chet Chaudhary (Science & Engineering) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Ms. K Chellammal (Others- Agriculture) (Andaman & Nicobar Islands)
- Ms. Joshna Chinappa (Sports) (tamil Nadu)
- Ms. Charlotte Chopin (Others-Yoga) France
- ShriRaghuveer Choudhary (Literature & Education) (Gujarat)
- Shri Joe D Cruz (Literature & Education) (Tamil Nadu)
- Shri Ghulam Nabi Dar (Art) (Jammu & Kashmir)
- Shri Chitta Ranjan Debbarma (Others-Spiritualism) (Tripura)
- Shri Uday Vishwanath Deshpande (Sports) (Maharashtra)
- Ms. Prema Dhanraj (Medicine) (Karnataka)
- Shri Radha Krishan Dhiman (Medicine) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Manohar Krishana Dole (Medicine) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Pierre Sylvain Filliozat (Literature & Education) (France)
- Shri Mahabir Singh Giddu (Art) (Haryana)
- Ms. Anupama Hoskere (Art) (Karnataka)
- Shri Yazdi Maneksha Italia (Medicine) (Gujarat)
- Shri Rajaram Jain (Literature & Education) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Jankilal (Art) (Rajasthan)
- Shri Ratan Kahar (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Yashwant Singh Kathoch (Literature & Education) (Uttarakhand)
- Shri Zahir I Kazi (Literature & Education) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Gaurav Khanna (Sports) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Surendra Kishore (Literature & Education - Journalism) (Bihar)
- Shri Dasari Kondappa (Art) (Telangana)
- Shri Sridhar Makam Krishnamurthy (Literature & Education) (Karnataka)
- Ms. Yanung Jamoh Lego (Others - Agriculture) (Arunachal Pradesh)

- Shri Jordan Lepcha (Art) (Sikkim)
- Shri Satendra Singh Lohia (Sports) (Madhya Pradesh)
- Shri Binod Maharana (Art) (Odisha)
- Ms. Purnima Mahato (Sports) (Jharkhand)
- Ms. Uma Maheshwari D (Art) (Andhra Pradesh)
- Shri Dukhu Majhi (Social Work) (West Bengal)
- Shri Ram Kumar Mallick (Art) (Bihar)
- Shri Hemchand Manjhi (Medicine) (Chhattisgarh)
- Shri Chandrashekhar Mahadeorao Meshram (Medicine) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Surendra Mohan Mishra (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Ali Mohammed & Shri Ghani Mohammed (Duo) (Rajasthan)
- Ms. Kalpana Morparia (Trade & Industry) (Maharashtra)
- Ms. Chami Murmu (Social Work) (Jharkhand)
- Shri Saindran Muthumvel (Public Affairs) (Papua New Guinea)
- Ms. G Nachiyar (Medicine) (Tamil Nadu)
- Ms. Kiran Nadar (Art) (Delhi)
- Shri Pakaravur Chithran Namboodiripad (Literature & Education) (Kerala)
- Shri Shilesh Nayak (Science & Engineering) (Delhi)
- Shri Harish Nayak (Posthumous) (Literature & Education) (France)
- Shri Hari Om (Science & Engineering) (Haryana)
- Shri Bhagabat Padhan (Art) (Odisha)
- Shri Saatan Ridra Pal (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Shankar Baba Pundlikrao Papalkar (Social Work) (Maharashtra)
- Shri Radhe Shyam Pareek (Medicine) (Gujarat)
- Shri Binod Kumar Pasayat (Art) Odisha)
- Ms. Silbi Passah (Art) (Meghalaya)
- Ms. Shanti Devi Paswan & Shri Shivam Paswan (Du) (Art) (Bihar)
- Shri Sanjay Anant Patl (Others-Agriculture) (Goa)
- Shri Muni Narayana Prasad (Literature & Education) (Kerala)
- Shri K S Rajanna (Social Work) (Karnataka)
- Shri Chadrashekhar Channapatna Rajannachar (Medicine) (Karnataka)
- Shri Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit (Literature & Education) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Ms. Nirmal Rishi (Art) (Punjab)
- Shri Pran Sabharwal (Art) (Punjab)
- Shri Gaddam Sammaiah (Art) (Telangana)
- Shri Sangthakima (Social Work) (Mizoram)
- Shri Machihan Sasa (Art) (Manipur)
- Shri Omprakash Sharma (Art) (Madhya Pradesh)
- Shri Eklavya Sharma (Science & Engineering) (West Bengal)

- Shri Ram Chander Sihag (Science & Engineering) (West Bengal)
- Shri Harbinder Singh (Sports) (Delhi)
- Shri Gurvinder Singh (Social Work) (Haryana)
- Shri Godawari Singh (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Ravi Prakash Singh (Science & Engineering) (Mexico)
- Shri Seshmapatti T Sivalingam (Art) Tamil Nadu)
- Shri Somanna (Social Work) Karnataka)
- Shri Kethvath Somlal (Literature & Education) (Telangana)
- Ms. Shashi Soni (Trade & Industry) (Karnataka)
- Ms. Urmila Srivastava (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)
- Shri Nepal Chandra Sutradhar (Posthumous) (Art) (West Bengal)
- Shri Gopinath Swain (Art) (Odisha)
- Shri Laxman Bhatt Tailang (Art) (Rajasthan)
- Ms. Maya Tandon (Social Work) (Rajasthan)
- Ms. Aswathi Thirunal Gauri Lakshmi Bayi Thampuratty (Literature & Education) (Kerala)
- Shri Jagdish Labhshanker Trivedi (Art) (Gujarat)
- Ms. Sano Vamuzo (Social Work) (Nagaland)
- Shri Balkrishna Sdanam Puthiya Veetil (Art) (Kerala)
- Shri Kurella Vittalacharya (Literature & Education) (Telangana)
- Shri Kiran Vyas (Others-Yoga) (France)
- Shri Jageshwar Yadav (Social Work) Chhattisgarh)
- Shri Babu Ram Yadav (Art) (Uttar Pradesh)

- ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Year 2023: Queentor Abel (Kenya)
- ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year 2023: Suryakumar Yadav (India)
- ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year 2023: Hayley Matthews (West Indies)
- ICC Men's Emerging Cricketer of the Year 2023: Rachin Ravindra (New Zealand)
- ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year 2023: Phoebe Litchfield (Australia)
- ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023: Virat Kohli (India)
- ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023: Chamari Athapaththu (Sri Lanka)
- ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year 2023: Usman Khawaja (Australia)
- ICC Umpire of the Year 2023: Richard Illingworth (England)
- ICC Spirit of Cricket Award 2023: Zimbabwe Team (for consoling opposition WC Qualifier)
- Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2023: Nat Sciver-Brunt (England)
- Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year: Pat Cummins (Australia)

14. NTPC Limited gets certified as a Top Employer 2024 in India by the Top Employers Institute

The 2024 Top Employers of the Top Employers Institute have been announced and NTPC Limited has been certified as a Top Employer in India by the institute.

- NTPC completed the following steps in order to qualify for the certification: HR Best Practice Survey, Validation and Audit.
- NTPC's performance score was rated against an international standard and NTPC has achieved Top Employer status.
- NTPC Limited, formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation, is an Indian central Public Sector Undertaking under the ownership of the Ministry of Power and the Government of India, who is engaged in the generation of electricity and other activities. The headquarters of the PSU are situated at New Delhi..
- NTPC is India's largest energy conglomerate with roots planted way back in 1975 to accelerate power development in India.

13. ICC Awards 2023 Winners List: Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav crowned ODI and T20I Cricketer of the Year

- **The ICC Awards 2023 will encompass a total of 13 categories, recognising outstanding individuals who excelled in specific formats as well as across multiple formats.**
- The coveted Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy will be awarded for the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year and the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy will be presented for the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year.

FULL LIST OF ICC 2023 AWARD WINNERS:

- ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year 2023: Bas De Leede (Netherlands)

Ranks & Reports

1. Slight Declines In Insurance Penetration, Female Policyholders' Proportion: IRDAI Report 2022-23

- Despite IRDAI's goal of 'Insurance for All' by 2047, life insurance penetration dropped marginally to 3 per cent in 2022-23 from 3.2 per cent in the previous year.

• India's overall insurance penetration reduced to 4 per cent in 2022-23 from 4.2 per cent in 2021-22, indicating a developmental slowdown in the sector.

• Despite IRDAI's goal of 'Insurance for All' by 2047, life insurance penetration dropped marginally to 3 per cent in 2022-23 from 3.2 per cent in the previous year.

• Non-life insurance penetration remained stagnant at 1 per cent.

• India's overall insurance penetration reduced to 4 per cent in 2022-23 from 4.2 per cent in 2021-22, indicating a developmental slowdown in the sector.

• While insurance density, measured as premiums collected per capita, saw a slight increase in life insurance from USD 69 to USD 70, non-life insurance density remained unchanged. Overall, insurance density rose marginally from USD 91 to USD 92 in 2022-23.

2. India's mineral production up 13.1% in October 2023

• The union ministry of mines has said India's mineral production index for October 2023 was 13.1% higher than in the same month last year.

• Citing provisional statistics from the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), it said cumulative growth for April-October was 9.4% year-on-year.

• production of lignite, copper concentrate, bauxite, chromite and phosphorite declined in October. Pralhad Joshi, Union minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Coal and Mines.

• The production level of important minerals such as iron ore (up by 66.8%), manganese ore (up by 33.1%), gold (up by 19.6%), coal (up by 18.5%), limestone (up by 14%), zinc concentrate (up by 10%), utilised natural gas (up by 9.9%), magnesite (up by 6.7%), lead concentrate (up by 4.7%) and crude petroleum (up by 1.3%) had all improved, with iron ore in particular up in value from '3,518 crore to '8,411 crore.

4. Indian fintech funding witnessed a decline of 63% in 2023: Report

• The FinTech sector in India has witnessed a downward trend as it received funding of \$2 billion in 2023, a decline of around 63% and 73% compared to previous years, according to a report by data intelligence platform Tracxn.

• The financial technology sector has raised \$5.4 billion in 2022 and \$8.4 billion in 2021.

• However, India ranked third globally in terms of FinTech startup funding last year, strengthening its position as a significant player on the global stage, despite the challenges posed by factors including increasing borrowing costs and macroeconomic conditions, among others.

• Alternative Lending, Payments, and BankingTech were the top-performing segments in the Indian FinTech sector, while the Peak XV Partners, Y Combinator, and LetsVenture were the top investors in the space.

Bengaluru emerged as the leader in total FinTech funding raised in 2023, followed by Mumbai and Jaipur.

• Also, there are only two companies 'Zaggle' and 'Veefin' that announced IPOs in 2023 as compared to five in 2022.

5. 52% drop in toy imports in 8 years, 239% jump in exports: Commerce Ministry

• The Indian toy industry witnessed growth in FY2022-23 in comparison to FY2014-15, with a decline in imports by 52 per cent, and a rise in exports by 239 per cent.

• These observations were noted in a case study on "Success Story of Made in India Toys", which was conducted by the IIM Lucknow at the behest of Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). DPIIT works under Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The government has implemented several interventions and initiatives, including:

- Formulation of a comprehensive National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT) having 21 specific action points, and implemented by 14 central ministries/departments, with DPIIT as the coordinating body.
- Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on toys (HS code 9503) was increased from 20 per cent to 60 per cent in February 2020, and subsequently to 70 per cent in March 2023.
- Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has mandated sample testing of each import consignment to curb the import of sub-standard toys.
- A Quality Control Order (QCO) for toys was issued in 2020, with effect from January 1, 2021.
- Special provisions were notified by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on December 17, 2020, to grant licences to micro-sale units manufacturing toys without a testing facility for one year and without establishing an in-house testing facility, which was further extended by three years.
- BIS has granted more than 1200 licences to domestic manufacturers and more than 30

licences to foreign manufacturers for the manufacture of toys with BIS standard Marks.

- Cluster-based approach adopted to support the domestic toy industry. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) is supporting 19 toy clusters under the Scheme of Funds for the Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI), and the Ministry of Textiles is providing designing and tooling support to 13 toy clusters.
- Several promotional initiatives have also been undertaken to promote indigenous toys and encourage innovation, including The Indian Toy Fair 2021, Toycathon, etc.

show that individual income inequality has significantly declined from 0.472 to 0.402 during FY14-FY22, per a ERD report.

This co-efficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher inequality.

- Based on trends in ITR filing, the ERD assessed that 36.3 per cent of individual ITR filers belonging to lowest income in FY14 have left the lowest income group and shifted upwards, resulting in 21.1 per cent more income for such individuals during FY14-FY21.
- Further, the income disparity of people earning less than '3.5 lakh have declined from 31.8 per cent to 15.8 per cent during FY14-FY21, signifying share of this income group in total income in comparison to their population has increased by 16 per cent.
- The ERD said top 2.5 per cent of taxpayer's contribution in income has declined from 2.81 per cent to 2.28 per cent during FY14-FY21
- Based on the trends, SBI's ERD has projected the weighted mean income for FY22 to come in the range of '12.5 lakh to '13 lakh.
- The report emphasised that the oft repeated conundrum debating a K-shaped recovery post-pandemic seems at best flawed, prejudiced, ill-concocted and fanning interests of select quarters to whom India's remarkable ascendance, signaling more the renaissance of the new global south, is quite unpalatable.

A K-shaped recovery is one in which the performance of different parts of the economy diverges like the arms of the letter "K." In a K-shaped recovery, some parts of the economy may experience strong growth while others continue to decline.

- Peter Atwater, a lecturer at Virginia-based William and Mary University, coined the term 'K-shaped recovery'. It implied stacked inequity on one side and stacked privilege on the other.

8. Chennai the Top Big Indian City for Women, South Fares Better Than North: Report

- Of the biggest cities in India ' those with a population of more than one million people ' **Chennai is the most conducive for women in the workforce, a study has found.**

• Pune comes next, followed by Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

The national capital, Delhi, ranked 14th on this list.

- Only 10 state capitals feature in the list of top 25 cities.
- The study, conducted by talent strategy consulting firm Avtar, analyses cities on five metrics – ease of living, safety, women's representation rate and women's empowerment initiatives.

6. India beats Taiwan in MSCI EM index weightage to be second after China

- In terms of weightage, **India now ranks second behind China in the MSCI Emerging Markets index, solidifying its reputation as one of the most promising emerging markets in the world to invest in.**

• India's weightage has now surpassed that of Taiwan. India's MSCI Emerging Markets index surged from 7% to 17.1% in eight years.

• A report by Nuvama suggests India could exceed a 20% weight in the MSCI EM Index by early 2024 due to ongoing institutional investments and steady FII participation.

• China's weight in the MSCI EM index has decreased to 26.6% from 33.5% in the year-ago period. On the other hand, Taiwan, South Korea and Brazil have seen marginal increases over the last one year.

In 2023, 17 new Indian stocks were inducted in the MSCI Standard Index increasing the stock count to 131. In 2022 nine new Indian stocks were inducted.

• In October 2020, India's MSCI EM pack share was at 8%. It had now nearly doubled fuelled by factors like the introduction of a standardised Foreign Ownership Limit (FOL) in 2020, robust performance in Indian equities (especially in the Midcap segment), and weaker performance in other emerging market packs, especially China.

7. SBI Research report reveals significant decline in individual income inequality in the country in past 8 years

- Individual income inequality has significantly declined during FY14-FY22 because of a 'great migration' at the bottom of the pyramid, even as individual's weighted mean income has risen from '3.1 lakh to '11.6 lakh during FY14-FY21, according to SBI's economic research department (ERD).

- Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, SBI
- **Gini coefficient** estimated using ITR (Income Tax Return) data of taxable income of individuals

- For smaller cities, with a population of less than one million, all five of the top ranked cities were in Tamil Nadu – Tiruchirappalli, Vellore, Erode, Salem and Tiruppur.

- In terms of state averages, Kerala emerged on top. Kerala emerges on top with the highest state average [inclusion score] of 55.67.

9. Vedanta's Hindustan Zinc Ranks No. 1 in S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment 2023

- Vedanta's Hindustan Zinc (HZL), the world's largest zinc, lead, and silver producer, has secured the coveted first position in the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment 2023 in the metals and mining sector.**

- With an impressive score of 85, Hindustan Zinc stands out as the top-ranked company among the 238 global peers in the sector.

- Vedanta Limited, the parent company secured the third position globally, moving up three ranks with a notable score of 80.

10. Uttar Pradesh among top three states for MSMEs with 9% national share: CBRE-CREDAI report

- India's most populous state Uttar Pradesh has emerged among the top three states as a significant contributor to the MSME sector, with a 9 per cent share in total registered MSMEs in the country, according to a report by realty consulting firm CBRE South Asia and real estate developers association CREDAI.**

- Rajasthan with 16 lakh and Gujarat with 15.96 lakh MSMEs were the other top destinations for registered units in the country.
- According to the official data from the MSME Ministry, 2.21 crore MSMEs are registered (excluding registrations via the Udyam Assist Portal) under the ministry, as of January 8, of which 38.09 lakh with a 17.2 per cent share were from Maharashtra followed by 22.32 lakh with a 10 per cent share from Tamil Nadu and 20.95 lakh with a 9.4 per cent share from Uttar Pradesh.

11. Global unemployment seen inching up to 5.2% in 2024, says UN labour body ILO

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) has projected a modest rise in the global unemployment rate to 5.2% in 2024, citing an increase in joblessness across advanced economies.**

- According to ILO's 2024 **World Employment and Social Outlook report** released on January 10, anticipated rise would result in the global unemployment rate inching up from 5.1% recorded in 2023.

12. World Bank retains India growth forecasts for FY24 and FY25

- The World Bank in its Global Economic Prospects report retained India's economic**

growth forecast at 6.3% for the current financial year, and 6.4% for the next, citing slow post-pandemic recovery.

- Global GDP is likely to grow 2.4% in 2024, it said.**

- That compares to 2.6% in 2023, 3% in 2022 and 6.2% in 2021 when there was a rebound as the pandemic ended.

13. World's Most Powerful Passports: 6 Countries In Top Spot, India Ranks 80th

- France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain start 2024 with the world's most powerful passport, allowing visa-free entry to 194 global destinations, according to the latest Henley Passport Index.**

- The ranking is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).**

- For the past five years, Japan and Singapore have consistently dominated the No. 1 spot. However, this quarter's ranking showcases European nations jumping up the tanks. Finland and Sweden tied with South Korea in second place, offering visa-free access to 193 destinations. Austria, Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands secure the third position, providing passport holders access to 192 destinations.

- India's passport ranked 80th spot in the list**, with citizens allowed to travel to 62 countries without a visa, including popular tourist destinations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

- India shares its current rank with Uzbekistan while neighboring Pakistan is positioned at 101st.**

- South Korea, Sweden, and Finland all climbed one spot to take joint second place, with access to 193 locations. Austria, Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands shared third place, allowing travel to 192 places.

- The United Arab Emirates was the fastest climber over the past decade, jumping to 11th place and offering access to 183 destinations without a visa. And China, up two spots this year to land in 62nd place, has visa-free access to 85 destinations — almost twice as many as 10 years ago.

List of top 10 most powerful passports 2024

- 1) France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, Spain (194 destinations)
- 2) Finland, South Korea, Sweden (193 destinations)
- 3) Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands (192 destinations)
- 4) Belgium, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom (193 destinations)
- 5) Greece, Malta, Switzerland (190 destinations)
- 6) Czech Republic, New Zealand, Poland (189 destinations)

- 7) Canada, Hungary, United States (188 destinations)
- 8) Estonia, Lithuania (187 destinations)
- 9) Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia (186 destinations)
- 10) Iceland (185 destinations)

14. Election disruption from AI poses the biggest global risk in 2024, Davos survey warns

• The **World Economic Forum's 'Global Risks Report 2024.'** released, ranked AI-derived misinformation and disinformation ' and its implications for societal polarization ' ahead of climate change, war and economic weakness in its top 10 risks over the next two years.

• As around half of the world's adult population heads to the polls in a bumper year of elections, **concern over the role of artificial intelligence in disrupting outcomes has topped the list of the biggest risks for 2024**, according to a new report.

• The WEF report, which was also produced in collaboration with Zurich Insurance Group, surveyed over 1,400 global risk experts, policymakers and industry leaders in September 2023 about their biggest global concerns.

• The report's authors said the combined risks are "stretching the world's adaptive capacity to its limit," and called on leaders to focus on global cooperation and building guardrails for the most disruptive emerging risks.

• **Top 10 global risks-** The most cited risks for the next two years were, in order: misinformation and disinformation, extreme weather events, societal polarization, cyber insecurity and interstate armed conflict. Also in the top 10 were lack of economic opportunity, inflation, involuntary migration, economic downturn and pollution.

• Extreme weather events, critical change to earth systems, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, natural resource shortages and misinformation and disinformation were named as the most likely risks over the next 10 years. Adverse outcomes from AI technologies was also named as a longer-term concern.

• The *Global Risks Report* is an annual study published by the World Economic Forum ahead of the Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

16. India ranked 35th for leveraging future possibilities; UK on top

• **India has been ranked 35th on a global index of countries best placed for leveraging future possibilities while the UK topped the list.**

• The Future Possibilities Index (FPI), a flagship global future trends study released by Newsweek Vantage and Horizon Group on sidelines of the

World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, has Denmark, US, the Netherlands & Germany in in the top 5.

- Among large emerging markets, China is placed highest at 19th this year, followed by Brazil at 30th, India (35th) and South Africa (50th).
- These six global transformational trends are Exabyte Economy (advanced digital technologies), Wellbeing Economy (health prevention and wellness), Net Zero Economy (reduction of carbon emissions), Circular Economy (recycling and reuse), BioGrowth Economy (food and agriculture innovations), and Experience Economy (consumption of experiences instead of physical goods).

17. India on top for trust in biz, NGOs; 4th for media, 5th in govt: Report

• **India tops the charts in terms of trust in businesses and NGOs, but it is fourth in terms of trust in media and fifth for the government, an annual trust barometer showed.**

• The **Edelman Trust Barometer 2024, released here ahead of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting**, put Saudi Arabia on the top for trust shown by their people in the government and China for trust in media

- In terms of trust shown in one's employer, Indonesia emerged at the top followed by India at the second place.

- The 24th annual survey, which covered over 32,000 respondents across 28 countries, showed developing countries having a lead over developed ones in terms of overall trust perception of their respective populations.

- On the overall index, prepared on the basis of average per cent trust in NGOs, business, government and media, India moved to second place from fourth in 2023, while China retained its top spot.

- The UK replaced South Korea as the least trusted nation. The survey also showed less trust for companies headquartered in global powers.

18. Apple reclaims most valued brand title; Tata only Indian brand in top 100

• **Technology companies continue to be the most valued brands globally, with the top five most valued companies from the technology sector, according to Brand Finance 2024.**

- Samsung has entered the top five most valued brands globally.

• **Apple secured the first position after falling to the second spot in 2023.**

- Apple's brand value increased by \$219 billion to \$517 billion.

- Apple has maintained its position as the dominant player in the premium smartphone market, holding a 71 per cent value share.

• **From an Indian perspective, Tata Group was the only Indian brand among the top**

100 most valued brands. Tata improved its ranking from 69th in 2023 to 64th in 2024. The total value of Tata Group stood at \$28.63 billion.

- Brand Finance research found significant gains among brands that have heavily invested in artificial intelligence, seeing NVIDIA (brand value up 163 per cent to \$44.5 billion) become the world's fastest-growing brand. Microsoft (brand value up 78 per cent to \$340.4 billion) also saw an impressive brand value increase, rising two spots to second place.

• Deutsche Telekom (brand value up 17 per cent to \$73.3 billion) has claimed the title as the world's most valuable telecommunications brand,

surpassing Verizon (brand value up 6 per cent to \$71.8 billion). Ranked ninth globally, Deutsche Telekom also leads as the most valuable European brand.

• Tesla (brand value down 12 per cent to \$58.3 billion) has dropped out of the top 10, falling to 18th place in the ranking.

- Tesla has been harmed by its large exposure to the Chinese electric vehicle market, and BYD (brand value up 20 per cent to \$12.1 billion) has now overtaken Tesla to become the world's largest electric vehicle maker.

- While Tesla's brand strength remains high overall, rated AAA-, Brand Finance research shows a significant fall in reputation. Tesla's close association with Elon Musk, a controversial leadership figure, creates added reputational risk for the brand

19. Apple dethrones Samsung as top phone maker for first time since 2010

• Apple Inc.'s iPhone dethroned Samsung Electronics Co. devices to become the best-selling smartphone series over the course of 2023, the first time South Korea's largest company has lost the top spot since 2010.

- The iPhone accounted for a fifth of the global market with close to 235 million shipments last year, research firm IDC estimates.
- Samsung, whose shipments slumped double-digits to 226.6 million, came in second, ahead of Chinese device makers like Xiaomi Corp.

20. Global Firepower Ranking 2024: India has the fourth most powerful military behind China; Pakistan on 9th

• The US maintains its position as the world's most powerful military force, as per the Global Firepower rankings for 2024.

- This comprehensive assessment evaluates the military strength of 145 countries, providing insights into their capabilities. In a global context, Russia and China follow closely behind, securing the second and third positions. **India claimed 4th spot.**

- Global Firepower utilizes a meticulous approach, considering around 60 factors, to determine the military strength of nations.

- The factors include the number of troops, military equipment, financial stability, geographic location, and available resources.

- The Power Index score, with 0.0000 considered 'perfect,' serves as a benchmark. According to the rankings, the United States leads with a score of 0.0699, trailed by Russia (0.0702) and China (0.0706). India, with a Power Index score of 0.1023, secures its position as the fourth most powerful military globally.

• Top 10 Powerful Militaries

- The top 10 countries with the most powerful militaries include the United States, Russia, China, India, South Korea, United Kingdom, Japan, Turkiye, Pakistan, and Italy. Each of these nations has undergone scrutiny based on Global Firepower's comprehensive evaluation.

• Bottom 10 Least Powerful Militaries

- Conversely, the countries with the least powerful militaries, as per the rankings, are Bhutan, Moldova, Suriname, Somalia, Benin, Liberia, Belize, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, and Iceland. These rankings highlight the diverse spectrum of military capabilities across the globe.

21. Tata Consultancy Services is world's 2nd most valuable IT services brand

• Accenture, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Infosys have continued to up their brand value and dominance in the IT industry, according to the latest Brand Finance 2024 report.

- This is despite disruptions caused by newer technologies and a tepid growth environment.
- Accenture remains the world's most valuable IT services brand, with a brand value of \$40.5 billion, representing a 1.6% increase from the previous year, according to an ET report quoting Brand Finance 2024 report.

- TCS, a leading Indian IT company, secured the second spot with a remarkable 11% rise in its brand value, reaching \$19.2 billion. In absolute figures, the increase in brand value was the most significant among global IT majors, rising almost \$2 billion, compared to last year's \$17.2 billion. TCS attributed this growth to its investments in AI-readiness and commitment to sustainability.

- However, Wipro, backed by Azim-Premji, witnessed a decline in brand value by 7.6% to \$6.2 billion.

- Infosys, on the other hand, has maintained its position as the fastest-growing IT services brand over the past five years and maintained its third spot on the ranking. With a brand value of \$14.2 billion, Infosys ranks 145th among the world's most valuable brands. Salil Parekh, CEO of Infosys, was recognized as the number one IT Services CEO for 2024.

• HCL Tech, the third-largest Indian IT firm, experienced the fastest growth, with a 16% increase, retaining its eighth position this year. The valuation reached \$6.5 billion, marking a year-on-year rise of \$1 billion.

22. IESA launches new report on semiconductor and ESDM policies in India

- **The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) launched a report that examined the policies and incentives offered by the Centre and 14 states on the Semiconductor and ESDM (Electronics System Design and Manufacturing) sector.**

- IESA's latest report compares and contrasts the various policies and incentives offered by different states, and provides insights and recommendations for stakeholders

- According to the report, Around 8 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, have come up with a clear mention of catering to the semiconductor industry.

- Of these, 4 states (Gujarat, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh) have already come up with a specified Semiconductor Policy.

23. Female enrolment in Higher Education in 2021-22 sees an increase of 32 pc since

2014: AISHE survey

- **The Ministry of Education has released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022 which said that female enrolment in Higher Education increased to 2.07 crore in 2021-22 from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 (an increase of 50 lakh students, 32 per cent increase).**

- **As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), the enrolment of SC students is 66.23 lakh in 2021-22 as compared to 46.07 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 44 per cent).**

More about the Survey:

- The survey also showed that the total enrolment in higher education has increased to nearly 4.33 crore in 2021-22 from 4.14 crore in 2020-21. There has been an increase of around 91 lakh in the enrolment from 3.42 crore (26.5 per cent) in 2014-15.

- "The enrolment of SC Female students has increased to 31.71 lakh in 2021-22 from 29.01 lakh in 2020-21 and 21.02 lakh in 2014-15. There has been an increase of 51 per cent since 2014-15. The enrolment of ST students has increased to 27.1 lakh in 2021-22 from 16.41 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 65.2 per cent). • The enrolment of OBC students has also increased to 1.63 crore in 2021-22 from 1.13 crore in 2014-15. There is a notable increase in OBC student enrolment since 2014-15 of around 50.8 lakh," the Ministry said quoting the survey.

- As per the Survey, the Minority Student enrolment has increased to 30.1 lakh in 2021-22 from 21.8 lakhs in 2014-15 (an increase of 38 per cent).

- Female Minority Student enrolment has increased to 15.2 lakh in 2021-22 from 10.7 lakh in 2014-15.

- Notably, the total Student Enrolment in North East States is 12.02 lakh in 2021-22 as compared to 9.36 lakh in 2014-15.

- The female enrolment in North East States is 6.07 lakh in 2021-22, higher than the male enrolment of 5.95 lakh.

- "As per response in AISHE 2021-22, about 78.9 per cent of the total students are enrolled in undergraduate level courses and 12.1 per cent are enrolled in postgraduate level courses.

- Among Disciplines at the undergraduate level in AISHE 2021-22, enrolment is highest in Arts (34.2 per cent), followed by science (14.8), Commerce (13.3) and Engineering and Technology (11.8).

- Among streams at postgraduate level in AISHE 2021-22, maximum students are enrolled in Social Science (21.1 per cent) followed by science (14.7)," the survey stated.

- Government Universities constituting 58.6 per cent of total Universities, contribute 73.7 per cent of total enrolment, and Private Universities account for 26.3 per cent of total enrolment.

- "The total number of Universities / University level institutions registered is 1,168, Colleges 45,473 and Standalone Institutions 12,002. In all, 341 Universities/University level institutions have been established since 2014-15.

- 17 Universities (of which 14 are State Public Universities) and 4,470 Colleges are exclusively for women," the survey said.

- As per the survey, the total number of faculty/teachers in 2021-22 is 15.98 lakh, of which about 56.6 per cent are male and 43.4 are female.

- "Female faculty/teachers have increased to 6.94 lakh in 2021-22 from 5.69 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 22 per cent since 2014-15). There is a marginal betterment of female per 100 male faculty from 75 in 2020-21 to 77 in 2021-22," it added.

24. India home to 718 snow leopards; Ladakh highest with 477: SPAI report

- **Environment minister, Bhupender Yadav released the report , Status of Snow Leopards in India during the National Board for Wildlife meet held in Delhi.**

- There are around **718 snow leopards in the country**, the first ever population estimation exercise of the vulnerable species by the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program has found.

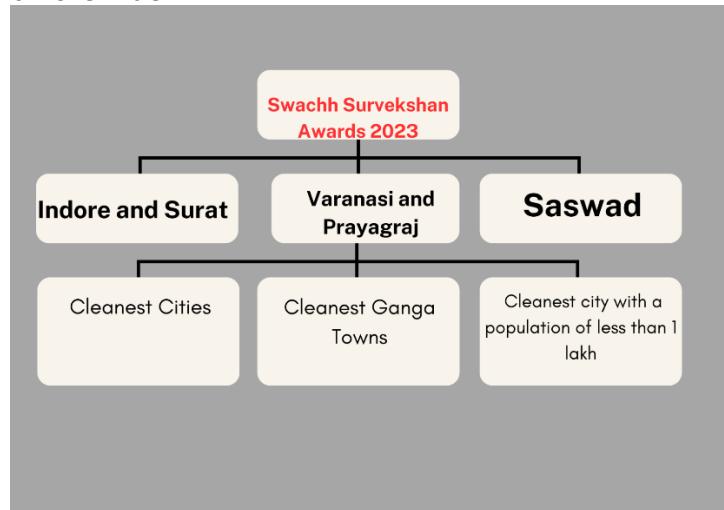
- The snow leopard is designated in the 'vulnerable' category by the IUCN
- During the assessment conducted from 2019 to 2023, a total of 241 unique snow leopards were photographed.
- Based on the analysis, Ladakh has the highest estimated population of the animal (477) followed by Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).**
- The study covered approximately 120,000 sq km of snow leopard habitat across the trans-Himalayan region, including Ladakh, J & K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh; surveyed 13,450 km of trails.
- The estimation of snow leopard population is important because of the species' role as an apex predator in the Himalayan ecosystem. As an apex predator, it exerts top down regulation of prey populations, thereby influencing the ecological equilibrium of its habitat.
- The species is found in 12 countries, Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and its global population is estimated at 3020 to 5390 , according to the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program.**

25. IMF upgrades India's GDP growth rate to 6.7 percent for current financial year

- International Monetary Fund (IMF) has increased its GDP growth estimate for India to 6.7 percent for the current financial year.**
- It is 40 basis points higher than its previous forecast of 6.3 percent. In its latest World Economic Outlook report, IMF also raised India's upward medium-term GDP growth to 6.5 percent, for 2025 and 2026
- The IMF said results are reflecting a strong public investment, and positive labor market outcomes. The IMF said India will narrow its current account deficit projection for financial year 24 from 1.8 percent of GDP to 1.6 percent. The agency said India continues to be the fastest-growing economy among the major economies of the world. In Financial Year 23, India's GDP had expanded by 7.2 percent over the previous year.

26. India ranks 93 in Global Corruption Index

- Transparency International unveiled the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), disclosing a list of the world's most corrupt countries.**
- In the CPI, India secured the 93rd position with a score of 39**, according to the Transparency International report.
- India's overall score remained relatively stable, as it was 40 in 2022, securing the 85th position.
- Meanwhile, Pakistan, with a score of 29, and Sri Lanka (34) grappled with their respective debt burdens and ensuing political instability, the report said.
- Among India's neighbours, Afghanistan and Myanmar scored 20, China scored 42, Japan scored 73 and Bangladesh scored 24.
- For the sixth consecutive year, Denmark secures the top position on the index with a score of 90 due to its "well-functioning justice systems".**
- Following closely, Finland and New Zealand hold the second and third positions with scores of 87 and 85, respectively.
- This year, the top 10 countries on the index include Norway (84), Singapore (83), Sweden (82), Switzerland (82), the Netherlands (79), Germany (78), and Luxembourg (78).
- Taking the bottom spots in the index are Somalia (11), Venezuela (13), Syria (13), South Sudan (13), and Yemen (16). These countries are all affected by protracted crises, primarily armed conflicts.
- Nicaragua (17), North Korea (17), Haiti (17), Equatorial Guinea (17), Turkmenistan (18), and Libya (18) are the subsequent lowest performers on the index.



Important Days

1. Global Family Day 2024

- Every year, Global Family Day is celebrated on January 1. As we begin the new year on a fresh note, it is important to understand how all of us are connected through love and humanity.
- Global Family Day is also known as World Peace Day as it speaks of the importance of bringing harmony and unity in diversity.
- In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly launched the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. In 1999, the members of the United Nations received a formal invitation to dedicate the first day of the year to developing strategies to bring peace to the world. Since then, Global Family Day has been celebrated every year on the same date.

2. World Day of War Orphans | 6th January

- World Day of War Orphans is observed every year on January 6 to highlight the plight of children orphaned by wars and conflicts.
- The day aims to raise awareness about the trauma experienced by orphans and the social, psychological and physical obstacles they often need to overcome to lead a normal life.
- The World Day of War Orphans was founded by the French organisation SOS Enfants en Detresses.
- The organisation works to help children in distress.

3. Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas | 9 January

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, also known as Non-Resident Indian Day, is celebrated on January 9 to mark the contribution and achievements of the overseas Indian community to the development of India.
- The day also commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, from South Africa to India in 1915, who led India's freedom struggle and changed the lives of Indians.
- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was first celebrated in 2003.
- Its format was later revised in 2015 to celebrate the event once every two years and to hold theme-based conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policy-makers, and stakeholders.
- The theme of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is chosen to reflect the current priorities and concerns of the Indian diaspora. The theme of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2021 was "Contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat" and 2023 was "Diaspora: Reliable Partners for India's Progress in Amrit Kaal"

4. World Hindi Day | 10 January

- World Hindi Day is being observed on 10 January.

- The day is commemorated every year with the objective to promote use of Hindi language abroad.

- On this day in 2006, the First World Hindi Conference was held in Nagpur with the aim to promote the language worldwide and since then, every year 10th January is being observed as the World Hindi Day.

5. DPIIT organises Startup India Innovation Week 2024

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is organising the Startup India Innovation Week 2024 from January 10 to 18.

- The aim of the exercise is to celebrate the country's startup ecosystem and launch the National Startup Day (16th January 2024).
- The Startup India initiative was launched by PM Narendra Modi on 16th January 2016.
- On 16th January 2024, as part of the National Startup Day celebrations, DPIIT is organising the result declaration and felicitation ceremony for the National Startup Awards 2023 and the 4th edition of the States' Startup Ranking Framework, two of the flagship initiatives under Startup India.

6. National Youth Day | 12 January

- National Youth Day is observed in India every year on January 12 to honour the teachings and ideals of Swami Vivekananda who was born on January 12, 1863, in Kolkata. The decision to celebrate Vivekananda's birthday as National Youth Day was taken in 1984, and it was first marked on January 12, 1985.
 - Swami Vivekananda was the chief disciple of 19th century mystic and yogi Ramakrishna Paramhansa who founded the Ramakrishna Math, a monastic order based on his guru's teachings in Kolkata and a worldwide spiritual movement known as the Ramakrishna Mission based on the ancient Hindu philosophy of Vedanta.
 - His birth anniversary is celebrated across India as National Youth Day, to honour one of the greatest philosophers and spiritual leaders and marks his ideas on how the young should participate in the modern world while upholding their values.
- The theme for National Youth Day 2024 is "Arise, Awake, and Realise the Power You Hold."

7. National Startup Day | 16 January

- On January 15, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced January 16, the foundation day of Startup India, as National Startup Day.

- The aim of National Startup Day is to champion entrepreneurs, cultivate a robust startup

ecosystem, and pivot India into a nation of job creators rather than job seekers.

- With an aim to bring together the country's startups, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is organising the Startup India Innovation Week 2024 from 10th January 2024 to 18th January 2024 to celebrate the Indian Startup Ecosystem and the National Startup Day (16th January 2024).

8. Kokborok Day | 19 January

On January 19th, the Indian State of Tripura observes Kokborok Day, also known as Tripuri Language Day, to foster the Kokborok language. The day honours the year 1979 when Kokborok became officially recognized for the first time.

- This year marks the 46th anniversary of Kokborok Day observed annually to demand the restoration of the ancient language of Tripura.
- The native tongue of Tripura is Kokborok, also known as Tripuri, and has been used by the local Tripuri people for many, many years. One of North East India's classical tongues, it. People are referred to as Borok and the language as Kok.
- Tiprakok/Tripurikok was Kokborok's previous name. In the northeastern region of India, in the state of Tripura, and the nearby CHT hill tracts of Bangladesh, Kokborok (Tripuri), a Tibeto-Burman language, is one of the main native languages.
- One of the Tibeto-Burman languages in the area with the fastest growth and development is Kokborok. The Tripuri clans like Debbarma, Kalai, Reang, Jamatia, Tripura, Noatia, Rupini, Murasing, and Uchoi are the main speakers of the language. The Kokborok language is spoken by the Tripuri community. Kokborok speakers collectively refer to themselves as "Tripuris."

9. National Girl Child Day | 24 January

Every year, National Girl Child Day is observed on 24th January to raise awareness of the difficulties that girls in Indian society endure. The day promotes equal opportunities in education, healthcare, and nutrition while raising awareness of the injustices that girls face. National awareness campaigns advocating for girls' empowerment are launched on this day each year.

- It serves to remind people how important it is to treat all girl children with dignity and equal opportunities, promoting their education and overall well-being.
- In India, the day also falls on the same dates as other government-sponsored programs, including Beti Padhao and Beti Bachao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child).

The theme for 2019 was 'Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow'. My Voice, Our

Common Future" was the theme for 2020. In 2021, the National Girl Child Day theme was 'Digital Generation, Our Generation'.

10. International Day of Education | 24 January

• In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution to make **January 24 as the International Day of Education** to create awareness on the accessibility of education and why it is significant for everyone.

- The resolution was authored by 59 member states, and since then, January 24 has been observed as International Day of Education.

• The theme of this year is ' Learning for lasting peace'.

11. National Voters' Day (NVD) | 25 January

Election Commission of India is celebrating 14th National Voters' Day (NVD) on 25th January 2024.

• Dedicated to the voters, NVD 2024 theme - 'Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For sure' is a continuation from last year's theme.
• Since 2011, National Voters' Day has been celebrated on January 25, to mark the foundation day of the Election Commission of India in 25 January 1950.

About Election Commission:

• The Election Commission of India is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India. The body administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.

• Election Commission of India is a permanent Constitutional Body. The Election Commission was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950. The Commission celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2001.

• Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner. It currently consists of Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.

• For the first time two additional Commissioners were appointed on 16th October 1989 but they had a very short tenure till 1st January 1990. Later, on 1st October 1993 two additional Election Commissioners were appointed. The concept of multi-member Commission has been in operation since then, with decision making power by majority vote.

• Appointment & Tenure Of Commissioners
• The President appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. They have tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India. The Chief Election Commissioner can be

removed from office in like manner and on like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

12. International Day of Clean Energy | 26 January

- **The International Day of Clean Energy on 26 January** was declared by the General Assembly as a call to raise awareness and mobilize action for a just and inclusive transition to clean energy for the benefit of people and the planet.
- 26 January is also the founding date of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
- Adopting clean energy is integral to the fight against climate change. A large chunk of the greenhouse gases that blanket the Earth and trap the Sun's heat are generated through energy production, by burning fossil fuels (oil, coal, and gas) to generate electricity and heat.
- The science is clear: to limit climate change, we need to end our reliance on fossil fuels and invest in alternative sources of energy that are clean, accessible, affordable, sustainable, and reliable.

13. International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust | 27 January

- **United Nations General Assembly Resolution that established the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, also designated 27 January as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust** ' observed with ceremonies and activities at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at United Nations offices around the world.
- Every year around 27 January, UNESCO pays tribute to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to counter antisemitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance that may lead to group-targeted violence.
- The date marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945.
- It was officially proclaimed, in November 2005, International Day of Commemoration in Memory

of the Victims of the Holocaust by the United Nations General Assembly.

14. International Customs Day | 26 January

- **International Customs Day is celebrated under the aegis of Belgium-based World Customs Organisation (WCO) all over the world on January 26.**

- This year, the World Customs Organisation (WCO) has dedicated the International Customs Day to the theme of 'Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose'.
- In India, the responsibilities of the customs agencies are handled by the Central Board of Excise and Customs.

15. Indian Newspaper Day | 28 January

- **India's Newspaper Day is celebrated every year on 28 January to commemorate the launch of the country's first newspaper in 1780.**

- "Hicky's Bengal Gazette, also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser, was the name of the first weekly publication. Augustus Hicky, a James Irishman, is also known as the "father of the Indian press".

16. World Leprosy Day 2024 | Last Sunday of January (28 January 2024)

- **World Leprosy Day (WLD) is celebrated on the last Sunday of January.**
- The theme for World Leprosy Day 2024 is 'Beat Leprosy'.

- This theme encapsulates the dual objectives of the day: to eradicate the stigma associated with leprosy and to promote the dignity of people affected by the disease.

17. International Zebra Day | 31 January

- **International Zebra Day is celebrated every year on 31 January**, across the world.
- It serves as an important occasion to increase global awareness regarding the conservation of zebras.
- The purpose of International Zebra Day is to inspire people to actively participate in the cause, fostering a sense of responsibility towards these majestic animals.
- It is important to celebrate International Zebra Day to create awareness and inform more people about protecting zebras.

Summit & Conferences

1. India to chair, host UNESCO's World Heritage Committee for first time In July

- India is set to chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024, marking a historic milestone for our nation. Vishal V Sharma, India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, announced this decision on January 9. Ms Audrey Azoulay | Director-General of UNESCO

- The **World Heritage Committee**, comprising representatives from 21 member states, gathers annually to recognize global cultural and natural heritage.
- According to the *World Heritage Convention*, a Committee member's term of office is for six years, but most States Parties choose voluntarily to be Members of the Committee for only four years, in order to give other States Parties an opportunity to be on the Committee.
- The **21** States Parties of the current World Heritage Committee are the following:
 - Argentina Belgium Bulgaria Greece India Italy Jamaica Japan Kazakhstan Kenya Lebanon Mexico Qatar Republic of Korea Rwanda Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Senegal Türkiye Ukraine Viet Nam Zambia

2. Second International AYUSH Conference Inaugurated in Dubai, Focusing on Holistic Healthcare for Non-Communicable Chronic Disease

- The second International AYUSH Conference and Exhibition was inaugurated at the Dubai World Trade Centre, orchestrated by the Science India Forum and the Ministry of AYUSH.
- Running from January 13 to 15, the three-day event is dedicated to showcasing AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy) as a reliable healthcare system.
- **The focal theme of the conference, "Non-Communicable Chronic Diseases – Prevention & Management through AYUSH,"** aims to highlight AYUSH as a prevention-oriented and cost-effective approach to creating a disease-free society.
- With over 1500 experts expected from India, the Middle East, Far East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and America, the conference is set to become a global platform for discussions and collaborations in the field of traditional medicine.

3. 54th World Economic Forum Summit Begins in Davos, Switzerland: Focus on Trust, Technology, and Global Challenges

- The 54th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum has begun today at Davos, Switzerland.
- **The theme of the conference is Rebuilding Trust, emphasizing the focus on exploring the opportunities enabled by the new technologies and their implications on decision-making and global partnership**
- Issues related to climate change, threats from artificial intelligence, economic issues, cooperation amid geopolitical fragmentation and other problems across the globe will be discussed. Ongoing conflicts like the Ukraine War, Israel-Hamas war will also be part of the agenda.
- Union Ministers Smriti Irani, Ashwini Vaishnaw and Hardeep Singh Puri will be representing India at the 5-day event. Meanwhile, three chief ministers - Maharashtra's Eknath Shinde, Telangana's Revanth Reddy and Karnataka's Siddaramaiah and over a hundred CEOs will also be part of the Indian delegation at the Forum.
- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das and Ministers from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana will also join the meeting.

4. Asia's largest civil aviation event, Wings India 2024 underway in Hyderabad

- Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyothiraditya Scindia inaugurated the prestigious Wings India 2024 and Global Aviation Summit at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad.
- The Airports Authority of India in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Ministry and FICCI has organised the four-day event.
- Theme: Connecting India with the World in Amritkal
- **The Wings India 2024 is being held with the main theme 'Connecting India with the World in Amritkal'** and holds deliberations over the strategies and strategic framework for the future Aviation Sector of the country.

5. 9th edition of India International Science Festival inaugurated in Faridabad

- The IISF four-day-long festival kickstarted at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)-Regional Centre for Biotechnology (RCB) joint campus in Faridabad.
- The ninth edition of the festival will celebrate the achievements of various Indian scientific institutions around the **theme 'Science and technology public outreach in Amrit Kaal.'**

Science & Technology

1. ISRO launched XPoSat aboard PSLV-C58

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) aboard Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C58.
- This mission marks India's first dedicated scientific endeavour to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays from celestial sources.
- The satellite was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- Ten other scientific payloads were also launched along with XPoSat.
- This mission marks India's first dedicated scientific endeavour to study the polarisation of cosmic X-rays from celestial sources.
- Following the launch of XPoSat, India has become the second country in the world after the United States to send a specialised astronomy observatory to study black holes and neutron stars in our galaxy.
- The mission life of the primary payload XPoSat is about five years.

2. Google DeepMind introduces mobile ALOHA humanoid system

- Stanford University has introduced Mobile ALOHA, a robotic system that advances the capabilities of bimanual mobile manipulation through low-cost whole-body teleoperation.
- This innovation, which builds upon Google DeepMind's existing ALOHA system, brings mobility and dexterity to the forefront of robotic learning.
- This robotics technology addresses the limitations of traditional imitation learning from human demonstrations, which often focus on tabletop manipulation without the necessary mobility and dexterity for real-world applications.
- DeepMind Technologies Limited, doing business as Google DeepMind, is a British-American artificial intelligence research laboratory which serves as a subsidiary of Google. Founded in the UK in 2010, it was acquired by Google in 2014

3. IITs Madras, Kanpur find way to recycle waste material from iron ore mining

- Researchers at the Indian Institutes of Technology Madras and Kanpur have developed a process to convert waste produced from iron ore mining into an environment-friendly material that can be reused by industry.
- This project is of importance to India as while processing iron ore, particles smaller than 0.15 mm are generated and are discarded as waste known as slime.
- The researchers collaborated with NMDC and JSW Steel to transform slime into iron-rich materials suitable for blast furnace charging

through a microwave-assisted beneficiation process.

- The process is economical as the microwave selectively interacts with iron oxides or carbon mix, leaving out other impurities (like silica, alumina, phosphorus oxides) while also rapidly heating the material compared to conventional routes, saving a significant amount of energy and emissions.
- IITs Madras and Kanpur undertook a project under **IMPRINT INDIA (Impacting Research Innovation and Technology)**, an initiative of the union education ministry.

4. Software giant Microsoft adds AI button to keyboards to summon chatbots

- Microsoft introduces an AI button on PC keyboards to launch its AI chatbot, in partnership with OpenAI, capitalizing on generative AI technology.
- The button will be added to laptops by third-party manufacturers, replacing the right "CTRL" key or menu key.
- The keyboard redesign will be Microsoft's biggest change to PC keyboards since it introduced a special Windows key in the 1990s.
- Microsoft's four-squared logo design has evolved, but the key has been a fixture on Windows-oriented keyboards for nearly three decades.
- The newest AI button will be marked by the ribbon-like Copilot logo and be located near the space bar.
- On some computers it will replace the right CTRL key, while on others it will replace a menu key.
- Microsoft is not the only company with customised keys. Apple pioneered the concept in the 1980s with its Command key marked by a looped square design (it also sported an Apple logo for a time). Google has a search button on its Chromebooks and was first to experiment with an AI-specific key to launch its voice assistant on its now-discontinued Pixelbook.

5. Google DeepMind Rolls Out Mobile ALOHA, An Open Source Humanoid

- Google DeepMind and Stanford University have leveraged cutting-edge technology to revolutionise household tasks.
- Together, they have unveiled Mobile ALOHA, an innovative and affordable open-source hardware system designed for bimanual teleoperation, specifically aimed at enhancing capabilities in cooking and cleaning.

6. ArcelorMittal partners with IIT Madras to create Asia's first Hyperloop facility

- ArcelorMittal has announced that it has established a partnership with Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) and is working closely with IIT

Madras' Hyperloop Technology teams '
Avishkar Hyperloop, student team and TuTr Hyperloop, a start-up incubated at IIT Madras, which are developing cost-effective Hyperloop technologies for passenger and cargo mobility.

- ArcelorMittal and AM/NS India are providing foundational steel materials, as well as engineering, design and project management expertise to support the creation of India's and Asia's first Hyperloop test track at IIT Madras' 163-acre Discovery Campus at Thaivur, on the outskirts of Chennai.
- In July 2023, ArcelorMittal announced that its XCarb Innovation Fund was launching an accelerator programme to fund and support the next wave of breakthrough ideas on decarbonisation emerging from India.
- Launched in 2021, the XCarb Innovation Fund invests in companies developing technologies that hold the potential to accelerate the steel industry's transition to carbon neutral steelmaking.

7. Aditya L1 reaches destination, successfully enters halo orbit

- **The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) successfully placed Aditya L1, the country's first space-based solar observatory, into a halo orbit around its intended destination: the Sun-Earth Lagrangian Point L1.**

• After a 1.5-million km journey the spacecraft was placed in a halo orbit around L1 following a firing manoeuvre which was carried out by ISRO scientists and engineers at the ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) in Bengaluru.

- The orbit of Aditya-L1 spacecraft is a periodic halo orbit which is located roughly 1.5 million km from earth on the continuously moving Sun-Earth line with an orbital period of about 177.86 earth days.

- This halo orbit is a periodic, three-dimensional orbit at L1 involving Sun, Earth and a spacecraft.
- This specific halo orbit is selected to ensure a mission lifetime of 5 years, minimising station-keeping manoeuvres and thus fuel consumption and ensuring a continuous, unobstructed view of the Sun.

8. In a first, India to launch GSAT-20 satellite on SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket

- **NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL), the ISRO's commercial arm, announced its plan to launch communication satellite GSAT-20 onboard Elon Musk-owned SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket.**
- GSAT-20 (renamed as GSAT-N2) is a high throughput Ka-band satellite. Ka-band satellites deliver high-speed broadband internet connectivity and digital video and audio transmission.

9. LG unveils world's 1st wireless transparent OLED TV

- **LG Electronics has unveiled the world's first wireless transparent TV.**

• Called LG Signature OLED T, the TV has a glass for a display that looks as if it disappears when turned off. The TV has a self-lit pixel technology that enables it to maintain the picture quality and it has a 4K resolution.

- **OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diodes)** is a flat light emitting technology, made by placing a series of organic thin films between two conductors. When electrical current is applied, a bright light is emitted. OLEDs are emissive displays that do not require a backlight and so are thinner and more efficient than LCD displays (which do require a white backlight).

• **LG Electronics Inc.** is a South Korean multinational electronics company headquartered in Yeouido-dong, Seoul, South Korea.

10. Microsoft launches AI Odyssey to skill 1 lakh developers in India in AI Tech

- **Microsoft has launched an initiative, AI Odyssey, that aims to skill one lakh developers in India in the latest AI technologies and tools.**

• The month-long program is open to all AI enthusiasts in India, regardless of experience level or background. The program has two levels that participants need to complete by January 31, 2024.

11. China launches new satellite 'Einstein Probe' shaped like a lotus to observe violent cosmic phenomena

- **Einstein Probe (EP), uses new X-ray detection technology inspired by the functioning of a lobster eye & was launched by a Long March-2C carrier rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in China's Sichuan Province.**

• It a new astronomical satellite shaped like a lotus launched to observe mysterious transient phenomena in the universe that flicker like fireworks.

• Weighing about 1.45 tonnes and as large as a full-size SUV, the satellite is shaped like a lotus in full bloom and features 12 petals and two stamens, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

• The 12 'petals' are 12 modules consisting of wide-field X-ray telescopes (WXT), while the two 'stamens' consist of two modules of follow-up X-ray telescopes (FXT).

• These telescopes form a space observatory which is aimed at helping scientists capture the first light stemming from supernova explosions, search for and pinpoint X-ray signals accompanying gravitational wave events, and discover dormant black holes and other faint

transient and variable celestial objects at the far reaches of the universe.

12. Gen AI gives a new lease of life to old favourite Chandamama stories

• As many as 10,000 volunteers, mostly from different engineering colleges, have helped a small team of techies build a repository of stories in Telugu for a Small Language Model (SLM).

• As it gets the feed (digital text), the SLM model 'AI Chandamama Kathalu' has started learning.

• While GenerativeAI models such as ChatGPT and Bard were built on Large Language Models (LLMs) and can churn out lengthy output, the SLMs can generate focused and smaller amounts of content.

• Students from 30 engineering colleges participated in a four-hour hackathon that witnessed uploading of 40,000 pages of stories from Chandamama. This dataset has just been released for the public.

13. Pixxel opens new spacecraft manufacturing facility in Bengaluru

• Bengaluru-based space data company Pixxel inaugurated its first spacecraft manufacturing facility in Bengaluru.

• The new facility holds significance as it targets to launch six satellites this year and 18 more by 2025, further advancing its mission of building a 'health monitor' for the planet.

• The facility was inaugurated by S. Somanath, chairman of ISRO.

• Pixxel has launched three of its satellites - Shakuntala, D2, and Anand - in collaboration with ISRO and Elon Musk's SpaceX.

• The Bengaluru startup further plans to launch Firefly, a constellation comprising six high-resolution hyperspectral satellites, in June. This would be followed by the so-called Honeybees constellation, another satellite constellation that will improve image resolution and the wavelength range of Pixxel's satellites.

• Additionally, Pixxel will also be rolling out its geospatial analytics platform, Aurora, by June 2024.

• The company's satellites are used in the environment, agriculture, and mining sectors to detect oil spills, vegetation, and other geographical issues, respectively.

• Pixxel has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture to provide hyperspectral imagery.

14. ISRO develops second-generation distress alert transmitter for fishermen

• ISRO has developed a second-generation 'Distress Alert Transmitter' (DAT), incorporating advanced satellite communication and navigation capabilities that allow fishermen at sea to send

emergency messages from fishing boats and get acknowledgement in real time.

• The DAT has been operational since 2010 and more than 20,000 of them are currently in use, • The messages are sent through a communication satellite and received at a central control station (INMCC: Indian Mission Control Centre) where the alert signals are decoded for the identity and location of the fishing boat, according to an ISRO statement.

• The extracted information is forwarded to Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres (MRCCs) under the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

15. PM Modi inaugurates new state-of-the-art campus of Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center at Bengaluru

• Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new state of the art Boeing India Engineering and Technology Center and launched the Boeing Sukanya programme in Bengaluru.

• The state-of-the-art BIETC is built with an investment of ₹1,600 crore.

• It is located in a 43-acre campus, and is the American aerospace major's largest such investment outside the U.S.

• Boeing's relationship with India goes back to the 1940s when the Indian Air Force enlisted two Boeing aircraft-- the T-6 Texan, or Harvard Advanced Trainer, made by North American Aviation, and the C-47 Skytrain military transport, a military variant of the DC-3, made by McDonnell Douglas.

16. Gurgaon-based ACME signs pact with Japan's IHI to supply green ammonia

• Gurgaon-based ACME Group signed an offtake term sheet for the supply of green ammonia from its project in Odisha to IHI Corporation, a Japanese integrated heavy industry company.

• The term sheet covers the supply of 0.4 million metric tons per annum (MMTPA) of green ammonia from Phase-1 of ACME's Gopalpur on a long-term basis.

• The green hydrogen and ammonia project of ACME in Odisha has a planned capacity of 1.2 MMTPA to be developed in phases, and the first production is likely to be expected by 2027.

17. Japan craft made successful pin-point Moon landing, space agency says

• Japan's "Moon Sniper" craft made a pin-point lunar landing despite last-minute engine problems, the space agency said as it released the first images from the mission.

• The touchdown made Japan only the fifth nation to achieve a soft lunar landing, after the United States, the Soviet Union, China and India.

• The unmanned Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) -- dubbed the "Moon Sniper" for its

precision technology -- had the goal of touching down within 100 metres (330 feet) of a specific landing spot on a crater.

- Two previous Japanese lunar missions -- one public and one private -- have also failed. In 2022, the country unsuccessfully sent a lunar probe named Omotenashi as part of the United States's Artemis 1 mission.
- In April, Japanese startup ispace tried in vain to become the first private company to land on the Moon, losing communication with its craft after what it described as a "hard landing".

18. Bhavish Aggarwal's AI startup Krutrim turns unicorn after raising \$50 mn

• **Krutrim, an artificial intelligence (AI) venture co-founded by Bhavish Aggarwal of Ola, announced that it has achieved unicorn status 'a term used to describe startups valued at \$1 billion or above' following its inaugural funding round.**

- The round, which saw participation from notable investors, such as Matrix Partners India, garnered investments worth \$50 million in equity at a valuation of \$1 billion.
- With this, Krutrim claimed the distinction of being India's first AI company to reach unicorn status and also the title of the country's fastest unicorn. Krutrim, which translates to "artificial" in Sanskrit, was launched in April 2023 by Aggarwal and Krishnamurthy Venugopala Tenneti, a board member of ANI Technologies that owns Ola and Ola Electric.
- The AI startup is the third venture helmed by Aggarwal to achieve a \$1 billion valuation, after mobility firm Ola and electric vehicle manufacturer Ola Electric.
- The funds raised will be used to expedite the company's "mission to transform the AI landscape, foster innovation, and extend its global footprint".

19. ISRO's unique & inexpensive space platform POEM-3 achieves all payload objectives

- **ISRO said its space platform, POEM-3, has successfully achieved all its payload objectives. POEM-3 (the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3) uses the spent PS4 stage of the PSLV-C58 rocket that launched XPoSat on January 1 this year.**
- ISRO said POEM-3 flew with nine payloads from Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, Physical Research Laboratory, academia, and space start-ups.
- By the 25th day in orbit, POEM-3, which the space agency described as a unique and inexpensive platform, completed 400 orbits.
- Over this period, each payload was put into operation, as planned and performance was demonstrated.
- **POEM-3 is a three-axis-attitude controlled platform with power generation and**

telecommand and telemetry capabilities, for supporting payloads, it was noted.

- It is predicted that POEM-3 will continue orbiting for approximately 73 more days before re-entering the Earth's atmosphere.

20. CoRover.ai unveils BharatGPT a GenAI as a Service

• **CoRover.ai, a Human-Centric conversational AI platform unveils India's first indigenous Generative AI LLM, BharatGPT.**

- The platform, which aims to cater to over 130 crore users, was showcased at the 2023 Global Partner Artificial Intelligence Summit in New Delhi.
- **BharatGPT integrates voice modality in more than 12 Indian languages and text modality in 22 languages, in collaboration with the National Hub of Language Technology (NHLT).**

• The NHLT is a key component of Digital India's efforts, tasked with executing the National Language Translation Mission (NLTM) under the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY).

21. NASA Unveils Aircraft That Can Travel Faster Than Speed Of Sound.

• **As NASA's newest X-plane, the X-59 is designed to break the sound barrier without the thunderous sonic booms that typically occur when aircraft go supersonic.**

- Instead, the Quesst will make a much quieter "thump," similar to the sound of a car door slamming as heard from indoors. Its predicted top speed is 1.4 times the speed of sound or 1,488 kilometres per hour.

• NASA's Quesst mission, which aims to provide information to assist regulators in re-evaluating regulations that forbid commercial supersonic flying over land, is centred around the X-59.

22. CMFRI to develop lab-grown fish meat for the first time in India

• An Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institute has signed a first-of-its-kind agreement in India with a start-up to develop lab-grown fish meat.

• **The Kochi-based Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has entered into a collaborative research agreement with Neat Meatt Biotech, a start-up working on cultivated meat.**

• Lab-grown meat or alternative proteins is gradually attracting big investments globally. As of 2020, around \$3.1 billion capital was invested in the smart proteins sector, according to reports.

• Some studies suggest that the niche market is projected to reach \$290 billion by 2035. Major agencies also predict that it would make up 4 to 60 per cent of the world meat market by 2040.

- As per the MoU signed by CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan and co-founder and CEO of the Neat Meatt Biotech Sandeep Sharma, CMFRI will carry out research on early cell line development of high-value marine fish species like king fish, pomfret and seer fish in the initial phase.
- CMFRI will also handle genetic, biochemical, and analytical work related to the project. Neat Meatt will lead the optimization of cell growth media, development of scaffolds or microcarriers

for cell attachment, and scaling up production through bioreactors.

- The ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was established by Government of India on February 3rd 1947 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and later it joined the ICAR family in 1967.
- The Headquarters of the ICAR-CMFRI is located in Kochi, Kerala.

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Defence

1. Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' between India and UAE to be held in Rajasthan

- **The Joint Military Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' between India and UAE will be held from January 2 to January 15 in Rajasthan.**

- The joint drills under 'Desert Cyclone 2024' will aim to enhance interoperability by learning and sharing best practices in urban operations.

• The first-ever India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise took place in September 2008.

- India and the UAE enjoy strong bonds of friendship which are founded on millennia-old cultural, religious and economic intercourse between the two regions.

- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, potential areas of bilateral cooperation in the defence field are the production and development of defence equipment; joint exercises of armed forces, particularly naval exercises; sharing of information on strategy and doctrines; technical cooperation in respect of Intermediate Jet Trainer etc.

2. Indian Air Force C-130 J aircraft recently carried out night landing at Kargil airstrip

• In a first, an Indian Air Force C-130 J aircraft recently carried out a night landing at the Kargil airstrip.

- Indian Air Force said, employing terrain masking enroute, the exercise also dovetailed a training mission of the Garud Commandos.

3. Navy gets first India-made long endurance Drishti 10 Starliner drone

• Admiral R Hari Kumar unveiled the indigenous Drishti 10 Starliner drone for the Indian Navy at Adani Defence's drone unveiling ceremony.

- The Drishti 10 Starliner is an advanced Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platform boasting a 36-hour endurance, 450kg payload capacity and clearance to fly in both segregated and unsegregated airspace.

• Adani Defence has built India's first unmanned aerial vehicles manufacturing facility, and the first private sector small arms manufacturing facility.

- It is currently setting up the country's first comprehensive aircraft MRO or maintenance, repair and overhaul facility to ensure safety and airworthiness as per to international standards.

4. Navy gets its first MALE drone made by Adani

- **The Indian Navy took delivery of its first India-made Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) drone, acquired under emergency procurement mechanism.**

- **Manufactured by Adani Defence and Aerospace in partnership with the Israeli firm Elbit**, in Hyderabad, the Drishti 10

StarLiner, has an endurance of 36 hours, satellite connectivity and the ability to carry a payload of 450 kg.

- It is the Indian version of the original Hermes StarLiner.

5. 'Ugram': DRDO launches indigenous assault rifle for armed forces

- **Ugram, a state-of-the-art assault rifle of the 7.62 x 51 mm calibre, was launched by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).**

- Ugram, which means ferocious, has been developed and manufactured DRDO's Pune-based facility Armament Research and Development Establishments (ARDE) along with Hyderabad-based Dvipa Armour India Private Limited. Ugram weighs less than four kilograms and has an effective range of 500 metres.

- Ugram, which means ferocious, has been developed and manufactured in collaboration with a private firm. It is designed for the operational requirements of armed forces, paramilitary and state police forces.

- Ugram weighs less than four kilograms and has an effective range of 500 metres. It has been designed based on the General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQRs) of the Indian Army, according to ARDE scientists.

- Having a 20-round magazine, the rifle has a rivet-free design and is capable of firing in both single as well as full auto mode.

6. Indian Army to observe 2024 as Year of Technology Absorption

- **Indian Army will observe 2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption'** as it's trying to gradually mature into a modern force that will have a new operational philosophy for induction of drones & counter-drones systems right across infantry, artillery and armoured battalions, and establish Command Cyber Operations Support Wings, besides bridging other conventional asymmetries

7. 20th India-Japan Coast Guard exercise

- **The 20th joint exercise between the Coast Guard of India and Japan took place off the coast of Chennai.**

- Indian Coast Guard ships Shaunak, Shaurya, Sujay, Samudra Paheredar, Rani Abbakka, Annie Besant, C-440, Sagar Anveshika and Matsya Drushti and six aircraft, and Japanese Coast Guard ship Yashima participated in the exercise.

8. DRDO successfully flight-tests new Akash missile off Odisha coast

- **The New Generation Akash (Akash-NG) missile, being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), was successfully flight-tested from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, off the Odisha coast.**

- The flight test was conducted against a high-speed unmanned aerial target at a very low altitude.

9. Indian-Thai Navy first bilateral exercise "Ex-Ayutthaya" connects to Ayodhya

- The Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy conducted a maiden bilateral exercise, named 'Ex-Ayutthaya', which symbolises the significance of 'Ayodhya' in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand, which holds historic legacies and has rich cultural ties.**
- The 36th edition of the India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) was also conducted along with the maiden bilateral exercise.**
- The Indo-Thai Bilateral Exercise 'Ex-Ayutthaya' translates to 'The Invincible One' or 'Undefeatable', and "symbolises the significance of two of the oldest cities, Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand, the historic legacies, rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives dating back to several centuries.

10. INDIAN ARMY SPECIAL FORCES CONTINGENT REACHES EGYPT FOR JOINT EXERCISE 'CYCLONE'

- The Indian Army contingent comprising 25 personnel reached Egypt to take part in the 2nd edition of India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE.**
- The Exercise will be conducted at Anshas, Egypt from 22nd January to 1st February 2024. The first edition of the exercise was conducted last year in India.
- Aim of the Exercise is to acquaint both the sides with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of Special Operations in desert/ semi desert terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter.
- Exercise CYCLONE is designed to develop bilateral military cooperation and strengthen bond between two armies through conduct of discussions and rehearsal of tactical military drills.

11. INDIAN ' KYRGYZSTAN JOINT SPECIAL FORCES EXERCISE KHANJAR COMMENCES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

- The 11th edition of India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has commenced at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.**
- The exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 22nd January to 3rd February 2024. It is an annual event conducted alternatively in both the countries.
- The Indian Army contingent comprising 20 personnel is being represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces) and the Kyrgyzstan contingent comprising 20 personnel is represented by Scorpion Brigade.

• Aim of the exercise is to exchange experiences and best practices in Counter Terrorism and Special Forces Operations in Built-up Area and Mountainous Terrain under Chapter VII of United Nations Charter. The exercise will emphasise on developing Special Forces skills, advanced techniques of insertion and extraction.

- The exercise will provide an opportunity for both the sides to fortify defence ties while addressing common concerns of international terrorism and extremism. The exercise will also accord opportunity to showcase capabilities of cutting edge indigenous defence equipment besides achieving shared security objectives and foster bilateral relations.

12. Indian Army launches 'Operation Sarvashakti' to thwart Pak's attempts to revive terrorism in Kashmir

- In a major step towards thwarting Pakistan's attempts to increase terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army is launching Operation Sarvashakti, where the security forces will be targeting the terrorists operating on both sides of the Pir Panjal mountain ranges in the Union Territory.**

• The operations are expected to be on the lines of Operation Sarvinash, which was launched in 2003 to eliminate terrorists from the same areas in the South of Pir Panjal range.

13. EX- DESERT KNIGHT

- On 23 Jan 2024, the Indian Air Force (IAF) conducted Exercise Desert Knight along with French Air and Space Force (FASF) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Force.**

• While the French participation included the Rafale fighter aircraft and a Multi Role Tanker Transport, the UAE Air Force fielded the F-16. • These aircraft operated from the Al Dhafra air base in the UAE.

• The IAF contingent comprised of Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, Jaguar, AWACS, C-130-J and Air to Air Refueller aircraft. The exercise in Indian FIR was conducted over the Arabian Sea, with IAF aircraft operating from bases within India.

- The main focus of Exercise Desert Knight was on enhancing synergy and interoperability between the three Air Forces.**

• The interactions during the exercise facilitated the exchange of operational knowledge, experiences and best practices amongst the participants. Such exercises are indicative of the growing diplomatic and military interactions in the region, apart from showcasing the prowess of the IAF.

14. Defence ministry inks Rs 1,070 cr contract with Mazagon Dock for 14 FPVs

- Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a contract with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL), Mumbai for acquiring 14 Fast**

Patrol Vessels (FPVs) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).

- **The value of the contract is Rs 1,070 crore.**
- These multi-role FPVs will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by MDL under the 'Buy (Indian-IDDM)' acquisition category and will be delivered.

Ammunition cum torpedo cum missile (ACTCM) barges

- The launch of the fifth "Ammunition Cum Torpedo Cum Missile Barge" was carried out at the MSME shipyard Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane.
- The contract for building 11 ACTCM barges was signed between the MoD and Suryadipta Projects on March 5, 2021. These barges are essential for carrying out the navy's logistical and operational commitments by facilitating transportation, embarkation and disembarkation of articles/ammunition to the navy's warships, while they are in harbour.

commenced at Mahajan, Rajasthan. The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from 29th January to 10th February 2024.

- The Saudi Arabian contingent comprising 45 personnel is being represented by Royal Saudi Land Forces.
- Aim of the Exercise is to train troops of both sides for Joint Operations in Semi Desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- The Exercise will enable both the sides to share their best practices in the tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting operations in sub-conventional domain.
- It will facilitate developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between troops from both the sides.
- The Exercise will involve Establishment of Mobile Vehicle Check Post, Cordon & Search Operation, House Intervention Drill, Reflex Shooting, Slithering and Sniper Firing.
- The Exercise will provide an opportunity to both the contingents to strengthen their bond. It will act as a platform to achieve shared security objectives, enhance the level of defence cooperation and foster bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

16. INDIA- SAUDI ARABIA JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE 'SADA TANSEEQ' COMMENCES IN RAJASTHAN

- **The inaugural edition of India-Saudi Arabia Joint Military Exercise 'SADA TANSEEQ'**



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Books & Authors

1. Army, Ministry of Defence reviewing Indian Army Chief Gen MM Naravane's Book 'Four Stars of Destiny'

- The Indian Army is reviewing the memoir of its former chief General M M Naravane.
- In a remarkable literary venture, **General Manoj Mukund Naravane, the former Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) of the Indian Army, has penned his autobiography titled 'Four Stars of Destiny: An Autobiography.'** Scheduled to be published in January 2024 by Penguin Veer, an imprint of Penguin Random

2. The book "An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy" released

- Sudha Kulkarni was forging a career as TELCO's first woman engineer when she met the serious, idealistic and brilliant Narayana Murthy, and they fell in love.
- **From their courtship to Infosys's founding years, from their marriage to parenthood ' told by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in the book An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy.**
- Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award winning writer, activist, professor and speaker, and the author of twenty one books such as The Palace of Illusions, The Forest of Enchantments, The Last Queen and Independence.
- Her work has been published in over a hundred magazines and anthologies, translated into thirty languages, made into films, plays and dance dramas, and performed as operas.
- Her awards include an American Book Award, a PEN Josephine Miles Award, a Premio Scanno and a Light of India Award. In 2015 the Economic Times included her in their list of the 20 Most Influential Global Indian Women.

3. IREDA Releases Vigilance Journal 'Pahal'

- **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), Government of India enterprise under the administrative control of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has unveiled released 'Pahal'- the insightful house journal of its Vigilance Department.** The journal has been unveiled by Chairman & Managing Director of IREDA, Shri Pradip Kumar Das on January 25, 2024.
- The ceremony took place at the registered office of IREDA in New Delhi, where Chief Vigilance Officer Shri Ajay Kumar Sahani and other senior officials graced the occasion. The initiative marks a significant step towards transparency, accountability, and the promotion of renewable energy initiatives by IREDA.

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Obituary

1. Franz Beckenbauer football player passed away at 78 in Germany

- **Franz Beckenbauer**, widely regarded among the **greatest football player** of all time, has died at the age of 78 in Germany. Known in football-obsessed Germany as 'the Kaiser' meaning 'the Emperor'. He collected 103 caps for West Germany, winning the 1972 European championship and then the World Cup on home soil.
- Franz Beckenbauer's Bayern Munich team was the best club side in the world during the mid-1970s, winning three successive European Cups and three successive Bundesliga titles, and Beckenbauer himself was twice named European Footballer of the year.
- In 2016 he was fined by FIFA's ethics committee for failing to co-operate with an inquiry into corruption over the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

2. Music maestro Ustad Rashid Khan dies at 55 in Kolkata

- **Classical singer Ustad Rashid Khan**, aged 55, passed away in a city hospital after valiantly battling cancer for over four years.
- Possibly the last living legend of Rampur Sahaswan gayaki (style of singing), Rashid Khan (pictured) was recognised as the 31st generation of Sangeet Samrat Mian Tansen, as detailed on his official website.
- **Apart from Padma Shri in 2006 and Padma Bhushan awards in 2022, Rashid Khan was conferred with the West Bengal government's state honour, Bangabhusan, in 2012.**

3. Renowned classical singer Prabha Atre, doyen of Kirana Gharana, dies at 92

- **Renowned classical singer Dr Prabha Atre** passed away following a cardiac arrest at her residence in Pune at the age of 92 early on January 13. Atre, who represented the Kirana Gharana of the Hindustani classical music, had been honoured with all three of Padma awards by the Indian government.
- Atre established the Swarmayee Gurukul to teach students all over the world in both traditions – 'guru-shishya parampara' and institutional.
- She strongly felt that it was important to bridge the gap between these two systems.
- **She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the nation's second-highest civilian honour, in January 2022. She was earlier honoured with the Padma Shri award in 1990 and the Padma Bhushan in 2002. She was also awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1991.**

4. Dr Nitya Anand, man who discovered India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli', dies at 99

- **Dr Nitya Anand, who discovered India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli'**, passed away after a prolonged illness at SGPGIMS Lucknow on Saturday. He was 99. Anand was also the former director of the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) from 1974 to 1984. He was with CDRI since its inception in 1951.
- He was the brain behind the discovery of Centchroman', popularly known as 'Saheli.' It was the world's first and only non-steroidal, non-hormonal, once-a-week oral contraceptive pill. It was launched by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986.
- In 2016, Saheli was incorporated in the National Family Programme of India.
- **In 2012, he was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian government.**

5. First hockey Olympian of Chandigarh dies at 48

- **Chandigarh's first hockey Olympian, Sukhbir Singh Gill** passed away at the age of 48.
- Sukhbir Singh Gill, who represented the Indian men's hockey team at the Sydney 2000 Olympics and the 2002 Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur.
- He also helped the Indian team to a gold medal finish at the 2001 Men's Hockey Champions Challenge in Malaysia.

Insurance

1. LIC trims stake in BHEL to 9.617%

- Life Insurance Corporation of India's has reduced its shareholding in Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd to 9.617 per cent from 11.701 per cent.

• In a disclosure to the exchanges, LIC said it sold the shares at an average price of ₹79.58 through secondary market between June 2019 and December 2023.

2. IRDAI eases norms for investment in infrastructure by insurers

- **The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDA) has done away with the current practice of according a case to case basis approval for investments in Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) by the insurers.**

• This will give insurers a free hand to invest in IDF which is of course subjected to a general set of norms.

• Previously, insurers were permitted to invest in IDFs backed by the central government on a case-by-case basis. The regulator has done away with the requirement for case-by-case approval for IDF as a measure to encourage investments by insurers in the sector and to increase the ease of doing business.

• This is in the wake of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) decision to enable IDF-NBFCs to play a greater role in financing the infrastructure sector.

• According to recent regulation by IRDAI, insurers are allowed to make investments in IDF-NBFCs which are registered with the RBI and have a minimum credit rating of AA or its equivalent by a Credit Rating Agency registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to be eligible for the investment.

• **These debt securities will have a residual tenure of not less than five years.**

3. India insurance sector growth pegged at 7.1% in 2024-28: Swiss Re

- India's insurance sector is projected to record the fastest growth among the G20 countries with the total premium expected to rise at an average rate of 7.1 per cent in real terms during 2024-28.

• **In comparison, the growth rate for the global insurance market will be around 2.4 per cent, said a report by Swiss Re Institute.**

• In the time period, the life insurance business is expected to record 6.7 per cent growth backed by rising demand for term life cover by the middle-income group and increased adoption of insurtech.

• Meanwhile, the non-life segment is estimated to grow by 8.3 per cent owing to economic growth, improvement in distribution channels, government support and a favourable regulatory environment with health premiums forecasted to rise by 9.7 per cent.

• India's economic outlook also remains positive with average annual real gross domestic product (GDP) growth estimated to be 6.4 per cent between 2024 and 2028.

• **According to Swiss Re, the overall insurance penetration in 2023-24 is expected to be at 3.8 per cent in India and 6.5 per cent globally.**

• Penetration for life insurance in India for the year is projected to be at 2.9 per cent, and for non-life at 1 per cent.

4. LIC launches Jeevan Dhara II plan

- **State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) announced the launch of the non-participating product Jeevan Dhara-II.**

• According to the exchange filing, the product, which will be available from 22 January 2023, is a non-linked, non-participating, individual savings deferred annuity plan.

• In November, LIC had launched a new non-linked, non-participating individual savings whole life insurance product - Jeevan Utsav.

• **The minimum entry age for the product is 20 years.**

• **The annuity is guaranteed from inception, offering 11 annuity options to the policyholders, and they have the flexibility to choose between regular and single premiums.**

• **It offers a higher annuity rate at higher ages and life cover is available during the deferment period.**

• **The available deferment period is from 5 years to 15 years in the case of regular premium and from 1 year to 15 years for single premium.**

India & World

1. France, Germany to provide 100 mln euros finance for AMRUT mission

• **France-based development agency AFD and Germany's KfW Bank are in talks with India to provide financing of 100 million euros to fund the country's urban infrastructure plan, AMRUT mission.**

• This follows the countries' recent collaboration on the City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS) 2.0 program.

• AMRUT stands for Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation.

• It is a four-year initiative focused on urban renewal and sustainable waste management, to which they have contributed 100 million euros each.

• The program envisages to support competitively selected projects which promote circular economy with focus on integrated waste management at the city level, climate-oriented reform actions at the state level, and institutional strengthening at the national level.

• The Union Cabinet had approved the plan in May 2023.

• France's AFD was part of the CITIIS 1.0 program, which began in 2018. It has also provided technical expertise to the government's Smart Cities Mission in Nagpur, Pondicherry and Chandigarh, besides financing metro projects in Bengaluru, Pune, Surat, Nagpur and Kochi.

2. India, Pakistan exchange list of nuclear installations under 1988 bilateral pact

• **India and Pakistan exchanged a list of their nuclear installations under a bilateral pact signed in 1988 and came into force in 1991 that prohibits the two countries from attacking each other's atomic facilities.**

• This is the 33rd consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries, the first one having taken place on January 1, 1992.

• The agreement—signed on December 31, 1988, and came into force on January 27, 1991—mandates both the two countries to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on the first of January of every calendar year.

3. Adidas to set up its first Asia GCC outside China in Tamil Nadu

• **Adidas is setting up its first and only global capacity centre (GCC) in Asia outside China in Chennai, to focus on 'key processes'.**

• The athletic footwear and apparel giant's move reinforces the recent boom of multinationals investing in India in large numbers to set up their GCCs to harness the abundant software skills in the country.

• The German corporation headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Bavaria, will set up its Global

Business Services (GBS) hub with Akhil Kapoor leading operations.

4. Cabinet approves MoU between India, Guyana on cooperation in hydrocarbons

• **Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of a MoU between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, India & the Ministry of Natural Resources, Guyana, on cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector.**

• Also, it will include cooperation in the area of clean energy, including biofuels as well as the renewables sector, including solar energy.

• Guyana, Capital: Georgetown.

• The Guyanese dollar is the official currency of Guyana.

• As per OPEC World Oil Outlook 2022, Guyana is projected to see a significant ramp-up in production, with liquids supply growing from 0.1 million barrel per day in 2021 to 0.9 mb/d in 2027.

• Further, as per the BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2022, **India is the world's 3rd largest energy consumer, the 3rd largest consumer of oil the 4th largest refiner** and the fastest-growing major economy with rising energy needs.

• The BP Energy Outlook and International Energy Agency estimate that India's energy demand would grow at about 3 per cent per annum till 2040, compared to the global rate of 1 per cent. Further, India is likely to account for approximately 25-28 per cent of the global energy demand growth between 2020-2040.

• Further, India is likely to account for approximately 25-28 per cent of the global energy demand growth between 2020-2040.

5. India, Nepal Ink Agreement on Export of 10,000 MW of Electricity

• **India & Nepal formally inked the agreement for export of 10,000 megawatt of electricity from the Himalayan nation to the South Asian giant over a period of 10 years.**

• Nepal's Energy secretary Gopal Sigdel & his Indian counterpart Pankaj Agrawal signed the bilateral agreement in the presence of Jaishankar & Nepal's Minister for Energy, Water Resources, & Irrigation.

• During Pushpa Kamal Dahal's first foreign visit in his third stint as Nepal's prime minister last June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that they had initiated an agreement for New Delhi to import 10,000 MW of electricity over a decade.

6. Denmark announces alliance on green fuels in India

• **Denmark has announced its Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) initiative to boost**

collaborative efforts between the two countries in the sustainable energy solutions sector and advance their joint global goal towards carbon neutrality.

- The new alliance is a strategic initiative poised to play a pivotal role in advancing the green fuels sector, including green hydrogen.
- It aims to achieve it by fostering innovation, collaboration, and partnerships between Danish industries and their counterparts in India.
- GFAI's primary objective is to promote sustainable energy growth in India by establishing an ecosystem that encourages collaboration among businesses, government entities, research institutions, and financial stakeholders from both the Indian and Danish sectors.

7. NPCI expands UPI's linkage with Singapore's PayNow

- **India and Singapore last year linked their respective digital payments systems, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and PayNow.**

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has now announced that this facility is live on BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money), PhonePe and Paytm.
- It added that more Third-Party Application Providers (TPAPs) and bank apps such as Bank of Baroda, Bank of India, Canara Bank, Central Bank of India, Federal Bank, HDFC Bank, IDFC First Bank, IndusInd Bank, Karur Vysya Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Punjab National Bank, South Indian Bank, and UCO Bank are expected to be added to the linkage soon.

Banks and Non-Banks participating in UPI-PayNow SG linkage India Side:

- Axis Bank
 - DBS Bank Ind
 - ICICI Bank
 - Indian Bank
 - Indian Overseas Bank
 - State Bank of India
- Singapore Side:
- DBS Bank Singapore
 - Liquid Group

8. India, Iran hold talks to establish "long-term cooperation framework" on Chabahar port

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishakar met Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development and discussed on establishing a "long-term cooperation framework" for Chabahar port, a strategic maritime facility situated on the southertheastern coast of Iran.

- Their discussions also focused on International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

- India's vision is to make Chabahar Port a transit hub under the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to reach out to CIS countries.

9. India Signs Agreement for Lithium Exploration & Mining Project in Argentina

- **Ministry of Mines, Government of India has achieved a significant milestone with the signing of an agreement between Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) and the state-owned enterprise of Catamarca province of Argentina** CATAMARCA MINERA Y ENERGTICA SOCIEDAD DEL ESTADO (CAMYEN SE) at Catamarca, Argentina today i.e., on 15th January, 2024.

- This is the first ever lithium exploration and mining project by a Government Company of India. KABIL will start exploration and development of 5 lithium brine blocks viz 1. Cortadera-I, 2. Cortadera-VII, 3. Cortadera-VIII, 4. Cateo-2022-01810132 and 5. Cortadera-VI covering an area of about 15,703 Hectare, located in the Catamarca province of Argentina.
- KABIL is also preparing to set up a branch office at Catamarca, Argentina. The project cost is about 200 crores.

- **Argentina is the part of "Lithium Triangle" along with Chile and Bolivia** with more than half of world's total lithium resources and having the distinction of having 2nd largest lithium resources, 3rd largest lithium reserves and 4th largest production in world.

10. Launch of 'Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality' by India at World Economic Forum, Annual Meeting Davos

- **India announced a new alliance for Global Good, Gender Equity and Equality, at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.**

- The primary and stated objective of this new Alliance is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investments in the identified areas of women's health, education, and enterprise.

- **The Alliance has garnered support from industry leaders, including Mastercard, Uber, Tata, TVS, Bayer, Godrej, Serum Institute of India, IMD Lausanne, and over 10,000 partners from industry.**

- **Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the alliance will be housed and anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership. The World Economic Forum has come on board as a 'Network Partner' and Invest India as an 'Institutional Partner'.**

11. India To Include Persian As One Of 9 Classical Languages

- In a significant move to deepen cultural ties, **External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar announced that the Government of India**

has decided to include Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages in India under the New Education Policy.

- This recognition reflects a commitment to fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Farsi's rich heritage within the India.

- Tamil was the first language in India to be accorded classical language status in 2004. Sanskrit, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia are the other languages that have been declared classical languages in India by the central government.
- "In addition to these classical languages Pali, Persian, and Prakrit; and their works of literature too must be preserved for their richness and for the pleasure and enrichment of posterity," according to India's National Education Policy-2020.

Currently there are six languages that enjoy the 'Classical' status in India:

- Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).

All the Classical Languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the following 22 languages:-(1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo,(20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri .Of these languages, 14 were initially included in the Constitution. Sindhi language was added in 1967. Thereafter three more languages viz., Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992. Subsequently Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added in 2004.

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved the proposal for signing of a protocol for establishment of Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) between the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic.

- The establishment of JETCO will strengthen economic tie between India and the Dominican Republic and shall play a pivotal role and provide a platform for discussions, exchange of information, knowledge and ideas which would in turn facilitate trade and industry.
- The Protocol can be an effective gateway to the larger Latin American and Caribbean markets.
- The Joint Committee will provide a platform for exchange of information between various authorities and their counterparts.
- This would help in facilitating trade of goods and services and consequentially help in better employment opportunities for professionals in both the countries.
- The establishment of JETCO will facilitate mitigating challenges in export of Indian products of mutual dialogue and pave the way for boosting exports of pharmaceuticals, automobiles and engineering goods manufactured in India leading to more foreign exchange earnings for a Atmanirbhar Bharat.

14. AIIIB Anchor Investor in India's Largest Renewable Energy Infrastructure Investment Trust

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIIB) has invested INR4.86 billion (around USD58.4 million equivalent) in India's largest renewable energy Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT).

- The InvIT (Sustainable Energy Infra Trust or SEIT), has eight operating solar power generation assets of 1.54 gigawatt-peak total capacity located nationwide in India.
- SEIT is co-sponsored by Mahindra Susten Private Limited, the dedicated renewable energy platform of one of the largest Indian multinational conglomerates (the Mahindra Group) and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, a leading global institutional investor.
- AIIIB aims to support the development of InvITs as an infrastructure asset class in India. The successful listing of SEIT contributes to the capital-raising track record and is a testament to establishing and validating InvITs as a long-term financing channel in India.

12. Switzerland and India reach deal on FTA after 16 years of negotiations

Switzerland and India have reached consensus on a free-trade agreement after 16 years of negotiations, Swiss Economy Minister Guy Parmelin said.

- The agreement will create jobs for the young population of India, and secure employment in Switzerland,

13. Cabinet approves Protocol for establishment of joint Economic and Trade Committee between India and Dominican Republic

Environment

1. Reliance Industries becomes first in India to use chemical recycling for Circular Polymers

• Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), operator of the world's largest integrated refining and petrochemical complex, has become the first Indian company to chemically recycle plastic waste-based pyrolysis oil into International Sustainability & Carbon Certification (ISCC)-Plus certified Circular Polymers.

- RIL's Jamnagar refinery became the first refinery to get this.
- RIL shipped its first batch of ISCC-Plus certified Circular Polymers, named CircuRepol™ (Polypropylene) and CircuRelene™ (Polyethylene).
- CircuRepol™ and CircuRelene™ have been designed to lead the way in Circular Economy practices. RIL's Jamnagar refinery became the first refinery to get the important ISCC-Plus certification, proving that it can produce Circular Polymers through chemical recycling.
- The ISCC-Plus certification guarantees that traceability and rules are followed in making Circular Polymers.

2. 2023 recorded hottest year ever as Earth nears critical 1.5C limit

• Last year was the planet's hottest on record by a substantial margin and likely the world's warmest in the last 100,000 years, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said.

• Since June, every month has been the world's hottest on record compared with the corresponding month in previous years.

• C3S confirmed 2023 as the hottest year in global temperature records going back to 1850.

When checked against paleoclimatic data records from sources such as tree rings and air bubbles in glaciers, Buontempo said it was "very likely" the warmest year in the last 100,000 years.

• On average, in 2023 the planet was 1.48 degrees Celsius warmer than in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period, when humans began burning fossil fuels on an industrial scale, pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

• Countries agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement to try to prevent global warming surpassing 1.5C (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), to avoid its most severe consequences.

• The world has not breached that target - which refers to an average global temperature of 1.5C over decades - but C3S said that temperatures had exceeded the level on nearly half of the days of 2023 set "a dire precedent".

• The world's CO2 emissions from burning coal, oil and gas hit record levels in 2023.

• Last year, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere rose to the highest level recorded, of 419 parts per million, C3S said.

• It was also the first year in which every day was more than 1C hotter than pre-industrial times. For the first time, two days - both of them in November - were 2C warmer than in the pre-industrial period, C3S said.

3. Himalayan Wolf Classified as 'Vulnerable' on IUCN Red List

• The Himalayan Wolf (Canis lupus chanco), a prominent lupine predator found across the Himalayas the taxonomic status of which was a puzzle till late, has been assessed for the first time in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List.

• The animal has been categorised as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List. The assessment was done on June 27, 2023.

About IUCN:

- Established in 1964, The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species has evolved to become the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of animal, fungi and plant species.
- The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria are intended to be an easily and widely understood system for classifying species at high risk of global extinction. It divides species into nine categories: Not Evaluated, Data Deficient, Least Concern, Near Threatened, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild and Extinct.

4. Odisha to set up 'black tiger' safari near Similipal, announces CM

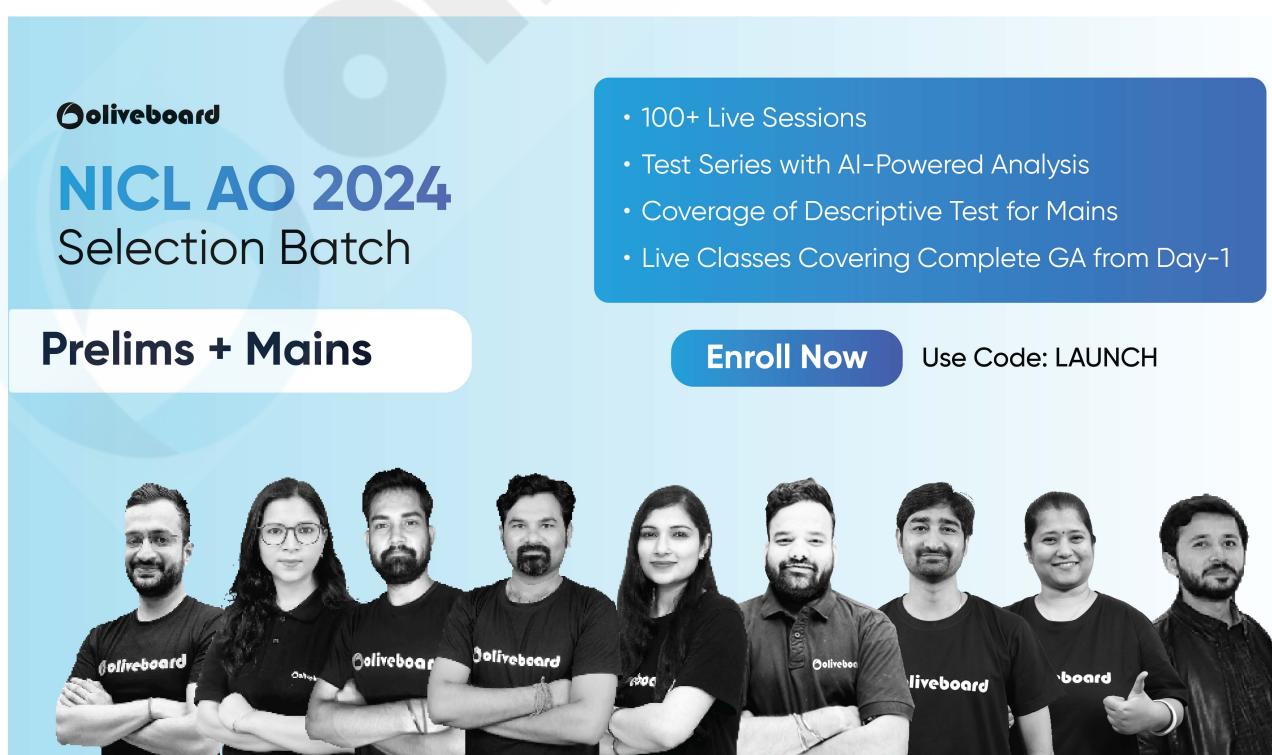
• Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced that the state would set up a melanistic tiger safari, a first of its kind in the world.

• The safari will come up near the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj.

• Melanistic tigers, popularly called black tigers, were sighted at the Similipal National Park recently.

• These rare creatures are characterised by a striking dark stripe pattern against a lighter background of white or golden fur.

- It is a known fact that Simlipal Tiger Reserve is the only home for melanistic tigers in the wild in the world.
- Simlipal Tiger Reserve is also having a rich history of conservation. It is also famous for Padmashree Late Saroj Raj Chowdhury, its founder Director and the tigress "Khairi", his foster daughter.
- **Simlipal has come under the Global Network of Biospheres from 2009.**



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Apps & Portals

1. IT Ministry Launches ERNET Portal for Domain Registration of Educational Institutions

• **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) has launched ERNET India's newly developed integrated web portal for educational institutes in the country.**

- The portal will offer domain registration, DNS and value-added services viz. Website as a Service (WaaS) and Learning Management as a Service (LMaaS).
- The users can select from the variety of available templates for schools, colleges, universities as per their requirement and create their own website and Learning Management System.
- The user can publish the website and LMS by customizing the template with single click. This web portal has been developed utilizing open-source software and emerging technologies such as AI/ML.

• **The ERNET India is a not-for-profit scientific society under MeitY.**

- It is the exclusive domain registrar for all the education & research institutes having 'ac.in', 'edu.in' & 'res.in' as domain name.
- In addition, ERNET India is providing web accessibility service, campus Wi-Fi services, smart classrooms and connectivity through Terrestrial and Satellite based systems to the educational & research institutes in the country.
- It is also in the field of establishing data centers.

2. Amit Shah launches portal for procurement of pulses

- Shri Amit Shah urged farmers to cultivate pulses on a large scale to reduce dependency on imports.
- He assured them that the two cooperatives, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF) would procure produce at a minimum support price or the market price.
- The process of registration, purchase and payment on the portal will be available on a single medium.

• **The multilingual electronic portal <https://esamridhi.in> will connect farmers, NAFED and concerned government departments, streamlining processes for better accessibility.**

- **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED)** was established on the auspicious day of Gandhi Jayanti on 2nd October 1958.

• **Nafed is registered under the Multi State Co-operative Societies Act.**

• Nafed was setup with the object to promote Co-operative marketing of agricultural produce to benefit the farmers. Agricultural farmers are the main members of Nafed, who have the authority to say in the form of members of the General Body in the working of Nafed.

• **NCCF**, as an organization to promote consumer cooperative movement in the country, aspires to facilitate the voluntary formation and democratic functioning of cooperatives, based on self-reliance and mutual aid for overall economic betterment and financial autonomy.

• The National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd. (NCCF), New Delhi is the national level consumer cooperative society having the entire country as its area of operation.

• **It was registered in October, 1965 and is functioning under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.**

• As on 31.03.2017, NCCF has 148 members, which includes the Government of India, three national level cooperative organization, namely the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), and the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).

3. PAiSA dashboard, PM SVANidhi mission monitoring portal launched for street vendors

• During the seminar 'Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) for Street Vendors' Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep S. Puri launched the refreshed **PAiSA Portal Dashboard and the PM SVANidhi Mission Monitoring Portal.**

• These portals will provide real-time progress updates on the mission and scheme, fostering transparency and accountability.

• **About PAiSA:** "PAiSA," which is an acronym for **Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access** is a centralised portal for the processing of interest subvention on bank loans to beneficiaries under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (**DAY-NULM**).

• This portal helps in ensuring greater transparency and efficient delivery of services to beneficiaries under DAY-NULM.

• **The portal was designed and developed by the Allahabad Bank.**

- All states / Union Territories & all scheduled commercial banks, Urban Local Bodies (**ULBs**), RRBs and Cooperative Banks are expected to be onboarding the PAiSA portal by December 2018.

- About PM SVANidhi:** Ministry launched PM SVANidhi scheme on June 01, 2020, to address the challenges faced by Street Vendors and help them in resuming the businesses adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 57.83 lakh street vendors have been provided with 1st term loan, more than 16.23 lakh with 2nd term loan, and 2.16 lakh with 3rd term loan. All this has been achieved within 43 months during which the nation witnessed three waves of the pandemic.

4. 'Report Fish Disease', mobile app to monitor fish diseases launched

- The National Surveillance Programme for Aquatic Animal Diseases (NSPAAD) project, under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, has recently launched the 'Report Fish Disease-App' on the Google Play Store.**

- This innovative mobile application aims to empower fish farmers with a convenient and efficient platform to report diseases on their farms.
- ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIIFT) is located in Kochi.

5. IMD launches Panchayat Mausam Sewa Portal for farmers

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) launched weather related services for farmers, known as Panchayat Mausam Sewa Portal, in English, Hindi and twelve regional languages to help farmers in planning the agricultural activities like sowing, transplantation, application of irrigation, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.**

- It also launched a National Framework of Climate Services (NFCS) that seeks to reduce losses from climate hazards and extreme weather events to commemorate the 150th year of the weather office.
- The NFCS framework seeks to build a platform for users of climate information and services that will strengthen the production, availability, delivery and application of science-based climate monitoring and prediction services for key sectors such as agriculture, health, energy and disaster management.

- Ministry of Earth Sciences said that IMD has improved its forecast accuracy of severe weather events by 40% in the last five years.
- It has improved the weather observational network in the country in last decade significantly by employing technology.

6. Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh launches the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application for the Revised Fund Flow Procedure

- The Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) Rao Inderjit Singh launched the MPLADS e-SAKSHI Mobile Application for revised fund flow procedure under MPLAD Scheme**

About MPLAD:

- The objective of MPLAD Scheme is to enable the Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets based on the locally felt needs.
- The revised set of guidelines aims to broaden the scope of the Scheme so as to enable the MPs to recommend the developmental works as per the changing needs of the community; with an emphasis on improving the functioning, implementation and monitoring of the MPLAD scheme.
- The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Division is entrusted with the responsibility of implementation of Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).
- Under the scheme, each MP has the choice to suggest to the District Collector for works to the tune of Rs.5 Crores per annum to be taken up in his/her constituency.**
- The Rajya Sabha Members of Parliament can recommend works in one or more districts in the State from where he/she has been elected.
- The Nominated Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select any one or more Districts from any one State in the Country for implementation of their choice of work under the scheme. The Ministry has issued the guidelines on MPLADS Scheme including implementation and monitoring of the scheme. The Department has initiated all necessary steps to ensure that the scheme is successfully implemented in the field.

7. ICICI Bank Canada launches 'Money2India (Canada)' mobile banking app

- ICICI Bank Canada, a wholly owned subsidiary of ICICI Bank Limited, announces the launch of its mobile banking app, 'Money2India (Canada)'.**

- The app enables customers of any bank in Canada to send money instantly and round the clock to any bank in India without opening an account with ICICI Bank Canada.

8. Central government launches 'Anuvadini' app to provide study materials in regional languages

- The Union government has decided to make study materials for all courses under school and higher education available in digital form in Indian languages included in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution to provide an opportunity to students to

study in their mother tongue. For this, an Artificial Intelligence-based 'Anuvadini' app has been created.

- The University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), and the Department of School Education have also been instructed to take steps in this regard concerning schools and universities in the state.

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Acquisitions & Mergers

1. Bharti Airtel Services to acquire 97.1% stake in Beetel Teletech

- **Bharti Airtel Services, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bharti Airtel, has entered into an agreement for the acquisition of 49.45 lakh shares or 97.1 per cent stake in Beetel Teletech, another Bharti Group company.**

- The acquisition is a related party transaction in terms of the provisions of SEBI listing regulations.

- Beetel Teletech was incorporated on March 30, 1999.

- Consequently, Beetel will become a subsidiary of the company.

2. CCI approves acquisition of 100% shareholding of GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited by Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd.

- **The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposed acquisition of 100% shareholding of GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited by Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd.**

- The PSPCL, a fully owned entity of the Punjab government, is set to acquire 100% shareholding of the power generation company.

• The Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd,

is a fully owned undertaking of the Government of Punjab.

- The erstwhile Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB), was a statutory body formed on 01st February, 1959 under the Electricity Supply Act, 1948.

- The PSEB was “unbundled” by the Government of Punjab vide Notification No. 1/9/08-EB(PR)196 dated 16th April, 2010 into two separate entities – Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) and Punjab State Transmission Corporation Limited (PSTCL).

- **The GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited,** is incorporated in December 1997, is a wholly owned subsidiary of GVK Energy Limited which in turn is the subsidiary of GVK Power and Infrastructure Limited. It is engaged in power generation through a 540 coal based thermal power plant.

3. Canada-based Brookfield Asset Management to buy ATC India in \$2 bn deal

- **Canada-based Brookfield Asset Management will acquire the Indian business of American Tower Corporation (ATC) for an enterprise value of Rs 16,628 crore (\$2 billion), the company said.**

- After its third acquisition in India's telecom sector in four years, Brookfield is set to become the largest manager of telecom towers in the country.

- The deal will see Data Infrastructure Trust (DIT), an infrastructure investment trust sponsored by an affiliate of Brookfield Asset Management, acquire 100 per cent of equity interests in ATC India. DIT currently houses Brookfield's telecom tower businesses in India through Summit Digitel and Crest Digitel.

- “The acquired sites are expected to diversify DIT's revenues and increase touch points with all mobile network operators in India,” Brookfield said.

4. LIC to acquire 10% stake in National Housing Board-promoted company

- **Life Insurance Corporation of India said its board has approved acquiring up to 10 per cent in a company promoted by the National Housing Bank.**

- In a regulatory filing, LIC said the board has cleared the proposal to invest in a new company, promoted by the NHB, for residential mortgage-backed securities, through equity contribution up to 10 per cent of share capital.

- RMBS are basically debt-based assets backed by the interest paid on residential loans. RMBS are bonds which are secured against a large pool of residential mortgages (home loans).

- RMBS are generally considered to be a safer investment than some other asset types.

5. Tata Consumer signs pact to buy Capital Foods, Organic India

- **Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) announced that it has signed definitive agreements to fully acquire Capital Foods, owner of Ching's Secret and Smith & Jones, and Organic India, the Fabindia-backed organic teas and health products maker.**

- TCPL will pay an enterprise value on a no cash-no debt basis of '5,100 crore for 100% stake in Capital Foods.

- TCPL said the takeover of Organic India will cost '1,900 crore.

- Sunil D'Souza, MD & CEO, Tata Consumer Products.

6. Reliance Industries sells REC Solar Norway to Elkem ASA for \$22 million

- **REC Solar Holdings AS, a step-down wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), has informed that it has, on January 14, 2024, entered into a share purchase agreement with Elkem ASA for the sale of its 100 per cent equity stake in REC Solar Norway AS for an aggregate cash consideration of USD 22 million.**

- Founded in 1904, Elkem ASA is a silicon-based material provider.

7. Competition Commission of India approves amalgamation of Shriram GI Holdings Private Limited with Shriram General Insurance

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposed amalgamation of Shriram GI Holdings Private Limited with Shriram General Insurance Company Limited.

• The proposed combination relates to the amalgamation of Shriram GI Holdings Private Limited (SGIH) with Shriram General insurance Company Limited (SGIC) (Proposed Combination).

• The competition watchdog also granted its approval to the proposal for the merger of Shriram LI Holdings Pvt Ltd with Shriram Life Insurance Company Ltd. Shriram Life Insurance Company is jointly promoted by Shriram Group and South Africa-based financial services firm Sanlam Group.

• Both Shriram GI Holdings and Shriram LI Holdings undertake the business of investments.

8. DMI group acquires BNPL startup ZestMoney in a distress sale deal

- DMI Group, a pan-India financial services platform, said it has acquired the beleaguered 'buy now pay later' (BNPL) ZestMoney (Zest) platform.
- DMI, which has raised over \$1.5 billion of equity investment and is supported by global institutional investors and international banks, didn't reveal the value of the transaction.

9. Sony scraps \$10 bn Zee merger deal; seeks \$90 million in termination fees

- After two years of hectic negotiations, Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) issued a termination notice to Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL) on their merger agreement.

- The wholly-owned subsidiary of Sony Group Corporation of Japan has also sought \$90 million in termination fees from ZEEL.
- The merger would have created a \$10 billion entertainment giant with a market share of 25 per cent among general entertainment channels.

Deal Timeline-

- **Dec 22, 2021:** Zee, Sony announce merger to create \$10 bn entertainment firm
- **Aug 10-11, 2023:** NCLT Mumbai approves merger
- **Oct 3:** SAT sets aside Sebi order against Punit Goenka, allows him to continue as CEO
- **Dec 21:** Zee, Sony agree to continue talks for another month to salvage the deal

10. CCI approves stake buy in Religare Enterprises by Burman family companies

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the proposals for stake acquisitions in Religare Enterprises (REL)

by four entities controlled by the Burman family members.

- These entities aim to acquire a majority shareholding of up to 53.94% in REL and collectively exercise joint control over the company.

• The CCI said Puran Associates, MB Finmart, VIC Enterprises and Milky Investment & Trading Company, which jointly hold 21.25% of REL, have proposed to acquire a majority shareholding of up to 53.94% (assuming full acceptance in the open offer process by the public shareholders).

11. CCI approves JSW's acquisition of up to 38% stake in MG Motor India

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has given its approval for Sajjan Jindal-promoted JSW Group's proposed acquisition of up to 38 per cent stake in MG Motor India.

• "The Acquirer is a newly incorporated entity and is not engaged in any activities as on date.

• It is a wholly owned subsidiary of JSW International Tradecorp Pte. Limited and belongs to JSW Group," the CCI stated.

12. Nazara Tech's Nodwin Gaming to acquire 100% stake in Comic Con India

- Nodwin Gaming, a subsidiary of Nazara Technologies, on 24 Jan 2024, announced that it will acquire a 100 per cent stake in Comic Con India at a valuation of Rs 55 crore.

• Comic Con India is famous for hosting multiple pop cultural festivals in India.

• In the announcement, Nazara Tech said that the acquisition will take place through a combination of cash and share swaps from Jatin Varma and Karan Kalra, the founders of Comic Con India. Varma and Kalra will, however, continue to operate the business as a part of Nodwin Gaming.

• Comic Con India was founded in 2011 and holds festivals across cities throughout the year. After the acquisition, the company will expand the number of festivals across the country and increase its penetration to other countries as well.

13. CCI approves 100% acquisition of Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India) Private Limited by Tata Electronics Private Limited

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved 100% acquisition of Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India) Private Limited by Tata Electronics Private Limited.

• The Acquirer is a greenfield venture of Tata Sons Private Limited.

• The proposed combination relates to the acquisition of 100% of the Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India) Private Limited's (Target) equity share capital from SMS Infocomm

(Singapore) Private Limited and Wistron Hong Kong Limited by Tata Electronics Private Limited (Acquirer).

- The Acquirer is a greenfield venture of Tata Sons Private Limited. It manufactures smartphone enclosures (i.e. the frame of the phone on which other components/sub-assemblies of a smartphone are assembled), a high precision component for smartphones.
- The Target is an electrical and electronics manufacturing company engaged in electronic manufacturing services (i.e., contract manufacturing of electronics) for smartphones in India, at its plant in Karnataka. It was incorporated in 2017 by the Wistron group.

14. CCI approves merger of Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited (Fincare) and AU Small Finance Bank Limited (AU)

- **The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the merger of Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited (Fincare) and AU Small Finance Bank Limited (AU).**
- The Proposed Combination involves the merger of Fincare and AU, with AU being the surviving entity (merged entity).
- The shareholders of Fincare will be allotted shares in the merged entity, post the Proposed Combination.
- AU is a banking company which provides personal and commercial banking services (including provision of deposits, loans and advances, debit and credit card services, institutional banking and digital banking services).
- AU is also licensed to transact business under AD-II bank category (foreign exchange).
- AU is also engaged in provision of ancillary functions such as distribution of insurance and investment products such as mutual funds, and portfolio management services.

- Fincare is a banking company and provides deposit services (such as savings account, current account, fixed deposits, recurring deposits), lending services (including retail and microfinance loans), and digital banking services.
- Fincare also provides certain miscellaneous services such as distribution of insurance products.

15. LIC gets nod from RBI to raise HDFC Bank stake to 9.99%

- **HDFC Bank announced that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted approval for the Life Insurance Corp. of India (LIC) to acquire an additional 4.8% stake in the country's largest private sector lender.**
- **LIC currently holds a 5.19% stake in HDFC Bank.**

- According to a stock exchange filing by HDFC Bank, the RBI has advised LIC to complete the acquisition of the additional HDFC Bank shares within a year. However, LIC must ensure that its overall holding in the bank does not exceed 9.99% of the paid-up share capital or voting rights of the bank at any given time.
- The central bank's approval is contingent on LIC's compliance with various regulations, including the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, RBI's Master Direction and Guidelines on Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights in Banking Companies, the **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999**, and regulations issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Under the RBI regulations, any entity seeking to acquire a substantial shareholding in a bank, defined as an aggregate holding of 5% or more of the paid-up share capital or voting rights, must obtain prior approval from the regulator.

Agri-Business

1. India's lentil production set to touch all-time high: Govt

- **India is likely to emerge as the world's largest producer of masoor (lentil) in the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) with the projected output of around 1.6 million tonne (MT).**
- If the projection comes true, the country's lentil output would be highest since the 2027-18 crop year when it produced 1.62 MT of pulse variety. In the 2022-23 crop year, lentil output was 1.55 MT.
- Canada is the largest producer currently.

FinTech

1. FASTags with incomplete KYC to get deactivated by banks after Jan 31: Govt

- To enhance the efficiency of the electronic toll collection system and provide seamless movement at the toll plazas, National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has taken the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative, which aims to discourage using a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle.
- FASTag uses the Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID).
- FASTags with a valid balance but an incomplete KYC will get deactivated or blacklisted by banks post-January 31, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways said.
- NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines.
- To avoid inconvenience, users must ensure that the KYC of their latest FASTag is complete. FASTag users must also comply with 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' and discard all the earlier issued FASTags through their respective banks.
- Only the latest FASTag account shall remain active, as previous tags will be deactivated or blacklisted after January 31, 2024. For further assistance or queries, FASTag users can reach out to the nearest toll plaza or toll-free customer care number of their respective banks.

PSUs

1. Power sector financer REC likely to lead National Rooftop Solar scheme

- Leading power sector financer REC Limited will be given the reins of the National Rooftop Solar scheme as the Centre shifts its focus to decentralised solar for meeting green energy targets.
- REC will be made the nodal agency for the scheme to spread its reach across the country and plug the inefficiencies. Shri Vivek Kumar Dewangan is the Chairman & Managing Director of REC Limited.
- **REC has been the nodal agency for various nationwide schemes of the ministry of power.**
- Most notable among them are rural electrification under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) and the Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA) scheme.
- REC Power Development and Consultancy (RECPDCL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of REC, provides a range of value added consultancy services in the power sector.

2. LIC becomes most valuable PSU firm, surpasses SBI in market valuation

- **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) surpassed State Bank of India (SBI) to become the country's most valued PSU firm by market valuation.**
- The market capitalisation of LIC stood at Rs 5,60,964.05 crore, which is Rs 2,149.47 crore more than SBI's Rs 5,58,814.58 crore valuation.
- LIC stood at the ninth place in the ranking of top ten most valued firms.
- **Top 5 in India: Reliance, TCS, HDFC, ICICI and Infosys.**
- Reliance Industries is the country's most valued firm with a market valuation of Rs 18,42,160.54 crore followed by TCS (Rs 14,21,230.44 crore), HDFC Bank (Rs 11,66,888.98 crore), ICICI Bank (Rs 6,87,740.99 crore), Infosys (Rs 6,80,631.89 crore), Bharti Airtel (Rs 6,10,389.59 crore), Hindustan Unilever (Rs 6,02,388.21 crore), ITC (Rs 5,82,423.61 crore), LIC (Rs 5,60,964.05 crore) and SBI (Rs 5,58,814.58 crore).
- The country's largest insurer was listed in May 2022. The government had sold over 22.13 crore shares, or a 3.5 per cent stake in LIC, through an Initial Public Offering (IPO).
- **The government holds 96.5 per cent stake in the company.**

State's/UT's

Arunachal Pradesh

1. Arunachal Pradesh's Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival gears up for its 9th Edition

• The 9th edition of the **Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF)**, a state festival of Arunachal Pradesh, will take place at Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district from January 18-20, 2024.

• The festival focuses on wildlife conservation, with a particular emphasis on hornbills. This year, the festival's theme is Domutoh Domutoh, Paga hum Domutoh.

• **Four species of the birds — Wreathed, Great Indian, Oriental Pied and the endangered Rufous-necked — are found in the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR) of Arunachal Pradesh.**

• The area is also home to the Nyishi, the largest tribal group in Arunachal Pradesh. The first-ever PPHF was held on January 16-18, 2015.

• The aim was to recognise the role played by the Nyishi in conserving hornbills in PTR.

• The Nyishi had formerly hunted hornbills and used their bills to craft traditional headgear. They had later turned hornbill conservationists.

• Other objectives were to raise alternative sources of income for the region and to create awareness in the rest of India about the wonders of PTR and its surrounding areas.

Goa

1. South Korean firm Simmtech signs MoU worth Rs1,250 crore for creating semiconductor ecosystem in Gujarat

• South Korean firm Simmtech announced setting up its plant in Sanand at a cost of Rs 1,250 crore as part of creating a semiconductor ecosystem in the state.

• South Korean firm has been allotted 30 acres of land and the work will start in the next two-three months. The company will need 6-7 months to set up the plants. Simmtech is the world's biggest manufacturer of semiconductor substrates.

• The company has been given subsidy under SPECS (Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS) by the centre as well as state government.

Gujarat

1. Gujarat govt signs deals worth \$86 billion ahead of investment summit

• India's Gujarat state signed initial investment agreements worth 7.17 trillion Indian rupees (\$86.07 billion) with 58 companies operating in sectors such as energy, oil and gas, and chemicals.

• Gujarat has been signing these agreements ahead of its biennial Vibrant Gujarat Global

Summit, which is scheduled to take place in state capital Gandhinagar from Jan. 10 to Jan. 12.

2. First 'Made In India' Memory chip is expected to be produced in Gujarat in 2024, says Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav

• Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the first 'Made In India' Memory chip is expected to be produced in Gujarat this year.

• Addressing a seminar on Semiconductors and Electronics at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar, the Minister said Micron's investment in Gujarat will pave the way for creating a Semiconductor ecosystem in India.

• Another firm, South Korea's Simmtech, has signed an MoU with the Gujarat government to set up a plant near the Micron plant in Sanand. The company is the world's largest manufacturer of semiconductor substrate, the supporting material upon which the elements of a semiconductor device are fabricated.

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• In addition to this, **Micron also signed an MoU with the New Age Makers Institute of Technology (NAMTECH), an ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India education initiative, to develop talent for its semiconductor operations in India.**

• The US-based firm has hired over 200 employees for its plant in India, which will begin operations by the first half of 2025. Three months after signing an agreement with the government of India, the chip-making giant commenced the construction of a factory in September 2023.

• **In November 2023, Idaho-headquartered semiconductor major Micron Technology's made its largest ever investment in Sanand, Gujarat, will make India a global hub for semiconductor manufacturing,**

• With a total proposed investment of \$2.75 billion — it is the largest so far under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).

• While Micron has committed \$825 million, the rest will be covered by state and central government subsidies.

3. Kachchhi Kharek, indigenous dates of Kutch, become Gujarat's 2nd fruit to get GI tag

• **Kachchhi Kharek, the indigenous variety of dates of Kutch, has become the second fruit of Gujarat to get a geographical indication (GI) tag from the Controller General of**

Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDT) of India.

• Jubilant farmers of the semi-arid district have hailed the decision.

• With this, fresh dates of Kutch become the second fruit from Gujarat to get a GI tag.

• In 2011, Gir kesar mango — grown in present-day Junagadh, Gir Somnath and Amreli districts of Saurashtra — was given the GI tag.

• The same year, Bhalia wheat grown in Bhal region abutting central Gujarat and Saurashtra regions of Gujarat was also awarded the tag.

Jharkhand**1. Jharkhand govt brings down age for enrolling in pension scheme to 50****• The Jharkhand cabinet has recently approved the proposal of including all women, tribals and Dalits above 50 in its old-age pension scheme.**

• Earlier, those above 60 years used to get the benefit of the scheme, under which Rs 1,000 is provided to each beneficiary per month.

• The cabinet gave its nod to the amendment in the Mukhya Mantri Rajya Vridhavastha Pension Yojana.

• It is an important amendment, which will allow all women and people of ST and ST category above 50 years to be covered under the scheme.

• A total of 35.68 lakh people already get the benefit of the scheme.

• Twenty-five other proposals were also approved by the cabinet, including the distribution of 'Matri Kit' to pregnant women, the kit, worth around Rs 1,500, will have 14 materials, including a mosquito net, a cotton saree, a cotton towel and a toothpaste.

• "Six lakh pregnant will be benefited by it. Rs 22.5 crore has been estimated for it in the current financial year,'.

• The cabinet also gave its nod for the appointment of Yogendra Prasad as the chairman of the State Backward Commission for three years.

Karnataka**1. Siddaramaiah launches 'Yuva Nidhi' scheme for unemployed youth in Karnataka's Shivamogga**

• **Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched the fifth and final poll guarantee of the Congress--'Yuva Nidhi' scheme—at Freedom Park in Shivamogga.**

• The scheme offers unemployment assistance to graduates and diploma holders who got their degrees in the academic year 2022-23.

• The government has promised to give Rs 3,000 per month to degree holders and Rs 1,500 per month to diploma holders who were unable to get a job in the past six months and are not pursuing higher studies.

• The ruling government has already launched four of the five guarantees, which are 'Shakti', providing free rides to Karnataka women in non-luxury government buses, 'Anna Bhagya' offering 10 kg rice to BPL families, 'Gruha Jyoti' giving free electricity up to 200 units to household users, and 'Gruha Lakshmi' promising Rs 2,000 a month to women heads of families having APL/BPL ration cards.

Kerala**1. Kerala launches K-Smart tech solution to streamline local self-government services**

• **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has launched K-SMART (Kerala Solutions for Managing Administrative Reformation and Transformation), the first of its kind project in the country aimed at making available all services of local self government institutions over a uniform digital platform.**

• K-SMART ensures easy access of most vital services to the common public.

2. Sh. Gadkari unveils Rs 1,464 crore highway projects in Kerala

• **Union Minister for Road, Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari has inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 12 National Highway projects in Kerala with an investment of over Rs 1,464 crore.**

• The total highway length of 105 km is poised to generate substantial employment opportunities, both directly and indirectly, fostering socio-economic growth in Kerala.

3. Artificial reef project inaugurated in Kerala capital

• **The deployment of artificial reefs off the coast of 42 fishing villages in Thiruvananthapuram district began.**

• The project is meant to boost fish resources and promote sustainable management.

• In all, 6,300 artificial reef units - 150 for each of the villages - will be deployed under this initiative.

• **The project is being implemented by the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) with technical support from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).**

• The '13.02 crore project is being implemented under the Central Government's Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

• The Department of Fisheries, Government of India, has proposed artificial reefs in 3,477 fishing villages across the coastline of the country, according to Mr. Rupala. Under PMMSY, the Centre has cleared '302 crore for artificial reef installation and promotion of sustainable fisheries and livelihood in Kerala

Maharashtra

1. Government of Maharashtra declares new Atpadi Conservation Reserve in Sangli District

- The Government of Maharashtra has declared a new Conservation Reserve in the forest land of Sangli district namely 'Atpadi Conservation Reserve'.

- The newly formed Atpadi Conservation Reserve connects the Maini Conservation Area in the west with the Maldhok Bird Sanctuary in the northeast.

- The Government of Maharashtra in exercise of the powers conferred by section 36-A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and of all other powers enabling it in that behalf, has declared this new Atpadi Conservation Reserve.

Odisha

1. Seven Odisha products bagged GI tag

- Seven products from Odisha, ranging from the Similipal Kai chutney made with red weaver ants to the embroidered Kapdaganda shawl, have bagged the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag in recognition of their exclusivity to the state.

- With these new entrants, the total number of GI-registered products in Odisha rose to 25. Geographical Indications of goods refer to the place of origin of a product.

- The new items include the Odisha Khajuri Guda, Dhenkanal Magji, Similipal Kai Chutney, Nayagarh Kanteimundi brinjal, Dongria Kondh embroidery shawl, Koraput Kalajeera rice and the paintings of Lanja Saora.

2. Odisha clears JSW's Rs 40,000 cr proposal to set up EV manufacturing units

- The Odisha government approved 14 proposals including the JSW Group's plan to set up electric vehicles and component manufacturing units in Cuttack and Jagatsinghpur districts with an investment of Rs 40,000 crore, a senior official said.

- The JSW Group has proposed to set- up an EV & EV battery manufacturing project at Naraj, Cuttack.

- The company is also planning to set up an original equipment manufacturing (OEM) plant for EVs and components in the same facility in two phases, he said, adding, that JSW is planning to invest Rs 25,000 crore in the state, generating employment for more than 4,000 people through this facility.

- The state cabinet also approved the scheme 'Coffee Plantation for Sustainable Livelihoods (CPSL)' to promote coffee plantation in six districts of Odisha with a total outlay of Rs 1,144 crore.

Punjab

1. Nitin Gadkari inaugurates, lays foundation stones of 29 highway projects worth Rs 4,000 cr in Punjab

- Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated and laid foundation stones of 29 national highway projects worth Rs 4,000 crore in Punjab.

- The projects included Ladhawal bypass in Ludhiana, six-lane flyover and two-lane road over bridge in Ludhiana, four laning of Jalandhar-Kapurthala section, and three bridges on the Jalandhar-Makhu road.

Tamil Nadu

1. PM Modi inaugurates new terminal building at Tiruchirappalli airport

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated new terminal building at Tiruchirappalli International Airport in Tamil Nadu.

- The new terminal building has been developed at a cost of more than Rs 1100 crore.

- The two-level new international terminal building has the capacity to serve more than 44 lakh passengers annually and about 3500 passengers during peak hours.

- Tiruchirappalli International Airport is the second-largest airport in terms of international passenger traffic after Chennai in Tamil Nadu.

- Prime Minister Modi also dedicated to the nation multiple railway projects worth crores. These include the doubling of the 41.4 km Salem-Magnesite Junction-Omalur-Mettur Dam section; the doubling of the rail line section of 160 km from Madurai-Tuticorin; and three projects for rail line electrification: Tiruchirappalli-Manamadurai-Virudhunagar; Virudhunagar-Tenkasi Junction; Sengottai-Tenkasi Junction; Tirunelveli- Tirunelveli- Tiruchendur. The rail projects are tipped to help improve the rail capacity to carry freight and passengers and contribute to economic development and employment generation in Tamil Nadu.

2. Tata Power Company to invest nearly Rs 70,000 crore in Tamil Nadu

- In what may well be the largest single investment by **Tata Power Company in any state, the power major is all set to invest around Rs 70,000 crore to come up with a 10 gigawatt (GW) solar and wind units in Tamil Nadu over a period of five to seven years.**

- TP Solar's manufacturing plant is expected to start commercial production of cells and modules by FY25.

3. Vietnam's VinFast unveils \$2 billion investment for integrated electric-vehicle manufacturing facility in Tamil Nadu

- The company has earmarked an initial investment of \$500 million, the EV giant said in a statement, for the first phase of

the project, spanning five years in Thoothukudi.

- VinFast also stated that it anticipates its Indian EV project to evolve into a "first-class EV production hub" in the region, with an annual capacity of up to 150,000 vehicles.
- VinFast recently named its founder and biggest financial backer, Pham Nhat Vuong, as chief executive as it plans an ambitious overseas expansion and ramps up sales via dealerships. Here replaces Le Thi Thu Thuy.

4. SIPCOT and Singapore Govt Collaborate for India's First Net-Zero Estate

- A comprehensive framework for India's first Net Zero Industrial Park, as a result of the collaborative efforts of the Tamil Nadu and Singapore governments, is likely to be finalised in the next one year.

- The framework will guide the establishment of a net-zero industrial park, which SIPCOT has plans to design and build in the North of Chennai.

Uttar Pradesh

1. UP govt to build a 1472-acre pharma park in Lalitpur, Bundelkhand

- The Uttar Pradesh government plans establishing a pharma park in Lalitpur, Bundelkhand, covering 1472 acres across five villages.

- The identified villages for the survey include Saidpur (426 acres), Gadolikala (249 acres), Langan (239 acres), Karounda (116 acres), and Rampur (441 acres).

- The plan is guided by Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA).

- The plan, guided by Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA), will unfold in two phases, with an initial focus on immediate development efforts covering 300 acres of land.

- UPSIDA is also taking steps to expedite development projects at Site-1 and Site-2 in Orai, along with the Plastic City project in Dibiyapur.

- The Plastic Park, spread across 274.4 acres, encompasses industrial units, residential areas,

and basic infrastructure. UPSIDA is actively seeking agencies to provide layout guide maps, sectoral maps, and gantry signage boards.

2. 100 new biogas plants soon to be established in UP: Hardeep Puri

- Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced the establishment of 100 new biogas plants in Uttar Pradesh.

- A new compressed biogas plant was inaugurated in Budaun, with the foundation stone being laid for new plants in eight other districts. The Budaun plant, developed on 50 acres with an investment of about Rs 135 crore, will produce 14 tonne of compressed biogas.

Lakshadweep

1. PM Modi inaugurates and lays foundation of projects worth Rs 1,156 crore in Lakshadweep

- PM Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation for various projects worth Rs 1,150 crore in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep.

- This includes the Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Connection (KLI - SOFC) project.

- PM also inaugurated the Low Temperature Thermal Desalination plant at Kadmat, which will produce 1.5 lakh litres of clean drinking water every day. The current Administrator of the union territory of Lakshadweep is Praful Khoda Patel.

- Additionally, he dedicated to the nation the Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) in all households on the Agatti and Minicoy islands.

- Other projects launched by Modi include the **solar power plant at Kavaratti, the first-ever battery-backed solar power project in Lakshadweep**.

- He also laid the foundation stone for the renovation of the primary health care facility in Kalpeni and the construction of five model Anganwadi centres (Nand Ghars) in the five islands of Androth, Chetlat, Kadmat, Agatti and Minicoy.

Committees

1. Commerce ministry sets up task force to resolve trade barrier issues for exporters

• The commerce ministry has set up a task force to identify and resolve trade barriers being faced by exporters.

- The ministry is also looking at improving mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with different countries so that product standards are as per the requirements of the importing countries.
- Indian exports that routinely face high barriers include chillies, tea and basmati rice.
- According to a report by the economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), India needs to act in a fast-track manner for the removal of non-trade barriers in countries such as the US, China and Japan.
- It has asked for upgrading domestic systems, in cases where Indian products are rejected due to quality issues; and retaliating if unreasonable standards or rules continue to obstruct exports from New Delhi.
- Indian exports that routinely face high barriers include chillies, tea and basmati rice.
- Most non-tariff measures are created by countries with an aim to protect human, animal or plant health and environment.



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Important CA

1. Indore, Bhopal, Udaipur selected for Wetland City Accreditation scheme under the Ramsar Convention

- MoEF&CC has submitted three nominations from India for Wetland City Accreditation of Indore (Madhya Pradesh), Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) & Udaipur (Rajasthan) under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

• The wetlands situated in and around these cities provide a plethora of benefits to its citizens in terms of flood regulation, livelihood opportunities, and recreational values.
 • These are the first three Indian cities for which nominations have been submitted for WCA based on the proposals received from respective State Wetlands Authorities in collaboration with the Municipal Corporations.
 • Sirpur Wetland (Ramsar site in Indore), Yashwant Sagar (Ramsar site closer to Indore), Bhoj Wetland (Ramsar Site in Bhopal), and several Wetlands (Lakes) in and around Udaipur are lifelines to these cities.

The three nominated cities include:

- **Indore:** Founded by Holkars, Indore is the cleanest city in India and the recipient of India's Smart City Award 2023 for its best sanitation, water and urban environment. Sirpur Lake, a Ramsar Site in the city, has been recognised as an important site for water bird congregation and is being developed as a Bird Sanctuary. A strong network of more than 200 wetland mitras is engaged in bird conservation and sensitising local community to protect Sarus Crane.

- **Bhopal:** One of the cleanest cities in India that has proposed conservation zones around the wetlands in its draft City Development Plan 2031. Bhoj Wetland, Ramsar Site is the city's lifeline, equipped with the world-class wetlands interpretation centre, Jal Tarang. Additionally, the Bhopal Municipal Corporation has a dedicated Lake Conservation Cell. A network of more than 300 wetland mitras is engaged in wetland management and conservation of Sarus Crane.

- **Udaipur:** Located in Rajasthan, the city is surrounded by five major wetlands, namely, Pichola, Fateh Sagar, Rang Sagar, Swaroop Sagar, and Doodh Talai. These wetlands are an integral part of the city's culture and identity, help maintain the city's microclimate, and provide a buffer from extreme events.

Wetland City Accreditation (WCA):

- Recognizing the importance of wetlands in urban and peri-urban environments and to take appropriate measures to conserve and protect these wetlands, the Ramsar Convention during COP12 held in the year 2015 approved a voluntary Wetland City Accreditation system

under Resolution XII.10 which recognizes cities which have taken exceptional steps to safeguard their urban wetlands.

- The Wetland City Accreditation scheme aims to further promote the conservation and wise use of urban and peri-urban wetlands, as well as sustainable socio-economic benefits for local populations.
- Additionally, the Accreditation seeks to encourage cities that are close to and dependent on wetlands, primarily Wetlands of International Importance, but also wetlands with other conservation category status, to develop and strengthen a positive relationship with these valuable ecosystems.
- To be formally accredited, a candidate for the Wetland City Accreditation should satisfy the standards used to implement each of the six international criteria mentioned Operational Guidance for WCA of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
- This voluntary scheme provides an opportunity for cities that value their natural or human-made wetlands to gain international recognition and positive branding opportunities for their efforts in demonstrating strong positive relationships with wetlands.

Possible Question: In January 2023, MoEF&CC has submitted three nominations from India for Wetland City Accreditation under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Which of the following cities were NOT nominated under the list? I. Indore II. Agra III. Bhopal IV. Nainital V. Udaipur

2. In 9 years, 248mn pulled out of multidimensional poverty: Niti Aayog paper

- As many as **248.2 million Indians** are projected to have come out of multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23, according to the latest **NITI Aayog discussion paper titled 'Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06'.**

More Finding from the Paper:

- The paper estimated that the share of the multidimensional poor in India's population declined sharply to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23 from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14. In 2019-21, it stood at 14.96 per cent.
- The paper also showed that the pace of decline in poverty headcount ratio using the exponential method was much faster between 2015-16 and 2019-21 (10.66 per cent annual rate of decline) compared with

the 2005-06 to 2015-16 period (7.69 per cent annual rate of decline). "All 12 indicators of MPI have recorded significant improvement during the entire study period," the NITI Aayog said.

- **The discussion paper by the central government think-tank interpolated and projected the poverty headcount ratio for the year 2013-14 using the National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3) data. Similarly, the headcount ratio for the year 2022-23 was interpolated on the basis of the rate of decline seen between NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS- 5 (2019-21).**
- **The multidimensional poverty index (MPI) identifies and captures overlapping deprivations in health, education, and living standards that are represented by 12 SDG-aligned indicators, such as nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, maternal health, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, and housing. Earlier, poverty estimates predominantly relied on income as the sole indicator.**
- **Among states, Uttar Pradesh registered the biggest decline in the number of poor, with 59.4 million people coming out of multidimensional poverty in the past nine years. It was followed by Bihar (37.7 million), Madhya Pradesh (23 million), and Rajasthan (18.7 million).**
- **The report also noted that initiatives like 'Poshan Abhiyan' and 'Anaemia-mukt Bharat' significantly enhanced access to healthcare facilities, leading to a substantial decrease in deprivation, whereas the targeted public distribution system under the National Food Security Act covered 813.5 million beneficiaries, providing food grains to rural and urban populations.**

Possible Question: Which of the following statements is/are NOT true according to the latest NITI Aayog discussion paper titled 'Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06'? I. As many as 248.2 million Indians are projected to have come out of multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23 II. Among states, Assam registered the biggest decline in the number of poor III. The share of the multidimensional poor in India's population declined sharply to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23 from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14

liquid assets against public deposits held by them, up from a stipulated 13 per cent.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed enhanced requirements of liquid assets as part of steps to harmonise regulations for housing finance and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).
- **Deposits taking HFCs will get time till March 2025 to meet the enhanced liquid asset norms.**
- RBI released a draft circular on 'Review of regulatory framework for HFCs and harmonisation of regulations applicable to HFCs and NBFCs'.
- Prominent deposit-taking HFCs include LIC Housing Finance, PNB Housing Finance and Can Fin Homes.
- Currently, HFCs accepting public deposits are subject to more relaxed prudential parameters on deposit acceptance as compared to NBFCs.
- The regulatory concerns associated with deposit acceptance are the same across all categories of NBFCs.
- Hence, it has been decided to move HFCs towards the regulatory regime on deposit acceptance as applicable to deposit-taking NBFCs, RBI said in a communication to HFCs and NBFCs.
- RBI also tightened the leverage ratio for raising funds via deposits.
- Ceiling on the quantum of public deposits held by HFCs, subject to meeting prudential norms and minimum investment grade credit rating, will stand reduced from 3 times to 1.5 times of net-owned funds. This will come into effect from the date of this circular, RBI said.
- Deposit-taking HFCs holding deposits in excess of the revised limit will not accept fresh deposits or renew existing deposits till the time the quantum of public deposits is below the revised limit. However, the existing excess deposits will be allowed to run off till maturity, RBI added.
- **Currently, HFCs are allowed to accept or renew deposits repayable after one year or more but not more than 10 years from the date of acceptance or renewal of such deposits.**
- **Henceforth, deposits accepted or renewed by HFCs shall be repayable after one year or more but not later than five years.**
- Existing deposits with maturities above five years will be repaid according to their existing repayment profile.
- RBI has permitted HFCs to hedge the risks arising out of their operations like in case of NBFCs.
- Further, HFCs have been allowed to diversify their activities in certain fee-based functions without risk participation like in case of NBFCs, subject to compliance to regulatory norms.

3. RBI proposes tighter norms for deposit-taking housing finance companies

- **Deposit-taking housing finance companies (HFCs) will have to maintain 15 per cent**

Possible Question: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed enhanced requirements of liquid assets as part of steps to harmonise regulations for housing finance and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Deposit-taking housing finance companies (HFCs) will have to maintain _____ liquid assets against public deposits held by them.

4. National Startup Awards 2023: Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu adjudged best in startup performance

- Under the States Startup Ranking Framework, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have been adjudged as the best performer states in Category A (population more than 1 crore).**

- The National Startup Awards 2023 were announced on the occasion of National Startup Day.
- The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal presented the awards.

More about the Awards:

- Top performer states during the year were Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and Telangana, according to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.**
- Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have been awarded the Leader status while Bihar and Haryana got 'aspiring leader' award**
- Under Emerging Ecosystems category, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir got the award.**
- In category B states (population less than 1 crore), best performance award has been given to Himachal Pradesh and top performers are Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya; Leader - Goa, Manipur, Tripura; Aspiring leader - Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Nagaland and Emerging Ecosystems - Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Mizoram, Puducherry and Sikkim.**
- This edition's ranking exercise saw the highest-ever participation with 33 States and UTs participating. A 'National Report' encompassing the full exercise, along with a 'Compendium of Best Practices' and individual 'State Report' for all participating states was also launched, celebrating the spirit of entrepreneurship in India with a total of 31 States/UTs having formulated State Startup Policies. Moreover, in this fourth edition of States Ranking, 3102 startups received funding worth INR 392 crore. 95 Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange Workshops were organised from August 2021 to December 2022.

- For the purpose of evaluation, the States and UTs were divided into two categories with category A including States and UTs with a population of more than 1 crore, and category B including States and UTs with a population of less than 1 crore. Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerela, Tamil Nadu were the Best Performers in category A, while Himachal Pradesh emerged as the Best Performers in category B.
- The governments of Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Punjab emerged as top performers in Category A, while Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya championed as top performers in Category B.
- Some achievements, efforts & initiatives from these states are highlighted in Annexure C.
- The participants were evaluated across 7 broad Reform Areas consisting of 25 Action Points ranging from Institutional Support, Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Access to Market, Incubation and Mentorship support, Funding Support, Capacity building of enablers & Roadmap to a sustainable future. 15% of the total scores were awarded based on 10,000+ survey responses collected in 9 languages (telephonic and web-based).

Possible Question: The National Startup Awards 2023 were announced on the occasion of National Startup Day on January 16, Which of the following state's/UT's have NOT been awarded the Leader status ? I. Assam II. Uttar Pradesh III. Maharashtra IV. Bihar

5. India climbs eight places to 127 in global gender index, says WEF report

- India has ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity -- an improvement of eight places from last year -- according to the World Economic Forum's annual Gender Gap Report, 2023.

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked India at 135 out of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index in the report's 2022 edition.
- India has improved by 1.4 percentage points and eight positions since the last edition, marking a partial recovery towards its 2020 parity level, the report stated.
- The country has attained parity in enrolment across all levels of education, it said.
- India has closed 64.3 per cent of the overall gender gap, the report said.
- However, it underlined that India has reached only 36.7 per cent parity on economic participation and opportunity.

More Finding from the Paper:

- The index ranked India's neighbours Pakistan at 142, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103.

- Iceland is the most gender-equal country in the world for the 14th consecutive year and the only one to have closed more than 90 per cent of its gender gap, according to the report.
- In India, while there has been uptick in parity in wages and income, the share of women in senior positions and technical roles have dropped slightly since the last edition, the report pointed out.
- On political empowerment, India has registered 25.3 per cent parity, with women representing 15.1 per cent of parliamentarians -- the highest for the country since the inaugural report in 2006.
- Out of the 117 countries with available data since 2017, 18 countries -- including Bolivia (50.4 per cent), India (44.4 per cent) and France (42.3 per cent) -- have achieved women's representation of over 40 per cent in local governance.
- For India, the 1.9 percentage point improvement in sex ratio at birth has driven up parity after more than a decade of slow progress, the report said.
- However, it also said that for Vietnam, Azerbaijan, India and China, the relatively low overall rankings on the Health and Survival sub-index is explained by skewed sex ratios at birth.
- Overall, the Southern Asian region has achieved 63.4 per cent gender parity, the second-lowest of the eight regions.
- The score in South Asia has risen by 1.1 percentage points since the last edition on the basis of the constant sample of countries covered since 2006. The improvement is partially attributable to the rise in scores of populous countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- In terms of the share of women in ministerial positions, 75 countries have 20 per cent or less female ministers.
- Populous countries such as India, Turkey and China have less than seven per cent women ministers while those like Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon have none.
- Overall, the report said gender parity globally has recovered to pre-Covid levels but the pace of change has stagnated as converging crises slow progress.
- While no country has yet achieved full gender parity, the top nine countries have closed at least 80 per cent of their gap.
- The report found that the overall gender gap has closed by 0.3 percentage point from last year.
- The overall progress in 2023 is partly due to the improvement in closing the educational attainment gap, with 117 out of the 146 indexed countries now having closed at least 95 per cent of the gap.

- The Global Gender Gap Report, now in its 17th edition, benchmarks the evolution of gender-based gaps in four areas: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. It is the longest-standing index which tracks progress on closing these gaps since its inception in 2006. It also explores the impact of recent global shocks on the gender gap crisis in the labour market.

Possible Question: Which of the following statements is/are NOT TRUE about Gender Gap index 2023 released by World Economic Forum?

I. India has ranked at 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity II. The index ranked India's neighbours Pakistan at 142, Bangladesh at 59, China at 107, Nepal at 116, Sri Lanka at 115 and Bhutan at 103. III. Finland is the most gender-equal country in the world for the 14th consecutive year and the only one to have closed more than 90 per cent of its gender gap, according to the report.

6. ICRA revises up bank credit growth estimate to 15% from 13% for FY24

- Ratings agency ICRA has revised upwards its projection of bank credit growth in FY24 to 14.9-15.3 per cent, estimated at an incremental growth of '20.4-20.9 lakh crore, from the earlier projection of 12.8-13 per cent equating to a growth of '17.5-17.8 lakh crore.

- This will be the highest ever incremental bank credit growth and would surpass the previous high of '18.2 lakh crore (YoY growth of 15.4 per cent) in FY23.
- ICRA said, adding that corporate bond issuances are also expected to touch a record high of '9.6-9.9 lakh crore in FY24, higher than '8.7 lakh crore in FY23.
- Bond issuances are seen at '9.6-9.9 lakh crore in FY24 and '10.0-10.5 lakh crore in FY25 against '8.7 lakh crore in FY23. Corporate bond outstanding, estimated at '44.7 lakh crore as of December 2023, is seen growing 5-7 per cent on year to '45.2-45.5 lakh crore by March 2024 and '47.7-48.5 lakh crore by March 2025.
- However, challenges in deposit mobilisation could temper bank credit expansion to 11.7-12.6 per cent or '19-20.5 lakh crore in FY25, it said.
- Incremental bank credit growth touched nearly '16.9 lakh crore in the nine-month period ended December 2023, far outpacing the '14.1 lakh crore expansion in the previous year. The rise has been driven by 33 per cent growth in retail and 23 per cent in the NBFC segment as of November 18, 2023.
- AUM growth for NBFCs has also been revised to 14-16 per cent for FY24, against the earlier

estimate of 13-15 per cent. This is expected to moderate to 13-15 per cent in FY25.

Possible Question: In January 2024, Ratings agency ICRA has revised upwards its projection of bank credit growth in FY24 to _____, estimated at an incremental growth of '20.4-20.9 lakh crore.

7. Australian Open: Jannik Sinner defeats Daniil Medvedev in Men's Singles final and Aryna Sabalenka wins Women's Singles

- **Italy's Jannik Sinner defeated Russia's Daniil Medvedev in a hard-fought game 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in the men's singles final of the Australian Open in Melbourne.**
- **Aryna Sabalenka crushes Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-2 to defend Australian Open title. She became the first woman to do so in more than a decade .**

• The 22-year-old fourth seed rallied from two sets down to register a convincing win against Medvedev and lift his maiden major trophy at the Australian Open.
 • With his win, Sinner became the first Italian man to win a Slam since Adriano Panatta in 1976. The World No. 4, who lost just one set en route to the final, ended Novak Djokovic's 33-match winning streak at the Australian Open in the semi-final.
 • Sinner is just the second player to rally from two sets down in the Australian Open final and lift the trophy. The other was Rafael Nadal, who defeated Medvedev from a two-sets-to-love deficit in 2022.
 • The 25-year-old Belarusian defending champion and world number two Aryna Sabalenka defeated Chinese 12th seed Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-2 to win the Australian Open women's singles title in Melbourne today. Sabalenka took just 33 minutes to race through a 6-3 win in the first set at Melbourne Park.
 • This is Sabalenka's second Grand Slam title while Zheng was gunning for a first. Sabalenka became the first woman to defend the Australian Open title since 2013.

Possible Question: Italy's Jannik Sinner defeated Russia's Daniil Medvedev in a hard-fought game 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in the men's singles final of the Australian Open in Melbourne. Who among the following won the women singles title?

8. Zomato, Stripe secure final RBI nod for online payment aggregator

• Food-delivery platform Zomato and international financial infrastructure provider Stripe are the latest entities to have received final approval from the regulator to operate as online payment aggregators.

• With the latest additions, 11 entities have now obtained the regulator's final nod to operate as online aggregators in the country.

- In December last year, **the RBI gave payment gateways Razorpay and Cashfree final approval to operate as payment aggregators**, paving the way for them to onboard new merchants, after a year-long embargo.
- Around the same time, payments major Google Pay, expense management platform Enkash and neo-banking startup Open Financial also received the regulator's nod.
- In 2022, Zomato had incorporated a non-banking financial company (NBFC) and had applied for a licence to offer lending products to its restaurant partners.
- Payment aggregators **enable their clients to accept various payment methods such as debit cards, credit cards, cardless EMIs, UPI, bank transfers, e-wallets, and e-mandates.**

Possible Question: In January 2024, Food-delivery platform Zomato has received final approval from the regulator to operate as online payment aggregators. Which of the following is/are the other companies that has been provided the online payment aggregator license by RBI? I. Razorpay II. Cashfree III. Stripe IV. Enkash

9. 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' will be India's nomination for recognition as UNESCO World Heritage List for 2024-25

• The 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' will be India's nomination for recognition as UNESCO World Heritage List for the year 2024-25.

About 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India':

- **The twelve component parts of this nomination are, Salher fort, Shivneri fort, Lohgad, Khanderi fort, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala Fort, Vijay durg, Sindhudurg in Maharashtra and Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu.**
- These components, distributed across diverse geographical and physiographic regions, showcase the strategic military powers of the Maratha rule.
- The Maratha Military Landscapes of India, which developed between 17th and 19th centuries, represent an extraordinary fortification and military system envisioned by the Maratha rulers.
- This extraordinary network of forts, varying in hierarchies, scales and typological features, is a result of integrating the landscape, terrain and physiographic characteristics distinctive to the Sahyadri mountain ranges, the Konkan

Coast, Deccan Plateau and the Eastern Ghats in the Indian Peninsula.

- There are more than 390 forts in Maharashtra out of which only 12 forts are selected under the Maratha Military Landscapes of India, of these eight forts are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India.
- These are Shivneri fort, Lohgad, Raigad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala fort, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg and Gingee fort whereas Salher fort, Rajgad, Khanderi fort and Pratapgad are protected by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra. In the Maratha Military Landscapes of India Salher fort, Shivneri fort, Lohgad, Raigad, Rajgad and Gingee fort are hill forts, Pratapgad is hill-forest fort, Panhala is hill-plateau fort, Vijaydurg is coastal fort whereas Khanderi fort, Suvarnadurg and Sindhudurg are island forts.
- The inception of the Maratha Military ideology dates back to 17th Century during the reign of the Maratha King Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj by the 1670 CE and continued through subsequent rules until Peshwa rule till 1818 CE.
- There are two categories of nomination-cultural and natural criteria, the Maratha Military landscapes is nominated in the category of cultural criteria. There are six criteria (i to vi) for cultural sites and four criteria (vii to x) for natural sites for inclusion in the World Heritage List.
- The Maratha Military Landscapes of India is nominated under **criterion (iii)**: To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization that in living or which has disappeared, **criterion (iv)**: to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape that illustrates significant stage(s) in human history and **Criterion (vi)**: To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.
- **At present in India there are 42 World Heritage sites, out of which 34 are cultural sites, seven are natural sites whereas one is mixed site.**
- In Maharashtra there are six World Heritage Sites, five cultural and one natural these are, Ajanta Caves (1983), Ellora Caves (1983), Elephanta Caves (1987), Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004), Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018) and western Ghats of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala is serial property in natural category (2012). The Maratha Military Landscapes of India included in the Tentative List of World Heritage sites in 2021 is the sixth cultural

property nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List from Maharashtra.

Possible Question: The 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' will be India's nomination for recognition as UNESCO World Heritage List for the year 2024-25. Which of the following is/are NOT the components of this nomination?
I. Gingee Fort II. Amber Fort III. Panhala Fort IV. Golkonda Fort V. Shivner Fort

10. FY 2023-24 marks third successive year of over 7% growth of Indian economy, predicts Economic Review of government

- **The Financial Year 2024 marks the third successive year of over seven percent growth of the Indian economy even as the global economy struggles to grow at more than 3 percent.**

- Projecting the good health of India's financial sector, the review said that the public sector capital investment has surged in the last 10 years.
- According to the Indian Economy Review released by the Department of Economic Affairs, India's unwavering commitment to ensuring steady economic growth is generating resources for investment needed for climate change adaptation, building resilience, and mitigating emissions.
- The report further highlights that the structural reforms implemented since 2014 have strengthened the macroeconomic fundamentals of the economy.
- The report highlighted the positive transformation in the fields of employment, ease of doing business, agriculture sector, E-commerce, and climate action.
- **Marking a significant improvement in women-led development, the report noted that under PM Jan Dhan Yojana, the proportion of women having a bank account has increased from 53 percent in 2015-16 to 78.6 percent in 2019-21.**
- **It further added, Female Labour Force Participation rose from 23.3 percent in 2017-18 to 37 percent in 2022-23.**
- Highlighting the enhancement in the education levels of women, the review said that the female gross enrolment ratio in senior secondary education rose from 24.5 percent in 2005 to 58.2 percent in 2022.
- Delineating the pivotal role of India's robust Digital Public Infrastructure, the report noted that the transformation in the authentication ecosystem has reduced the cost of conducting e-KYC from a thousand rupees to five rupees. It said that India is the third-largest fintech economy in the world after the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The review

further added, India became the world's fourth-largest stock market in the world by market capitalisation due to the significant interest from domestic and global investors in the Indian stock market.

Possible Question: According to the Indian Economy Review released by the Department of Economic Affairs released in January 2024, FY 2023-24 marks the _____ successive year of over 7% growth of Indian economy

11. Best Republic Day tableaux: Odisha wins 1st prize; Gujarat bags top spot in people's choice category

- The colourful tableau of Odisha that showcased women empowerment in the state as well as its rich handicraft and handloom sector during the 75th Republic Day parade here, has bagged the first prize among the tableaux showcased by various states and UTs.
- Gujarat's tableau showcasing Dhordo tourism village has earned the first place in the people's choice category.

- In people's choice category, Uttar Pradesh has bagged the second position and Andhra Pradesh has been ranked third.

Possible Question: The colourful tableau of Odisha that showcased women empowerment in the state as well as its rich handicraft and handloom sector during the 75th Republic Day parade here, has bagged the first prize among the tableaux showcased by various states and UTs. Which state won the second prize?

12. Toyota keeps crown as world's top-selling automaker in 2023

- Toyota Motor sold a record 11.2 million vehicles in 2023, taking the crown as the world's top-selling automaker for a fourth straight year.
- The Japanese automaker reported a 7.2% jump in global group sales last year, including those of truck unit Hino Motors and small-car maker Daihatsu, helped by record overseas sales of 8.9 million vehicles.

Possible Question: Which automobile company has sold a record 11.2 million vehicles in 2023, taking the crown as the world's top-selling automaker for a fourth straight year?

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BANKING

Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	4.50%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	18.00%

POLICY/EXCHANGE RATE & RESERVE RATIO	PERCENTAGE
Repo Rate	6.50%
Reverse Repo Rate	3.35%
Marginal Standing Facility Rate (MSF)	6.75%
Bank Rate	6.75%

APPOINTMENTS

APPOINTMENT	POST
Gwanggu Lee	Managing Director and CEO of Kia India
Succes Masra	Prime Minister of Chad
Randhir Jaiswal	Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs
Shashi Singh	President of All India Rubber Industries Association
Sanjiv Aggarwal	Managing Director and CEO of National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited
G Ram Mohan Rao	Executive Director (ED) of Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)
P Santhosh	Managing Director and CEO of National Asset Reconstruction of India Ltd (NARCL)
Raghuram Iyer	Chief Executive Officer of Indian Olympic Association
Vikas Sheel	Executive Director of Asian Development Bank
Ashwani Gupta	Chief Executive Officer of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone
Indra Mani Pandey	Secretary General (SG) of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
Sheikh Hasina	Prime Minister of Bangladesh
Gabriel Attal	Prime Minister of France
Senthil Pandian C	India's ambassador to World Trade Organisation (WTO)
Sheel Vardhan Singh	Member of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
Rajay Kumar Sinha	Member finance and investment at Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India
King Frederik X	King of Denmark
Praveen Achuthan Kutty	Managing Director and CEO of DCB bank
Daljit Singh Chaudhary	Director general of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)
Jagrut Kotecha	Chief Executive Officer of PepsiCo India
Sankey Prasad	Chairman and Managing Director for India and Colliers Project Leaders Middle East
Nitish Kumar	Chief Minister of Bihar
Anil Kumar Lahoti	Chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)
Harun Rashid Khan	Non-executive chairman of AU Small Finance Bank
Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar	King of Malaysia

IMPORTANT DAYS

DATE	DAY	THEME
1st January	Global Family Day	
6th January	World Day of War Orphans	
9th January	Pravasi Bharatiya Divas	
10th January	World Hindi Day	
10th- 18th January	Startup India Innovation Week 2024	
12th January	National Youth Day	Arise, Awake, and Realise the Power You Hold
15th January	National Startup Day	
19th January	Kokborok Day	

24th January	National Girl Child Day	
24th January	International Day of Education	Learning for lasting peace
25th January	National Voters' Day	Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For sure
26th January	International Customs Day	Customs engaging traditional and new partners with purpose
27th January	International Day of Clean Energy	
27th January	International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust	
28th January	India's Newspaper Day	
28th January	World Leprosy Day	Beat Leprosy
31st January	International Zebra Day	

SPORTS

NAME OF THE SPORTS PERSON	RELATED FIELD
Anahat Singh	Squash
David Warner	Cricket
Rohit Sharma	Cricket
Virat Kohli	Cricket
M S Dhoni	Cricket
Allan Border	Cricket
Pat Cummins	Cricket
Deepti Sharma	Cricket
Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa	Chess
Vishwanathan Anand	Chess
Satwiksairaj Rankireddy	Badminton
Chirag Shetty	Badminton
Man Singh	Marathon Running
Ravi Kumar Dahiya	Wrestling
Rohan Bopanna	Tennis
Matthew Ebden	Tennis
Mandeep Jangra	Boxing
A. Sanjana	Weightlifting
Sonam Maskar	Rifle Shooting
Jannik Sinner	Tennis
Daniil Medvedev	Tennis
Aryna Sabalenka	Tennis
Zheng Qinwen	Tennis

SCHEMES

NAME OF THE SCHEME	THEME
Sagar Parikrama	To disseminate information about various fisheries related schemes and programs
Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme	Promote Manufacture Sector
PM Vishwakarma Yojana (PMVY)	To empower and enhance the skills of the craftsman community
PRITHvi VIgyan	Augmentation and sustenance of long-term observations of the atmosphere, ocean, geosphere, cryosphere, and solid earth to record the vital signs of the Earth System and change
Prerana: An Experiential Learning program	To empower leadership qualities in students
Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan	For socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana	Install Rooftop Solar System

OBITUARY

OBITUARY	RELATED FIELD
Franz Beckenbauer	Football Player
Ustad Rashid Khan	Classical Singer
Dr Prabha Atre	Classical Singer
Dr Nitya Anand	Developer of India's first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli'
Sukhbir Singh Gill	Hockey Player

BOOKS & AUTHORS

BOOKS	AUTHORS
Four Stars of Destiny: An Autobiography	General Manoj Mukund Naravane
An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy	Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

DEFENCE

DEFENCE EXERCISE NAME	COUNTRIES INVOLVED
Desert Cyclone 2024	India and UAE
Ex-Ayutthaya	India and Thailand
Exercise CYCLONE	India and Egypt
Exercise KHANJAR	India and Kyrgyzstan
Exercise Desert Knight	India, France and UAE
Exercise - SADA TANSEEQ	India and Saudi Arabia

INDIA AND WORLD

COUNTRIES INVOLVED	FIELD OF CO-OPERATION
India, France and Germany	Funding for AMRUT Mission
India and Pakistan	Pact on Nuclear Installation
India and Guyana	Hydrocarbon sector.
India and Nepal	Electricity
India and Denmark	Green Fuel
India and Singapore	UPI Payments
India and Iran	Chabahar Port
India and Argentina	Lithium exploration and mining
India and Iran	Persian Language
India and Switzerland	Free Trade Agreement
India and Dominic Republic	Joint Economic and Trade Committee

ACQUISITION AND MERGERS

ENTITY	ACQUIRED BY/MERGED WITH
Beetel Teletech	Bharti Airtel Services
GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited	Punjab State Power Corporation Ltd.
Indian business of American Tower Corporation (ATC)	Brookfield Asset Management
Capital Foods	Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL)
Shriram GI Holdings Private Limited	Shriram General Insurance Company Limited
ZestMoney (Zest)	DMI Group
MG Motor India	SW Group
Comic Con India	Nazara Technologies
Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India) Private Limited	Tata Electronics Private Limited
Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited (Fincare)	AU Small Finance Bank Limited (AU)

AWARDS

AWARDE	AWARDS NAME	RELATED FIELD
B.R. Kamboj	MS Swaminathan Award	Agronomy
SWAMITRA Scheme	Best Innovation Award for Innovation Sandbox presentation during Public Policy Dialogues'2024	
Shah Rukh Khan	CNN-News18 Indian of the Year (IOTY) 2023 award	
Arun Krishnamurthy and Saalumarada Thimmakka	CNN-News 18 Climate warriors award	Climate
Dinesh Khara	CNN-News 18 Indian of the Year 2023 award	Business
Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)	CNN-News 18 Indian of the Year 2023 award	
Ravi Kannan	CNN-News18 Indian of The Year 2023	Social change
Neeraj Chopra	CNN-News 18 Indian of the Year award	Sports
R Praggnanandhaa	CNN-News18 Rising Sports Star at the Indian of The Year 2023.	Sports
Indore	Swachh Survekshan Awards	Cleanest City
REC Limited	ICAI Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting 2022-23'.	
Lionel Messi	FIFA's best men's player for 2023	
Aitana Bonmati	FIFA's best women's player for 2023	
Engineers India Limited	SCOPE Eminence Award	
Justice Ranjan Gogoi	Assam's highest civilian award 'Assam Baibhav'.	
Thiruvananthapuram International Airport	Excellence Award by Quality Circle Forum of India	
Bas De Leede (Netherlands)	ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Queentor Abel (Kenya)	ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Suryakumar Yadav (India)	ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Hayley Matthews (West Indies)	ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Rachin Ravindra (New Zealand)	ICC Men's Emerging Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Phoebe Litchfield (Australia)	ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Virat Kohli (India)	ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Chamari Athapaththu (Sri Lanka)	ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Usman Khawaja (Australia)	ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Richard Illingworth (England)	ICC Umpire of the Year 2023	
Zimbabwe Team (for consoling opposition WC Qualifier)	ICC Spirit of Cricket Award 2023	
Nat Sciver-Brunt (England)	Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2023	
Pat Cummins (Australia)	Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year	
NTPC Limited	The 2024 Top Employers of the Top Employers Institute	
Christopher Nolan	Golden Globes Awards 2024	Best Director - Motion Picture- Oppenheimer
Oppenheimer	Golden Globes Awards 2024	Best Movie

National Startup Awards 2023

Category A States (Population more than 1 crore)

Performance	States
Best performer	Gujarat Karnataka Kerala Tamil Nadu
Top Performer	Maharashtra Odisha Punjab Rajasthan Telangana
Leader	Andhra Pradesh Assam Madhya Pradesh Uttar Pradesh Uttarakhand
Aspiring leader	Bihar Haryana
Emerging Ecosystems	Chhattisgarh Delhi Jammu and Kashmir

Category B States (Population less than 1 crore)

Performance	States
Best performer	Himachal Pradesh
Top Performer	Arunachal Pradesh Meghalaya
Leader	Goa Manipur Tripura
Aspiring leader	Andaman and Nicobar Islands Nagaland
Emerging Ecosystems	Chandigarh Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu Ladakh Mizoram Puducherry Sikkim

SUMMITS AND CONFERENCE

SUMMIT/ CONFERENCE NAME	THEME	LOCATION
UNESCO's World Heritage Committee		New Delhi
The second International AYUSH Conference and Exhibition	Non-Communicable Chronic Diseases – Prevention & Management through AYUSH	Abu Dhabi
54th World Economic Forum Summit	Rebuilding Trust	Davos, Switzerland
Wings India 2024	Connecting India with the World in Amritkal	Hyderabad
India International Science Festival	Science and technology public outreach in Amrit Kaal	Faridabad

RANKS AND REPORTS

NAME OF THE REPORT/INDEX	RELEASED BY	RANKING OF INDIA/STATE/COMPANY ETC	COUNTRY WHICH TOPPED THE LIST
World Employment and Social Outlook report	International Labour Organization (ILO)		
Global Economic Prospects	World Bank		
Henley Passport Index	International Air Transport Association (IATA)	80 th - India	France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain
Global Risks Report 2024	World Economic Forum		
Future Possibilities Index (FPI)	Newsweek Vantage and Horizon Group	35 th - India	UK
Edelman Trust Barometer 2024			
Global Firepower rankings for 2024	Global Firepower	4th- India	USA
All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)	Ministry of Education		
Status of Snow Leopards in India	Union Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)		
Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)	Transparency International	93 rd – India	Denmark
Gender Gap Report, 2023	World Economic Forum	127 th – India	Iceland
Multidimensional Poverty in India since 2005-06	Niti Aayog		



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IMPORTANT STATIC & CURRENT INFO

INDIAN STATES, CAPITALS, CHIEF MINISTERS & GOVERNORS

STATE	CAPITAL	CHIEF MINISTER	GOVERNOR
Andhra Pradesh	Amaravati	Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy	Justice (Retd.) S. Abdul Nazeer
Arunachal Pradesh	Itanagar	Pema Khandu	Lt. General Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik
Assam	Dispur	Himanta Biswa Sarma	Gulab Chand Kataria
Bihar	Patna	Nitish Kumar	Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar
Chhattisgarh	Raipur	Vishnu Deo Sai	Biswa Bhusan Harichandan
Goa	Panaji	Pramod Sawant	P.S. Sreedharan Pillai
Gujarat	Gandhi Nagar	Bhupendra Patel	Acharya Dev Vrat
Haryana	Chandigarh	Manohar Lal Khattar	Bandaru Dattatraya
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla	Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu	Shiv Pratap Shukla
Jharkhand	Ranchi	Hemant Soren	CP Radhakrishnan
Karnataka	Bengaluru	Siddaramaiah	Thaawarchand Gehlot
Kerala	Thiruvananthapuram	Pinarayi Vijayan	Arif Mohammed Khan
Madhya Pradesh	Bhopal	Mohan Yadav	Mangubhai Chhaganbhai Patel
Maharashtra	Mumbai	Eknath Shinde	Ramesh Bais
Manipur	Imphal	N Biren Singh	Sushri Anusuya Uikye
Meghalaya	Shillong	Conrad Kongkal Sangma	Phagu Chauhan
Mizoram	Aizawl	PU Lalduhoma	Dr Kambhampati Haribabu
Nagaland	Kohima	Neiphiu Rio	La. Ganesan
Odisha	Bhubaneshwar	Naveen Patnaik	Raghubar Das
Punjab	Chandigarh	Bhagwant Mann	Banwarilal Purohit
Rajasthan	Jaipur	Bhajan Lal Sharma	Kalraj Mishra
Sikkim	Gangtok	PS Golay	Lakshman Prasad Acharya
Tamil Nadu	Chennai	M. K. Stalin	R. N. Ravi
Telangana	Hyderabad	A Revanth Reddy	Tamilisai Soundararajan
Tripura	Agartala	Dr. Manik Saha	Indra Sena Reddy Nallu
Uttar Pradesh	Lucknow	Yogi Aditya Nath	Anandiben Patel
Uttarakhand	Dehradun	Pushkar Singh Dhami	Lt. Gen. Gurmit Singh
West Bengal	Kolkata	Mamata Banerjee	C V Ananda Bose

UNION TERRITORIES, LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS & ADMINISTRATORS

UNION TERRITORY	LT. GOVERNOR & ADMINISTRATOR
Andaman and Nicobar Island (UT)	Admiral D K Joshi (Lieutenant Governor)
Chandigarh (UT)	Banwarilal Purohit (Administrator)
Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (UT)	Praful Patel (Administrator)
Delhi (NCT)	Vinai Kumar Saxena (Lieutenant Governor)
Jammu and Kashmir (UT)	Manoj Sinha (Lieutenant Governor)
Lakshadweep (UT)	Praful Patel (Administrator)
Puducherry (UT)	Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan (Addl. Charge) (Lieutenant Governor)
Ladakh (UT)	Brig. (Dr.) BD Mishra (Retd.) (Lieutenant Governor)

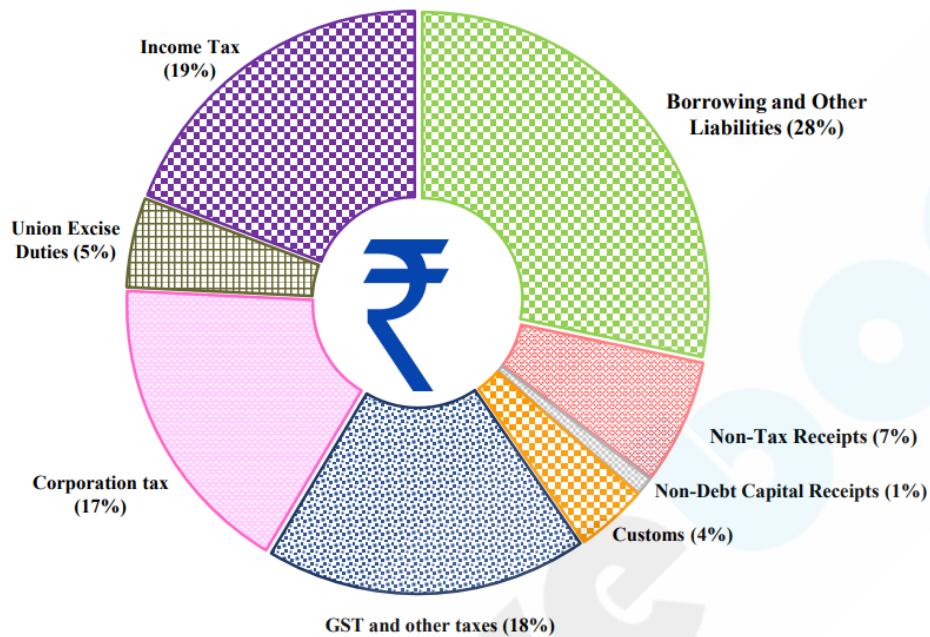
UNION MINISTERS & PORTFOLIO

UNION MINISTER	PORTFOLIO
Narendra Modi	Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions Department of Atomic Energy Department of Space
Rajnath Singh	Ministry of Defence
Amit Shah	Ministry of Home Affairs Ministry of Cooperation
Nitin Gadkari	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
Nirmala Sitharaman	Ministry of Finance Ministry of Corporate Affairs
Piyush Goyal	Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ministry of Textiles Ministry of Consumer affairs, food and public distribution
Narendra Singh Tomar	Ministry of agriculture and Farmers welfare
Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar	Ministry of External Affairs
Arjun Munda	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
Smriti Zubin Irani	Ministry of Women and child Development Ministry of Minority Affairs
Dharmendra Pradhan	Ministry of Education Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
Pralhad Joshi	Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs Ministry of coal Ministry of Mines
Narayan Tatoo Rane	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
SarbanandaSonowal	Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH)
Dr. Virendra Kumar	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
Giriraj Singh	Ministry of Rural Development Ministry of Panchayati Raj
Jyotiraditya M. Scindia	Ministry of Civil Aviation Ministry of Steel
Ashwini Vaishnaw	Ministry of Railways Ministry of Communications Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
Pashu Pati Kumar Paras	Ministry of Food Processing Industries
Gajendra Singh Shekhawat	Ministry of Jal Shakti
Kiren Rijiju	Ministry of Earth Sciences
Raj Kumar Singh	Ministry of Power Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
Hardeep Singh Puri	Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
Mansukh L. Mandaviya	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
Bhupender Yadav	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Ministry of Labour and Employment
Mahendra Nath Pandey	Ministry of Heavy Industries
ParshottamRupala	Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
G. Kishan Reddy	Ministry of Culture Ministry of Tourism Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
Anurag Singh Thakur	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
Arjun Meghwal	Ministry of Law and Justice

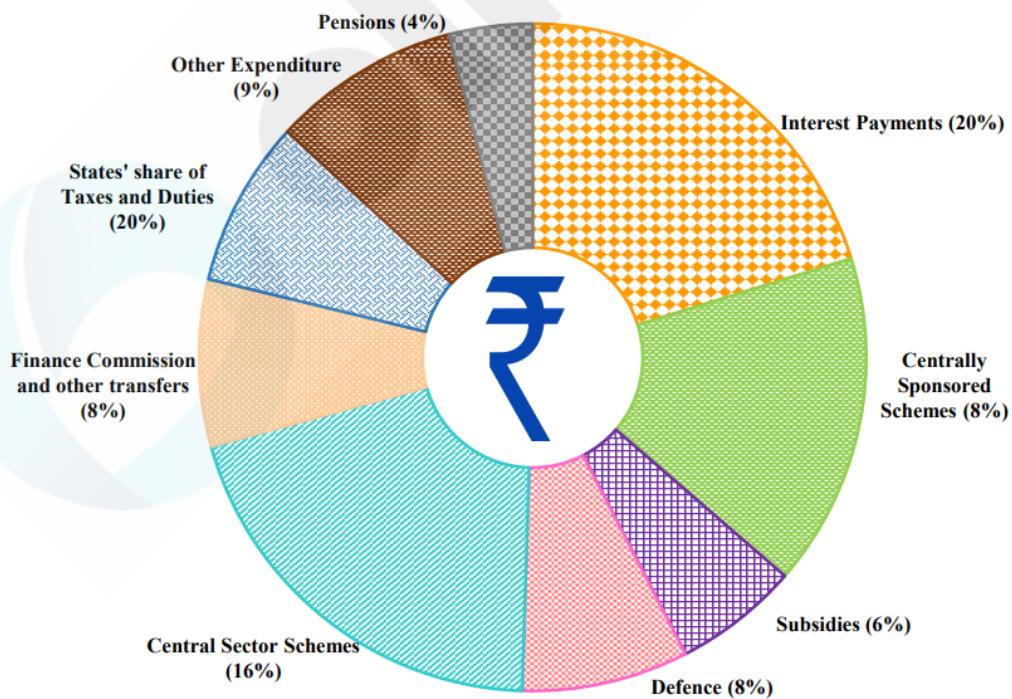
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INTERIM UNION BUDGET 2024-25

With the 'mantra' of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, and Sabka Vishwas' and the whole of nation approach of "Sabka Prayas", the Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Interim Union Budget 2024-25 in Parliament. The key highlights of the Budget are as follows:

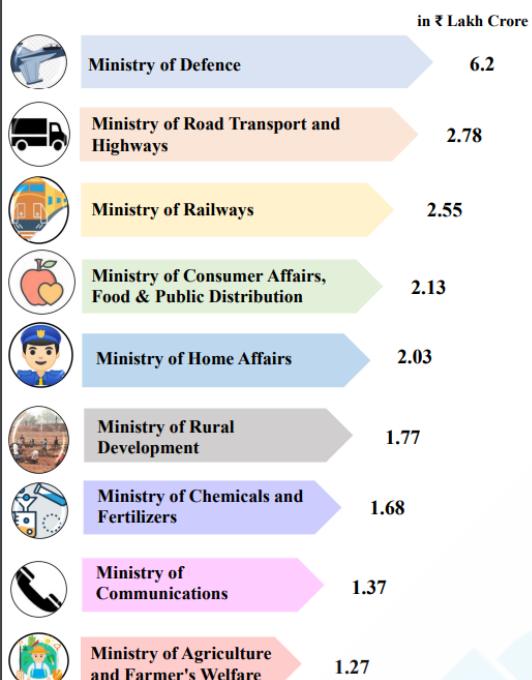
Rupee Comes From



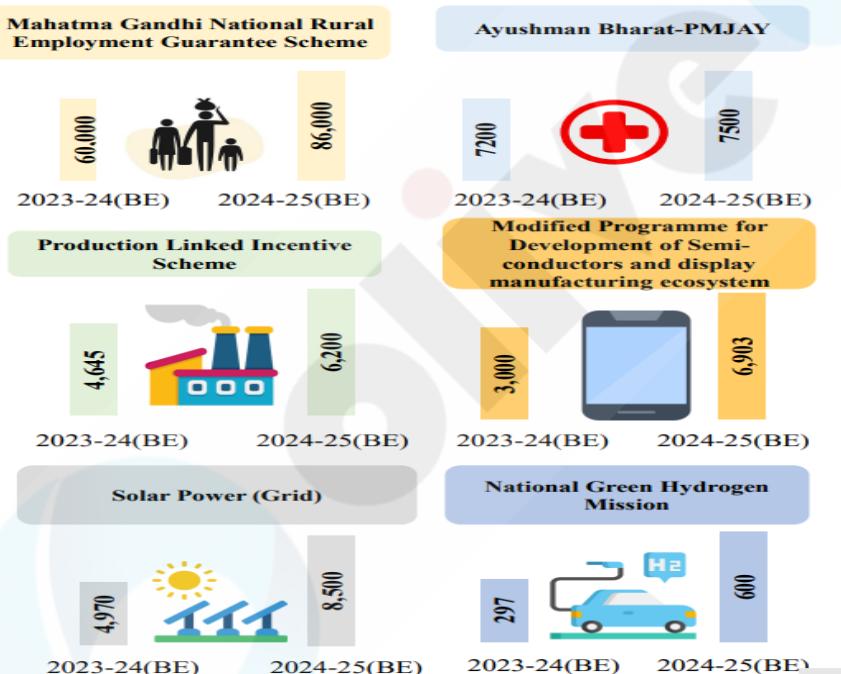
Rupee Goes To



Allocation for Specific Ministries



Allocation to Major Schemes (in ₹ crore)



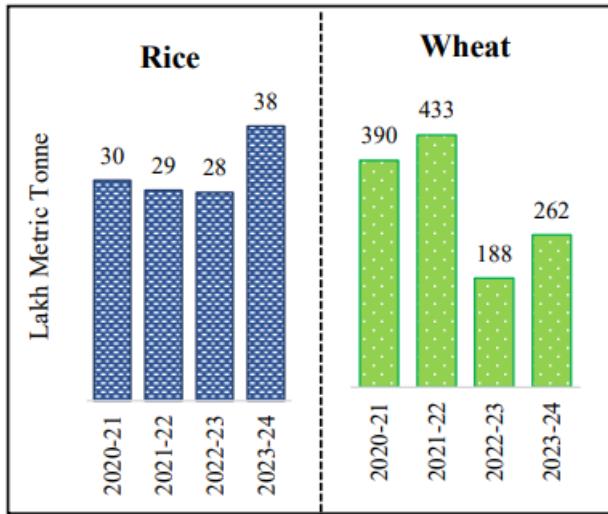
Part A

Social Justice

- Prime Minister to focus on upliftment of four major castes, that is, 'Garib' (Poor), 'Mahilayen' (Women), 'Yuva' (Youth) and 'Annadata' (Farmer).



Increasing Procurement of Wheat and Rice

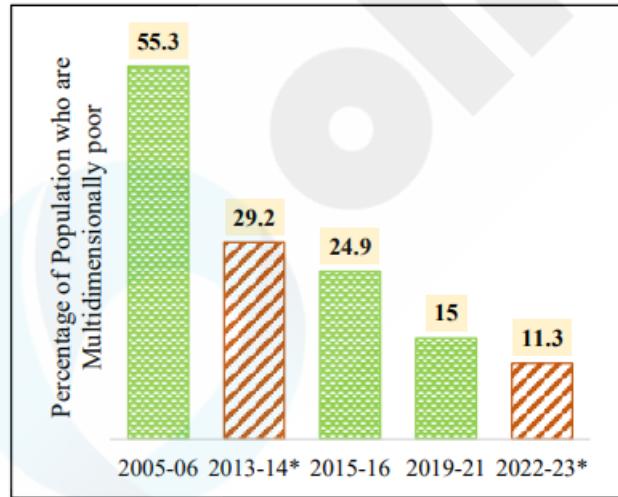


'Garib Kalyan, Desh ka Kalyan'

- Government assisted 25 crore people out of multi-dimensional poverty in last 10 years.
- DBT of Rs. 34 lakh crore using PM-Jan Dhan accounts led to savings of Rs. 2.7 lakh crore for the Government.
- PM-SVANidhi provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors. 2.3 lakh have received credit for the third time.
- PM-JANMAN Yojana to aid the development of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTG).
- PM-Vishwakarma Yojana provides end-to-end support to artisans and crafts people engaged in 18 trades.



Decline in Headcount Ratio



* Projections

Welfare of 'Annadata'

- PM-KISAN SAMMAN Yojana provided financial assistance to 11.8 crore farmers.
- Under PM Fasal BimaYojana, crop insurance is given to 4 crore farmers
- Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) integrated 1361 mandis, providing services to 1.8 crore farmers with trading volume of Rs. 3 lakh crore.

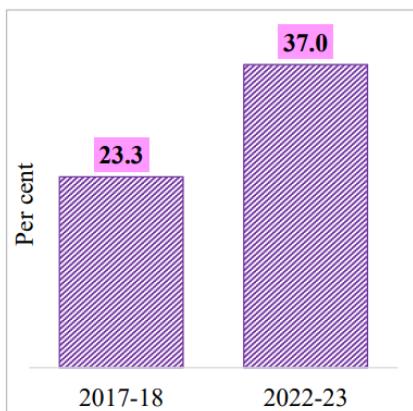
Momentum for Nari Shakti

- 30 crore Mudra Yojana loans given to women entrepreneurs.
- Female enrolment in higher education gone up by 28%.
- In STEM courses, girls and women constitute 43% of enrolment, one of the highest in the world.

- Over 70% houses under PM Awas Yojana given to women from rural areas.



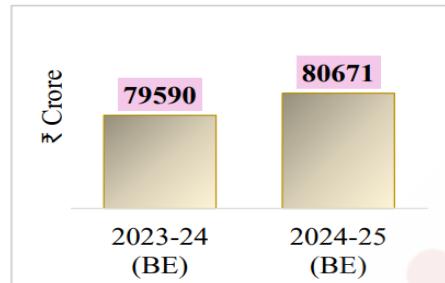
Rise in Female Labour Force Participation Rate



PM Awas Yojana (Grameen)

- Despite COVID challenges, the target of three crore houses under PM Awas Yojana (Grameen) will be achieved soon.
- Two crore more houses to be taken up in the next five years.

Increased allocation for PMAY



Rooftop solarization and muft bijli

- 1 crore households to obtain 300 units free electricity every month through rooftop solarization.
- Each household is expected to save Rs.15000 to Rs.18000 annually.

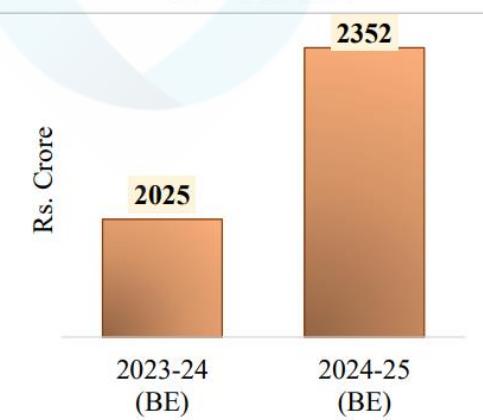
Ayushman Bharat

- Healthcare cover under Ayushman Bharat scheme to be extended to all ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers.

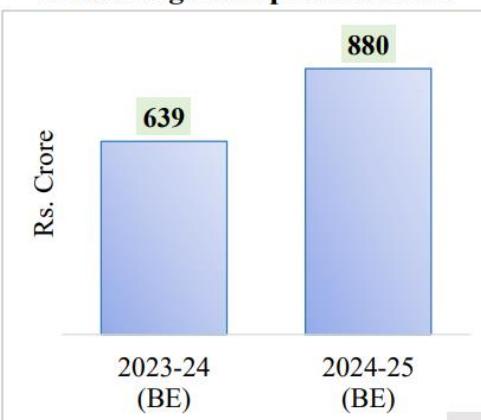
Agriculture and food processing

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana has benefitted 38 lakh farmers and generated 10 lakh employment.
- Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Yojana has assisted 2.4 lakh SHGs and 60000 individuals with credit linkages.

Increased allocation for Blue Revolution



Increased allocation for PM-Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises scheme



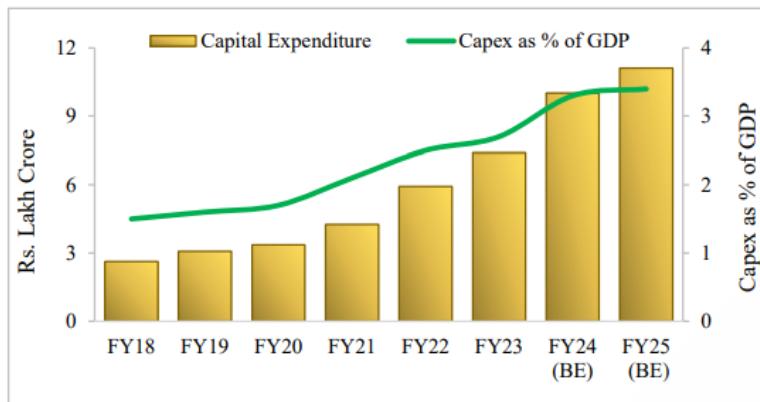
Research and Innovation for catalyzing growth, employment and development

- A corpus of Rs.1 lakh crore to be established with fifty-year interest free loan to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates.
- A new scheme to be launched for strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting 'atmanirbharta'.

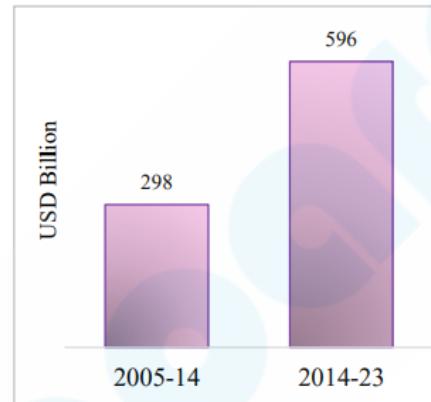
Infrastructure

- Capital expenditure outlay for Infrastructure development and employment generation to be increased by 11.1 per cent to Rs.11,11,111 crore, that will be 3.4 per cent of the GDP.

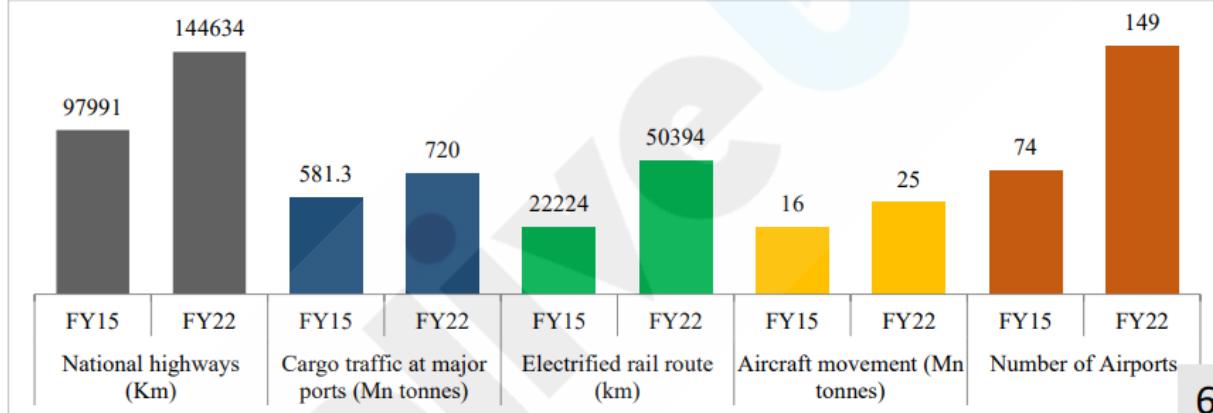
Increase in Capital Expenditure



Doubling of FDI Inflow



Improvement in Physical Infrastructure



6

Railways

- 3 major economic railway corridor programmes identified under the PM Gati Shakti to be implemented to improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost
 - Energy, mineral and cement corridors
 - Port connectivity corridors
 - High traffic density corridors
- Forty thousand normal rail bogies to be converted to Vande Bharat standards.

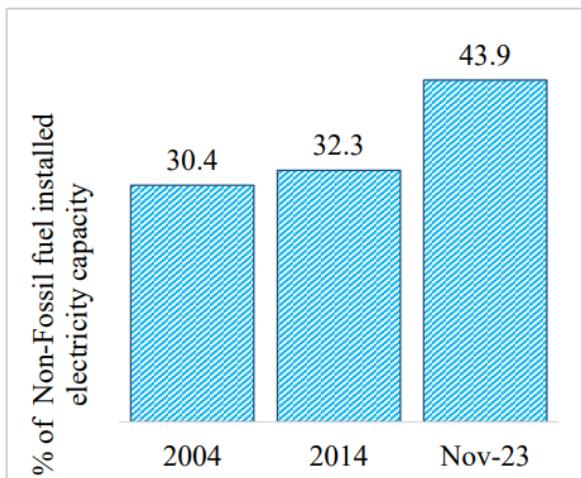
Aviation Sector

- Number of airports in the country doubled to 149.
- Five hundred and seventeen new routes are carrying 1.3 crore passengers.
- Indian carriers have placed orders for over 1000 new aircrafts.

Green Energy

- Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 MT to be set up by 2030.
- Phased mandatory blending of compressed biogas (CBG) in compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport and piped natural gas (PNG) for domestic purposes to be mandated.

Per cent increase in Non-Fossil Fuel installed electricity capacity



Tourism sector

- States to be encouraged to take up comprehensive development of iconic tourist centres including their branding and marketing at global scale.
- Framework for rating of the tourist centres based on quality of facilities and services to be established.
- Long-term interest free loans to be provided to States for financing such development on matching basis.

Investments

- FDI inflow during 2014-23 of USD 596 billion was twice of the inflow during 2005-14.

Reforms in the States for 'Viksit Bharat'

- A provision of Rs.75,000 crore rupees as fifty-year interest free loan is proposed to support milestone-linked reforms by the State Governments.

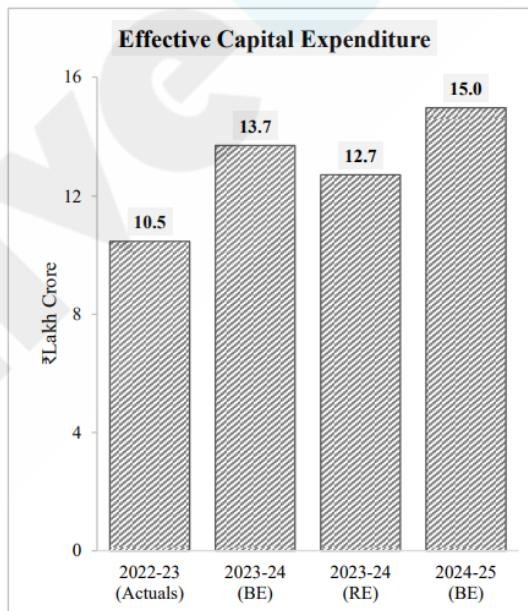
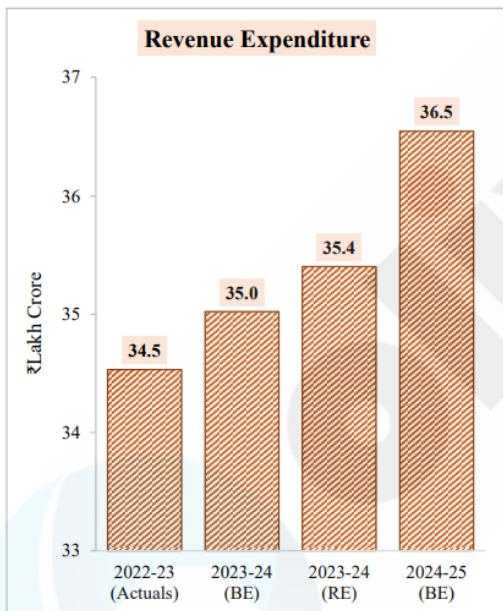
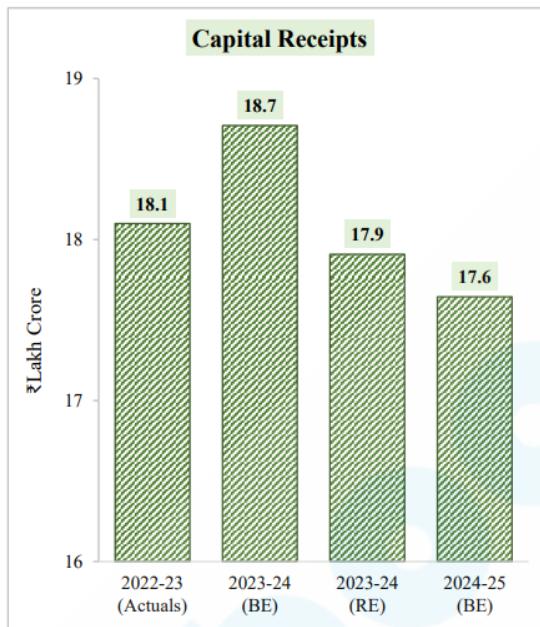
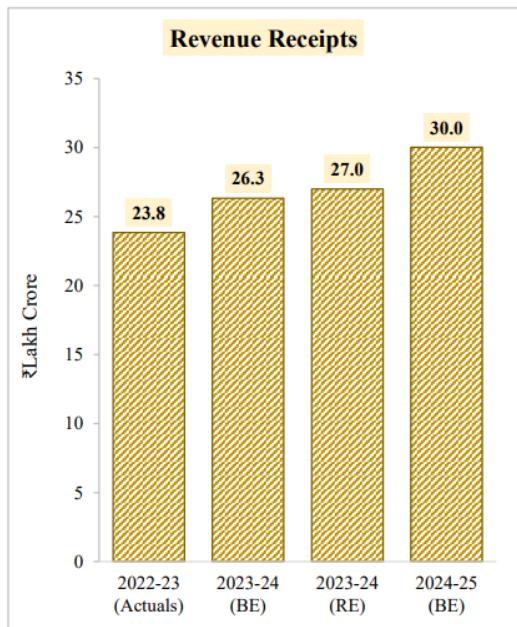
Revised Estimates (RE) 2023-24

- RE of the total receipts other than borrowings is Rs.27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are Rs.23.24 lakh crore.
- RE of the total expenditure is Rs.44.90 lakh crore.
- Revenue receipts at Rs.30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate, reflecting strong growth momentum and formalization in the economy.
- RE of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 per cent of GDP for 2023-24.

Budget Estimates 2024-25

- Total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs.30.80 and Rs.47.66 lakh crore respectively.
- Tax receipts are estimated at Rs.26.02 lakh crore.
- Scheme of fifty-year interest free loan for capital expenditure to states to be continued this year with total outlay of Rs.1.3 lakh crore.
- Fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP
- Gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs.14.13 and Rs.11.75 lakh crore respectively.

Receipts and Expenditure



Part B

Direct taxes

- FM proposes to retain same tax rates for direct taxes
- Direct tax collection tripled, return filers increased to 2.4 times, in the last 10 years
- Government to improve tax payer services
 - Outstanding direct tax demands upto Rs 25000 pertaining to the period upto FY 2009-10 withdrawn
 - Outstanding direct tax demands upto Rs 10000 for financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15 withdrawn
 - This will benefit one crore tax payers
- Tax benefits to Start-Ups, investments made by Sovereign wealth funds or pension funds extended to 31.03.2025
- Tax exemption on certain income of IFSC units extended by a year to 31.03.2025 from 31.03.2024

Indirect taxes

- FM proposes to retain same tax rates for indirect taxes and import duties
- GST unified the highly fragmented indirect tax regime in India
 - Average monthly gross GST collection doubled to Rs 1.66 lakh crore this year
 - GST tax base has doubled
 - State SGST revenue buoyancy (including compensation released to states) increased to 1.22 in post-GST period(2017-18 to 2022-23) from 0.72 in the pre-GST period (2012-13 to 2015-16)
 - 94% of industry leaders view transition to GST as largely positive
 - GST led to supply chain optimization
 - GST reduced the compliance burden on trade and industry
 - Lower logistics cost and taxes helped reduce prices of goods and services, benefiting the consumers

Tax rationalization efforts over the years

- No tax liability for income upto Rs 7 lakh, up from Rs 2.2 lakh in FY 2013-14
- Presumptive taxation threshold for retail businesses increased to Rs 3 crore from Rs 2 crore
- Presumptive taxation threshold for professionals increased to Rs 75 lakh from Rs 50 lakh
- Corporate income tax decreased to 22% from 30% for existing domestic companies
- Corporate income tax rate at 15% for new manufacturing companies

Achievements in tax-payer services

- Average processing time of tax returns has reduced to 10 days from 93 days in 2013-14
- Faceless Assessment and Appeal introduced for greater efficiency
- Updated income tax returns, new form 26AS and prefilled tax returns for simplified return filing
- Reforms in customs leading to reduced Import release time
 - Reduction by 47% to 71 hours at Inland Container Depots
 - Reduction by 28% to 44 hours at Air Cargo complexes
 - Reduction by 27% to 85 hours at Sea Ports

Economy-then and now

- In 2014 there was a responsibility to mend the economy and put governance systems in order. The need of the hour was to:
 - Attract investments
 - Build support to the much-needed reforms
 - Give hope to the people
- **The government succeeded with a strong belief of 'nation-first'**
- "It is now appropriate to look at where we were till 2014 and where we are now": FM
- **The Government will lay a White Paper on the table of the house.**

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