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# **BAZOOKA**

**AUGUST 2024**

**MONTHLY CURRENT  
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## NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. Bhubaneswar-based **KIIT Deemed to be University** has been granted the distinguished **Special Consultative Status** by the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC)**, a recognition of the university's significant contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This recognition underscores KIIT's unwavering commitment to the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

The status was conferred during the UN ECOSOC management segment meeting held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the USA.

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### **MoUs signed:**

- During the event, KIIT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **UN Volunteers (UNV)**. This partnership offers students of KIIT DU the opportunity to engage with various UN agencies as 'National University UN Volunteers.' This initiative is the first of its kind by any private university in South Asia.
- The **American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL)**, a global leader in fostering international understanding and diplomacy, has collaborated with the Kalinga Institute of

Social Sciences (KISS) and KIIT. KISS, a sister institution of KIIT, will benefit from the support of the U.S. Department of State and numerous other partners.

2. **India** has been elected as the **Vice-Chair of the Supply Chain Council (SCC)** under the **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)**. This council is focused on making supply chains stronger and more reliable for its 14 member countries.

The IPEF has created three councils to deal with different supply chain issues:

- Supply Chain Council (SCC): Works on improving supply chain security and economic health.
- Crisis Response Network (CRN): Helps countries respond together in emergencies that disrupt supply chains.
- Labour Rights Advisory Board (LRAB): Addresses issues related to workers' rights.

The elected chairs and vice chairs are:

**Supply Chain Council:** USA (Chair) and India (Vice Chair)

**Crisis Response Network:** Republic of Korea (Chair) and Japan (Vice Chair)

**Labor Rights Advisory Board:** USA (Chair) and Fiji (Vice Chair)

3. The **Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA)** in collaboration with **HP India**, launched the inaugural batch of the "HP Future Impact Leader – IICA Certified Environmental-Social-Governance (ESG) Professional Programme" in Manesar, Haryana.

The program aims to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead sustainable initiatives within their organizations.

This collaboration between HP and IICA represents a significant stride towards building a more sustainable and responsible corporate ecosystem.

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4. The **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** has inaugurated the '**One DAE One Subscription' (ODOS)** at Tata Memorial Hospital, in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

ODOS is a unique idea enabling the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) & all its units/subunits (about 60) together under one umbrella for read and publish access to national and international research papers as well as scientific journals.

With this initiative, it is now possible to share the resources digitally and evolve collectively.

DAE has signed consortium agreements with M/s. Wiley India Private Limited and with M/s. Springer Nature Group in furtherance of the same.

The first ODOS agreement with **M/s. Wiley India Private Limited** will provide access to the collection of 1353 Wiley journals including archives from 1997, to the entire DAE community.

The second ODOS agreement with **M/s. Springer Nature Group** will provide access to about 2,686 Springer Nature titles which includes 553 journals as Fully Open Access (FOA). The access will be provided to the entire DAE as against 1752 unique journals access provided to 14 units earlier.

5. Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat**, inaugurated the sprawling 100,000 square feet state of the art – **Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site Museum** at the Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage site in **New Delhi**.

The Museum is a facility of the Archaeological Survey of India designed and built in collaboration with the **Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)**.

It is a UNESCO recommendation that interpretation centres/ site museums be provided at the entrance zone of significant World Heritage Sites to provide the cultural context of the heritage site and thus significantly enhance the visitor experience.

The Museum is designed to be underground so as to retain the visual integrity of the monuments located in the complex.

The Museum boasts over 500 esteemed artefacts - from the collections of the National Museum, Archaeological Survey of India, and Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

The first principal Gallery, **'Where the Emperor Rests'**, is focused on the architecture of Humayun's Mausoleum and the personality of Emperor Humayun – conveyed through stories of his travels, his deep interest in reading and astronomy.

The gallery, **'Icons of a Sacred Landscape'**, has exhibits focussed on the four iconic cultural personalities associated with the Nizamuddin area from the 14th century onwards.

These are the 14th century Sufi Saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, his disciple, poet Amir Khusrau—who created the Qawwali music genre. Also here are Rahim, commander-in-chief of Akbar's army but more famous as a poet - for his couplets and his translation of the Ramayan into Persian, and Dara Shikoh – who translated the Upanishads into Persian.

The foundation stone of the Museum was laid in **April 2015**. The museum building and exhibition cost **Rs 250 Crore**.

6. Under the Digital India initiative, the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** organized a 6-day intensive workshop in collaboration with the **Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIM-Bangalore)** to conduct the **Digital Government Senior Leaders' Programme (DGSLP)** from July 29 to August 3, 2024.

This workshop was attended by officials from both Central Line Ministries and State departments.

The DGSLP is a meticulously designed program to provide participants with exposure to the benefits and potential impacts of digital government on public service delivery, citizen engagement, and organizational effectiveness.

It also addresses contemporary issues in managing large-scale digital governance projects and enables the sharing of insights from successful implementations and challenges encountered.

This is the 4th batch of the DGSLP since its inception in October 2022.

This initiative is part of the broader Capacity Building scheme under the Digital India Programme, which seeks to cultivate relevant skills across all government levels.

- 7. Exercise 'Tarang Shakti 2024'** is India's first multinational air exercise, intended to showcase its defense capabilities and enhance operational compatibility among participating nations.

The exercise was held in two phases.

**Phase I:** Held at **Sulur in Tamil Nadu** between 6-14 August 2024.

**Phase II:** Held at **Jodhpur in Rajasthan** between 29 August to 14 September 2024.

In this exercise, nearly 30 countries participated, and out of 30, 10 countries joined the exercise with their fighter aircraft.

- 8. The National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID),** under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) and the **Hans Foundation**, launched the **Mobile Therapy Bus** initiative.

This transformative program aims to address the unique needs of children with disabilities in marginalized communities through the deployment of five Mobile Therapy Buses in **Noida, Ghaziabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai.**

Each Mobile Therapy Bus, designed to provide intensive and life-changing services, is expected to reach nearly 14,000 people with disabilities.

The initiative requires an initial investment of **Rs.2 crore** per bus for capital expenditure and infrastructure, along with an annual operating budget of **Rs.1.2 crore** to ensure ongoing maintenance, staffing, and operational efficiency.

In its first year, the Mobile Therapy Bus initiative has already demonstrated remarkable progress. To date, a total of 5,222 children with disabilities have been registered and screened, receiving comprehensive healthcare and counselling services.

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- 9. The Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** launched the '**Suvidha Software Version 1.0**' during its maiden '**Annual Operational Sea Training Conference**' at **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.**

This software is a cutting-edge tool designed to enhance training protocols and ensure consistency across all ICG platforms.

Deputy Director General (Sea Training) Inspector General Anupam Rai delivered the keynote address during the conference.

The conference saw active participation from senior officers from various ICG regions, underlining the need for a unified approach to complex operations.

It provided a valuable platform for discussing best practices, sharing insights, and aligning strategies to address the dynamic maritime security landscape.

- 10.** India hosted the **Second Edition of the Colombo Security Conclave Seminar** on ***“Exchange of Information on Legislations, Cyber Policies, and Incident Mitigation”*** and the Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Cyber Security in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.

The National Security Council Secretariat, in collaboration with the National Forensics Science University at Gandhinagar, organized the seminar.

The seminar saw active participation from delegates representing Member and Observer States of the Colombo Security Conclave which includes Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Colombo Security Conclave Secretariat.

The seminar marked the beginning of exchanges between Colombo Security Conclave member and observer states on Cyber security Policies & Strategies, a deep dive into incident response and mitigation techniques, Digital Forensics investigations to counter cybercrimes, and Cyber Threat Intelligence sharing.

The discussions revolved around various technological advancements, research challenges, and innovative approaches to make our cyberspace more secure and resilient.

- 11.** The **Central Electricity Authority (CEA)** has accorded concurrence to two Hydro Pumped Storage Plants (PSPs) namely, **600 MW Upper Indravati** in **Odisha** being developed by OHPC Ltd (A Government of Odisha Undertaking) and **2000 MW Sharavathy** in **Karnataka** being developed by KPCL (A Government of Karnataka Undertaking) in record time.

**Pumped Storage Hydropower (PSH)** is a type of hydroelectric energy storage. It is a fundamentally simple system that consists of two water reservoirs at different elevations. There are two main types of PSH:

- Open-loop: with either an upper or lower reservoir that is continuously connected to a naturally flowing water source such as a river.
- Closed-loop: an ‘off-river’ site that produces power from water pumped to an upper reservoir without a significant natural inflow.

- 12.** The **President of India, Droupadi Murmu**, inaugurated the **Conference of Governors 2024** at Rashtrapati Bhavan in **New Delhi**. The two-day conference was organized on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2024.

This Conference was the first Conference of Governors presided over by President Droupadi Murmu.



The Vice President; the Prime Minister; Union Ministers of Home Affairs; Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; Education; Tribal Affairs; Information and Broadcasting; Environment, Forest and Climate Change; and Youth Affairs and Sports; Vice Chairman and CEO of NITI Aayog and other senior officials from PMO, Cabinet Secretariat, MHA, and other Ministries participated in the conference.

The Governors of all States attended the Conference.

The agenda of the Conference includes the implementation of three criminal laws; reforms in higher education and accreditation of universities; development of focus areas like tribal areas, aspirational districts, and blocks and border areas; the role of Governors in campaigns like 'MYBharat', 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and 'Ek Vriksha Maa ke Naam', and natural farming; enhancing public connect; and role of Governors in better coordination between various central agencies in the state.

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**13. The 30th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) was held in New Delhi.**

In the meeting, Joint Secretary (East Asia) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Gourangalal Das led the Indian delegation, while the Chinese delegation was led by the Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Department of the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, Hong Liang.

Both sides reviewed the current situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to find an early resolution of the outstanding issues.

The 29<sup>th</sup> WMCC meeting was organized on 27 March 2024 in Beijing, China.

**14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists (ICAE) at the National Agricultural Science Centre (NASC) Complex, New Delhi.**

The theme for this year's conference is, ***"Transformation Towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems."***

The conference aims to tackle the pressing need for sustainable agriculture in the face of global challenges such as climate change, natural resource degradation, rising production costs, and conflicts.

Around 1,000 delegates from around 75 countries took part in the conference.

The conference, organized by the **International Association of Agricultural Economists**, was held from 02 to 07 August 2024.

This conference was organized in India after 65 years.

The conference highlights India's proactive approach to global agricultural challenges and showcases the nation's agricultural research and policy advancements.

The ICAE 2024 aims to strengthen partnerships between research institutes and universities, influence policymaking on both national and global scales, and showcase India's agricultural progress, including advancements in digital agriculture and sustainable agri-food systems.

- 15.** Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, has announced that the country has achieved a new record in the field of gas production.

As per the data, the **gas production in 2026** will be **45.3 BCM (Billion cubic meters)**.

The gas production in 2020-21 was 28.7 BCM. In **2023-24**, it has been increased to **36.43 BCM**.

Natural gas is a cleaner fossil fuel compared to coal, and India has set a target to raise its share in the energy mix from the present 6.7% to 15% by 2030.

India has been investing significantly in infrastructure projects such as gas pipelines, liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminals, and compressed natural gas (CNG) stations to achieve this target.

- 16.** Bike-taxi startup **Rapido** has achieved **unicorn status** after it raised a capital funding of **USD 120 million** in its latest Series E funding round led by WestBridge Capital.

This makes Rapido the **fourth startup in India** to reach unicorn status in 2024 after Krutrim, Perfois, and Porter.

So far, Rapido has raised over \$430 million in funding from investors, including TVS Motor Company, Nexus Ventures, Shell Ventures, Kunal Shah (CRED), Yamaha, Pawan Munjal Family Trust, Nexus Venture Partners, and Positive Moves.

- 17.** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has selected Indian Air Force (IAF) **Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla** for an upcoming Indo-US mission to the International Space Station (ISS).

Shubhanshu Shukla, who hails from Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh), is the **"prime"** astronaut recommended for the mission, Group Captain **Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair**, who hails from Palakkad district of Kerala, has been selected as the **"backup."**

ISRO's Human Space Flight Centre has signed a space flight agreement with Axiom Space Inc for their fourth mission to the ISS.

For this **Axiom-4 mission**, the two "gaganyatris" (space travellers) were recommended by the National Mission Assignment Board.

The Multilateral Crew Operations Panel (MCOP) will give the final approval for the crew members to fly to the ISS.



Both the travellers are also part of the team of astronaut-designates selected for the **Gaganyaan mission**.

Group Captain Ajit Krishnan and Group Captain Angad Pratap have also been chosen by the space agency for the Gaganyaan project, which aims to demonstrate India's indigenous capability to undertake a human space flight mission to low Earth orbit.

- 18.** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the development of **8 important National High-Speed Corridor projects** with a Length of **936 km** at a cost of **Rs. 50,655 crores** across the country.

The implementation of these 8 projects will generate an estimated 4.42 crore mandays of direct and indirect employment.

These projects include:

- 6-Lane Agra - Gwalior National High-Speed Corridor
- 4-Lane Kharagpur - Moregram National High-Speed Corridor
- 6-Lane Tharad - Deesa - Mehsana - Ahmedabad National High-Speed Corridor
- 4-lane Ayodhya Ring Road
- 4-Lane Section between Pathalgaon and Gumla of Raipur-Ranchi National Highspeed Corridor
- 6-Lane Kanpur Ring Road
- 4-Lane Northern Guwahati Bypass and Widening/Improvement of Existing Guwahati Bypass
- 8-Lane Elevated Nashik Phata - Khed Corridor near Pune

**Note:** The length of National Highways (NH) has increased from 0.91 lakh km in 2013-14 to 1.46 lakh km currently.

- 19.** Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj **Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel** inaugurated a five-day **refresher training program** for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Zila Parishads, Chief Development Officers (CDOs), District Development Officers (DDOs) and District Panchayati Raj Officers (DPROs) under Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) at Sarthak Hall, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), **New Delhi**.

The five-day training program includes sessions on leadership skills, teamwork, conflict management, communication skills, media relations, community engagement, crisis communication, and practical training on various initiatives like e-GramSwaraj, PFMS, TMP, OSR, and others.

The training also covers the various initiatives taken under RGSA and its inclusion in Annual Action Plans, reporting of progress under RGSA, and the use of portals like Audit Online, Meri Panchayat and Panchayat NIRNAY, etc.

The program aims to enhance participants' leadership capabilities through developmental and diagnostic approaches, identifying areas for improvement and refining necessary governance skills.

- 20.** The Government of India (GoI) has extended the deadline for meeting minimum public shareholding norms for central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) and public sector financial institutions till **August 2026**.

The central government in the public interest provided exemption up to August 1, 2026, to increase public shareholding to at least **25 percent** in CPSEs and public sector banks and financial institutions.

The CPSEs with public shareholding below 25 percent and which could not increase their public shareholding to at least 25 percent within the timeline stipulated in Rule 19A of Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rules 1957 will now get time for another two years.

Out of 12 public sector banks (PSBs), five are yet to comply with MPS norms and the government's holding is beyond 75 percent.

As per the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), all listed companies must maintain an MPS of 25 percent.

Currently, the government holding in Delhi-based Punjab & Sind Bank is 98.25 percent. It is followed by Chennai-based Indian Overseas Bank at 96.38 percent, UCO Bank at 95.39 percent, Central Bank of India at 93.08 percent, and Bank of Maharashtra at 86.46 percent.

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- 21. Kalyani Strategic Systems (KSSL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bharat Forge, has been granted defence license for the manufacture of various defence products specially designed for military application at its **Jejuri unit in Maharashtra**.

The license has been granted by the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951.

This will allow the company to participate in potential defense programs in the future by KSSL.

The license shall remain in effect in perpetuity, subject to compliance with the terms and conditions specified therein.

- 22.** The International Science, Technology, and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation (ISTIC) under the auspices of UNESCO together with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) constituents, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library Unit (CSIR-TKDL Unit), New Delhi, and CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT), Hyderabad, India organized the **first STI Conclave on "Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Livelihoods"** in **New Delhi**.

The Conclave aims to emphasize the importance of engaging in collaborative learning models and expand the partnership and networks through engagement and cooperation for addressing the development challenges of the region, specifically through sustainable living through local knowledge systems.

The Conclave envisages promoting understanding and enhancing academic and professional capabilities under the theme of ***"Strengthening Competencies in Digitization, Preservation and Protection of Traditional Knowledge (TK) – Intellectual Property (IP) and People's Rights."***

The participants were from Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malaysia, and India.

- 23.** The **National Institute of Technology, Calicut (NIT-C)** has launched the '**Nivahika**', an innovative web portal for advanced data management.

The portal is designed for the systematic and timely recording of key activities from various departments and multidisciplinary centers, ensuring that crucial data is accessible at all times.

Nivahika also offers access to the Director, Registrar, Deans, Heads of Departments (HoDs), and Centre Chairpersons through personalized user accounts.

- 24.** The Government of India (GoI) introduced its first **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** for the **transportation of live human organs** across the country.

The transport protocols aim to ensure the expeditious movement of life-saving organs from the point of harvest to their destination through effective use of available infrastructure.

A live organ needs to be transported between hospitals when both the organ donor and the organ recipient are in different hospitals either within the same city or in different cities.

The GoI has released SOPs for transportation modes like **air, road, railways, and waterways**.

According to the SOPs for transportation by air, airlines carrying human cadaveric organs can request the Air Traffic Control for priority take-off and landing of the aircraft and arrange front-row seats. They can also request priority reservations and a provision for late check-in for medical personnel transporting organs.

As per the SOPs, the source airport will inform and communicate with the destination airport to facilitate the arrival process.

Trolleys can be arranged for carrying the organ box from the aircraft to the ambulance on arrival by the airport and airline staff and in case the ambulance is allowed until the runway, the airline crew can guide and assist the accompanying medical personnel carrying the organ box to disembark from the staircase onto the runway directly and into the waiting ambulance.

Airport officials should define a "green corridor" -- free from obstruction -- and a trolley for the organ box from ambulance to the aircraft at the airport of origin and vice versa.

The "One Trigger System" i.e., a request from the organ allocation authority (NOTTO/ROTTA/SOTTO) to initiate the process of organ transport by creation of green corridors", may be considered for this purpose.

A nodal officer from the police department can be appointed to handle issues related to the creation of a "green corridor" for organ transport in each state/city who may help iron out issues related to jurisdiction, approvals, security concerns, etc. during the creation of the "green corridor".

The SOPs also called for sensitizing the state traffic police in various states about organ donation and transplant and the crucial role that they play in expediting organ transport by creation of green corridors.

To facilitate the transfer of organs by metro, the Metro Traffic Control should accord priority transit for the metro carrying live human organs for transplant. The metro security staff should escort the clinical team carrying the organ box till their boarding at the metro station.

The organ box should be kept in the correct position and orientation i.e. upright straight vertically at 90 degrees to the surface during transport, and a label of "handle with care" can be put on the organ box.

Similarly, SOPs to facilitate the transport of organs by road, trains, and through ports via shipping have been issued to outline the essential guidelines and protocols on it.

Organ transport SOPs were developed in consultation with the NITI Aayog, concerned ministries, and transplant professionals.

- 25.** The **Indian Naval Ship (INS) Tabar**, commanded by Captain MR Harish with a crew of 280 officers and sailors, participated in a Maritime Partnership Exercise (MPX) with the **Russian Navy Ship Soobrazitelny** on 30 July 2024.

The participation of Indian Navy Ship Tabar in the **328th Russian Navy Day Parade** and the conduct of MPX marks a significant milestone in the maritime cooperation between India and Russia, reinforcing the commitment of both nations to maintain peace, stability, and security in the region.

The MPX involved a series of complex naval manoeuvres, including communication drills, Search & Rescue tactics and Replenishment at Sea serials.

Ships from both navies demonstrated high levels of professionalism and interoperability.

- 26.** The Ministry of Coal, in collaboration with the Ministry of Power & Natural Gas, has facilitated a landmark joint venture agreement between two leading Maharatna CPSEs, **Coal India Limited (CIL) and GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL)**.

This agreement marks a major step towards setting up a **Coal to Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG) plant** using surface coal gasification (SCG) technology.

The plant will come up in **Raniganj area of Eastern Coalfields Limited, West Bengal.**

It has been planned to produce **80000 Nm<sup>3</sup> per hour** of Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG).

The annual production is slated at 633.6 Million Nm<sup>3</sup> per hour which will require 1.9 million tonnes (mts) of coal.

The coal will be supplied by CIL.

Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG) is a fuel gas predominantly consisting of methane, CH<sub>4</sub> which is a feedstock for production of various chemicals and fertilizers.

- 27.** The **Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL)** at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, New Delhi celebrated its **seventh anniversary** event at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

During the occasion, CTIL released the Special Issue of the Global Trade and Customs Journal (GTCJ) and its Seventh Anniversary Magazine on "India's G20 Presidency".

Since its inception, CTIL has been regularly advising the Department of Commerce and other governmental departments and agencies on emerging issues in international economic law, with a focus on WTO law and bilateral trade agreements.

The event was graced by G20 Sherpa, Government of India, Amitabh Kant; Commerce Secretary, Sunil Barthwal; Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, L. Satya Srinivas; and Vice-Chancellor, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Rakesh Mohan Joshi.

- 28.** The Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India in association with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) hosted the **first edition of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Business Summit** in **New Delhi** from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

The first edition of the Business Summit aims to foster greater regional collaboration through robust trade and investment relations among the member countries of BIMSTEC.

The Business Summit was inaugurated by **External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar.**

Minister of Commerce and Industries Shri Piyush Goyal and other leaders delivered the keynote addresses.

The event brought together more than 300 key stakeholders from across the Bay of Bengal region to facilitate economic collaboration and explore ways ahead in focus areas such as trade facilitation, regional connectivity, energy security, inclusive growth, and sustainable development.

India attaches great importance to the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) which links five countries from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India & Sri Lanka) and two from Southeast Asia (Myanmar & Thailand).

This summit follows the 4th Annual Meeting of BIMSTEC Security Chiefs held in Myanmar's capital, Naypyitaw, in July 2024, where National Security Advisor Ajit Doval led the Indian delegation.

29. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced **Rs 18,000 crore** expenditure on setting up **100 export-oriented horticulture clusters** in the next five years to boost farm income.

The government will soon launch an **oilseeds mission** with an outlay of **6,800 crore** to boost domestic output and reduce imports of cooking oils.

He also mentioned plans to amend pesticide management laws and integrate over 1,500 additional mandis with the e-NAM platform.

30. The Central Government has declared **Adichunchanagiri in Karnataka** and **Choolannur in Kerala** as **Peacock Sanctuary**.

The Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also set up breeding and conservation centers for peacocks.

The Adichunchanagiri peacock sanctuary is located in the Mandya district of Karnataka. It was established in 1981 and is one of the few places where you can spot peafowl in their natural habitat.

Mayiladumpara, popularly known as Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary, is the only peacock shelter and is located in the Palakkad district of Kerala.

31. The Indian Air Force (IAF) approved **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)** for the production of **200 Astra Mark 1 air-to-air missiles**, which are developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The Astra Mark 1 missiles will be produced under the Rs 2,900 crore project, which was approved by the Defence Acquisition Council in 2022-23.

The missiles produced will be integrated into the **Russian Su-30** and the indigenous **LCA Tejas fighter aircraft**, and a range of 130 km is being considered for testing the Mark II while testing and development of a missile with a range of 300 km is also planned.

The Astra Mark 1 is India's first air-to-air missile that can hit targets beyond visual range, up to 110 kilometers away and at altitudes up to 20 kilometers.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) developed the Astra Mk-1, which is being manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited, a public-sector company.



- 32.** The **first meeting** of the **Central Level Banker's Coordination Committee** under the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) was held at Vigyan Bhawan, **New Delhi**.

Secretary, DAHD, **Alka Upadhyaya** chaired the meeting.

Senior officials from DAHD, NABARD, SIDBI, NDDDB, NCDC, and representatives from respective lending banks attended the meeting.

During the meeting, in-depth discussions were held on various aspects of DAHD schemes including the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF), the National Livestock Mission-Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NLM-EDP), and the Kisan Credit Card (KCC).

Topics covered included achievements, guideline modifications, portal usage, pending issues, and the role and support required from lending institutions.

Special emphasis was placed on challenges such as limited access to finance for small entrepreneurs due to lack of collateral security, delays in sanctioning eligible projects, untimely submission of interest subvention claims and supporting documents, and feedback from the lenders present.

- 33.** Dr. Neeraj Mittal, Secretary of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), has launched the **ITU-WTSA-24 Hackathon "AI Bharat 5G/6G Sandbox"** in preparation for the upcoming World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-24), scheduled to take place in New Delhi from October 15-24, 2024.

The hackathon focuses on integrating AI/ML into next-generation networks by applying ITU standards such as ITU-T Y.3172 and ITU-T Y.3061.

Participants from both India and abroad are invited to take part, with the hackathon consisting of two phases: an online phase running from August 7 to September 30, 2024, and an in-person coding event in New Delhi.

Winners will receive various prizes, including special awards for the best students, startups, and girls' teams.

- 34.** In August, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi released 109 high-yielding, climate-resilient, and biofortified crop varieties.

- **Crops Involved:**

- **34 field crops:** Including cereals (like millets), pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton, fibre, and forage crops.
- **27 horticultural crops:** Including fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, tuber crops, spices, flowers, and medicinal crops.

- **Objective:** To promote sustainable farming and climate-resilient methodologies and to combat malnutrition by linking biofortified varieties to government programs like the Mid-Day Meal and Anganwadi.
- The 109 varieties are aimed at ensuring higher income for farmers and opening new avenues for entrepreneurship.

- **Income Growth Roadmap:** Key focus areas include increasing production, reducing costs, ensuring fair prices, compensating losses due to natural disasters, promoting agricultural diversification, and natural farming.
- **Climate-Friendly Seeds:** Emphasis on the need for climate-friendly seeds to combat increasing temperatures due to climate change.

**35.** The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute (HMI), operating under the Ministry of Defence, has successfully undertaken an unprecedented Divyangjan expedition from Kanchenjunga National Park to Kilimanjaro, the highest peak of the African continent.

Team is led by Group Captain Jai Kishan and includes Mr. Uday Kumar [Divyangjan], Capt. Shruti, Sub Mahendra Kumar Yadav, Mr. Pawel Sharma, and Miss Sulaxchana Tamang. The goal is to conquer Kilimanjaro, a feat that symbolizes not just the heights of physical endurance, but also the strength of the human spirit.

Note: Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, stands at a height of approximately 19,341 feet (5,895 meters) above sea level. It is located in northeastern Tanzania and is part of the Kilimanjaro National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Mount Kilimanjaro is the fourth highest of the seven summits.

**36.** ISRO successfully launched an earth observation satellite, marking the third and final development flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle-03 (SSLV-D3).

The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle is designed for low cost production, quick turnaround time, and minimal infrastructure requirements.

It is capable of carrying a **500 kg satellite** to a **500 km orbit**.

The primary objectives of the SSLV-D3-EOS-08 mission include designing and developing a microsatellite, creating payload instruments compatible with the microsatellite bus, and incorporating new technologies required for future operational satellites.

**37.** The India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), in association with the Confederation of Indian Footwear Industries (CIFI), India, has organized the '8th India International Footwear Fair (IIFF) during August 8 to 10, 2024, in New Delhi, India.

The fair displayed footwear, machinery and equipment, technology, compounds, raw materials, footwear components, synthetic materials (PVC and PU), chemicals, soles, fabrics, and leather products and accessories.

India is the second-largest footwear manufacturer in the world with aspirations to become the top producer.

India has the potential for the industry to reach the export target of **\$50 billion by 2030**.

The event provides an opportunity for the trade and industry to showcase their products and finalize their business with national and international buyers. It is expected to attract more than 20,000 business visitors to the fair.

- 38.** The **Har Ghar Tiranga campaign**, launched in 2022, is designed to **strengthen patriotism and unity** among Indian citizens.

In 2023, over **ten crore selfies with the Tiranga** were uploaded.

The **third edition of the HGT campaign was organized from August 9 to 15, 2024** as part of the Independence Day celebrations.

The campaign aims to promote patriotism and national pride by encouraging all Indians to hoist the national flag.

Other activities include Tiranga Concerts, street plays, and exhibitions on the history of the national flag.

The 2024 edition of the campaign saw over 200 cultural events organised across the country.

Additionally, a Tiranga Bike Rally was also organised on August 13 with MPs and other ministers to promote this initiative.

- 39.** India's 'Parvat Prahaar' military drill in Ladakh, involving the Mountain Strike Corps and over 50,000 troops, emphasizes high-altitude warfare amid ongoing tensions with China.

The 'Parvat Prahaar' exercise emphasizes high-altitude warfare and operations in Ladakh, a region known for its rugged and mountainous terrain.

The Mountain Strike Corps of the Northern Command is indeed involved in the exercise, as it is responsible for operations in the sensitive region along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

India has stationed over 50,000 troops in the region to counter Chinese deployments and maintain the status quo along the LAC.

- 40.** Union Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched the **National Pest Surveillance System on Independence Day**.

The system is a **digital initiative** by the **Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare**.

It leverages **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Machine Learning (ML)** to provide **timely and accurate pest management advisories**.

The Agriculture Ministry has invited over **1,000 farmers** for a two-day program to honor **heroes of the fields**.

Shivraj Singh Chouhan interacted with these farmers, including beneficiaries of schemes such as PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, PM Crop Insurance Scheme, and FPO representatives.

- 41.** The Ministry of Coal aims to enhance coal evacuation in India with expanded rail transport and multimodal connectivity.

The strategy includes modernizing infrastructure with advanced technology and fostering multimodal connectivity through initiatives like PM Gati Shakti.

### Key Initiatives

- Increasing Production Capacity: Support the **target of producing 1.5 billion tonnes of coal by FY30** by ensuring that infrastructure keeps pace with production increases.
- Modal Shift to Rail Transport: **Expand the modal share of rail transport for coal from 64% to 75% by FY 2030**, thereby reducing road congestion and enhancing environmental sustainability. The Ministry has identified **38 priority rail projects** that will be fast-tracked in close coordination with the Ministry of Railways. These projects are crucial for improving rail connectivity and ensuring timely coal supply to power plants and industries across the country.
- Mandatory Mechanized Coal Handling Facilities: All larger coal mines producing more than **2 million tons (MT) per annum** will be required to implement mechanized coal handling facilities within the next five years. This move aims to enhance operational efficiency, ensure safer working conditions and reduce the environmental impact of coal transportation
- Integrated Infrastructure Development: Foster multi-modal connectivity through the **PM Gati Shakti initiative**, ensuring coordinated efforts across various ministries for seamless coal evacuation.
- Sustainability and Environmental Considerations: The Ministry will focus on minimizing the environmental impact of coal evacuation, adopting cleaner technologies and practices that align with India's climate goals.

**42. DRDO has developed the Bullet Proof Jacket (BPJ) consisting of the lightest Front Hard Armour Panel (FHAP).**

This jacket has been developed in two configuration viz. In-Conjunction-With (ICW) and Standalone with different areal density of FHAP.

The Bullet Proof Jacket has been developed under the DRDO project.

The process to transfer the developed technology to Indian Industries has been initiated as per **Transfer of Technology (ToT) Policy** and procedure of DRDO for production.

This BPJ is based upon a new design approach, where novel material along-with new processes have been used.

This BPJ confirms BIS standard 17051 and therefore, it is the lightest BPJ of level 6 with approx. weight of 10.1 kg for medium size, which enhances the wearability and comfort during the operation.

This Jacket has also a unique feature of **Quick Release Mechanism (QRM) along with other associated features.**

This BPJ will protect the soldiers of Indian Armed Forces/ CAPFs from the maximum possible threat of **7.62×54 R AP/ API rounds** as on date.

**43. The 28th CoCSSO, held at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi, was inaugurated by Rao Inderjit Singh, Union Minister of State for MoSPI.**

The theme underscored the importance of using data effectively to improve decision-making processes and strengthen state statistical systems.

The event featured breakout sessions on data dissemination, capacity building, and other key topics, and included the release of the publication ***Women and Men in India, 2023***.

The theme "**Use of Data for Decision Making—Strengthening State Statistical System**" was chosen for the conference to facilitate intensive and focused discussions and exchange of views and best practices in the field of official statistics.

44. The Government e-Marketplace (GeM) saw a significant growth of approximately 136% in procurement in FY 2024-25, reaching ₹1,92,433 Crore by 8th August 2024, reflecting strong performance and high adoption by government buyers.

GeM's service procurement has also witnessed unprecedented growth, with a Gross Value Merchandise (GMV) of ₹3.91 lakh crore since its inception.

In FY 2024-25 alone, service procurement reached ₹80,493 crore. Over the past three fiscal years, the platform has maintained a 100% year-on-year growth rate, completing 62.86 lakh orders worth approximately ₹4.03 lakh crore in FY 2023-24. Over 1.5 lakh Government buyers procure goods and services across 11,523 product categories and 327 service categories from about 23 lakh vendors and service providers across India, all without any intermediaries.

P K Singh, CEO of GeM, presided over the ceremony, highlighting the launch of the GeM SAHAYAK program, which aims to create a nationwide network of 6,000-7,000 trained and certified trainers to assist sellers and buyers on the platform.

GeM has been a catalyst for social inclusion, empowering women, tribal and SC/ST MSMEs, startups, artisans, weavers, and various grassroots organisations through its #VocalForLocal initiatives.

Currently, 9,56,465 Udyam-verified MSEs are registered on the portal, fulfilling orders worth ₹3,87,407 crore, accounting for 39.24% of the cumulative GMV. Additionally, 1,63,996 women-led MSEs and approximately 50,000 SC/ST MSEs have completed orders worth ₹37,430 crore and ₹7,828 crore, respectively. Over 25,816 startups have secured orders exceeding ₹27,598 crore through GeM.

45. On August 14, 2024, the Centre declared three new wetlands as Ramsar sites: Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary and Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu and Tawa Reservoir in Madhya Pradesh. This brings India's total Ramsar sites to 85, covering 1,358,068 hectares.

The Ramsar Convention aims to protect wetlands that are crucial for biodiversity and provide essential ecological services.

India joined the Ramsar Convention in 1981, and since then, it has significantly increased its number of Ramsar sites, with 59 added from 2014 to 2024 alone.

Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu was restored centuries ago by King Nanjarayan and is crucial for local biodiversity.

The Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary, located on the Coromandel Coast in Tamil Nadu, is a vital stopover for migratory birds.

The Tawa Reservoir in Madhya Pradesh, initially built for irrigation, also supports power generation and aquaculture.



These sites add to India's significant Ramsar site count, contributing to conservation and biodiversity efforts.

The Ramsar Convention defines wetlands to include a range of water-related environments such as lakes, rivers, swamps, marshes, estuaries, and man-made sites like reservoirs and fish ponds. India has the maximum Ramsar sites in Tamil Nadu (18 sites).

- 46.** The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has launched a new department to ensure quality and safety in the Ayush sector, which includes traditional Indian medicine systems such as **Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy.**

Announced on **August 9, 2024**, this initiative aims to strengthen the credibility and outreach of these practices.

BIS has already made significant strides by creating **91 standards for various elements of Ayush, including herbs, equipment, and practices.**

A key development is the introduction of standards for **Panchakarma equipment**, which helps standardize therapeutic procedures.

The department collaborates with experts, industry leaders, and regulatory bodies to create thorough, evidence-based standards.

BIS is also focusing on environmental sustainability, as shown by the new standard for **"Cotton Yoga Mats."**

This effort is set to increase the global recognition of Ayush systems and support the sector's growth.

- 47.** India's defense exports rose by 78% in Q1 FY 2024-25, reaching ₹6,915 crore, compared to ₹3,885 crore in Q1 FY 2023-24.

The number of export authorizations granted to defense manufacturers increased to 1,507 in FY 2024 from 1,414 in FY 2023.

Domestic defense production grew by 16.7%, reaching ₹1.27 trillion in FY 2024, up from ₹1.09 trillion in the previous fiscal year.

Around 100 domestic companies contributed to the export of military products like Dornier-228 aircraft, BrahMos missiles, and PINAKA rockets.

India is aiming for a defense export target of ₹50,000 crore within the next five years, supported by strategic policy reforms and international collaborations.

- 48.** Baramulla set a world record with the largest Kashmiri folk dance, the Rouf, performed by 10,000 young women at the 'Kashur Riwaaj' cultural festival.

The festival took place at Prof. Showkat Ali Indoor Stadium.

The event was organized by the Dagger Division of Chinara Corps in collaboration with Baramulla District Administration and Indrani Balan Foundation (IBF).



**Highlights:**

- Cultural activities included traditional dances, music, calligraphy, and local artistry.
- **Record Adjudication:** By Universal Records Forum (URF), certified to Guinness standards.
- **Notable Performers:**
  - Ishfaq Hamid Bhatt, a 13-year-old Rubab prodigy, awarded Pradhan Mantri Bal Puraskar 2024.
  - Naseer Ahmed Mir, Santoor player, gold medalist at Kashmir University convocation 2021.
- **Objective:** The festival aimed to showcase the vibrant traditions of Kashmir, including traditional dances, music, calligraphy, and cultural activities.

**49.** The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** oversees the ASEAN-India Fellowship.

**Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan**, Union Minister of Agriculture, launched the fellowship.

The program aims to enhance agricultural education and research in collaboration with ASEAN countries.

It supports the development of **human resources** in agriculture and allied sciences.

This fellowship is part of India's broader '**Act East Policy**' and Indo-Pacific strategy.

The event was held at **ICAR, PUSA, New Delhi**.

The launch aims to support **postgraduate studies** in agriculture and allied sciences for ASEAN students.

The ASEAN-India Fellowship will award **50 fellowships** annually.

This will start from the **academic year 2024-25**.

Each year, **10 fellowships** will be given to students from ASEAN member countries.

This initiative is funded under the **ASEAN-India Fund** for five years.

The **ASEAN-India Fund** will cover several aspects of the fellowship program.

Funding includes **fellowships, admission fees, living expenses, and incidental expenses**.

**50.** Dr. Jitendra Singh introduced the 'Amrit Gyan Kosh' and 'Faculty Development Portal' at the Civil Service Training Institutions Convention.

**National Capacity Building Commission and Mission Karmayogi Bharat:** Emphasized as a transformative approach to civil service training, combining Indian ethos with a global outlook.

CBC and Mission Karmayogi Bharat have integrated into governance, training 31 lakh government employees annually.

**Amrit Gyan Kosh:** A knowledge bank providing India-centric case studies, reducing reliance on Western material.

**Faculty Development:** Highlighted the importance of the Faculty Development Programme in improving teaching quality.

Over 140 training institutes are accredited, with 20 ministries also receiving accreditation.

**Quality Improvement Plan:** Launched 13 QIPs to enhance training institutions' performance.

**Mission Karmayogi – Prarambh:** Extends capacity building beyond civil servants to all individuals contributing to the nation.

**Recognition:** Recognized the top CSTIs with the highest number of IGoT courses.

**51.** Non-petroleum & non-gems & jewelry exports increased by **5.69%** from July 2023 to July 2024.

- **Value Change:** Exports rose from **USD 25.47 Billion** in July 2023 to **USD 26.92 Billion** in July 2024.
- **Growth Drivers:** Major contributors include **Electronic Goods, Engineering Goods,** and **Drugs & Pharmaceuticals.**

Exports of electronic goods surged by **37.31%** over the year.

- **Value Change:** The value increased from **USD 2.04 Billion** in July 2023 to **USD 2.81 Billion** in July 2024.
- **Significance:** This growth signifies a strong expansion in the electronic goods sector, reflecting increased global demand.
- **Drivers:** This sector is a major contributor to India's overall export growth.

The cumulative value of merchandise exports for the period April-July 2024 was **USD 144.12 Billion.**

- **Comparison:** This represents an increase from USD 138.39 Billion during the same period in 2023.
- **Growth Rate:** The growth rate of exports for this period was **4.15%.**
- **Significance:** This growth reflects an overall positive trend in India's export performance.

**52.** The Indrani Bridge is a 300-foot Bailey Suspension Bridge constructed over the **Teesta River** at Singtam, Sikkim.

The bridge was inaugurated by Sikkim's Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang, after a previous bridge at the site was destroyed by flash floods on **October 4, 2023.**

Constructed by **Project Swastik of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**, this bridge is critical for restoring road connectivity between South and East Sikkim.

The Chief Minister highlighted that **restoring road connectivity** in Sikkim, especially after disasters, is a **top priority** for the government.

The project was completed in **record time**, reflecting the BRO's efficiency and dedication.

The bridge's inauguration marks a significant step in Sikkim's **economic and infrastructure development**.

- 53.** Recently, a new flowering plant species from the 'ceropegia' genus has been discovered inside the Vishalgad premises in Maharashtra and named it as Ceropegia Shivrayiana.

It is a flowering plant species named in a nod to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It consists of unique, tubular flowers, which are specially adapted to attract moths for pollination.

This plant thrives in rocky terrains and is capable of growing in less nutrient-or poor soils. It belongs to the Asclepiadaceae family, which includes many medicinal plants, with significant ecological importance. Its conservation is essential due to the ongoing threat of habitat loss.

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- 54.** The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**, the National Standards Body of India, has established a new department called the **Environment and Ecology Department (EED)**.

The purpose of EED is to develop standards that address environmental and ecological needs on a national and global scale.

A workshop titled '**Standardization for Environment and Ecology**' was organized on **12th August 2024** to lay the foundation for the department's future activities.

**Pramod Kumar Tiwari, Director General of BIS**, emphasized the department's role in setting benchmarks for global sustainability and the importance of collaboration.

**Leena Nandan, Secretary, MOEFCC**, highlighted the significance of interaction between experts, consultants, and stakeholders in developing these standards.

The department will focus on areas like **ECO-Mark, sustainably grown wood standards, and Blue Flag Beaches**.

- 55.** The Department of Fisheries (DoF) organized a series of seminars and demonstrations, for creating awareness about Application of Space Technologies in the Fisheries Sector.

11 seminars have been held across coastal states and UTs, involving over 4000 participants in collaboration with ISRO and DoF field offices.

A seminar on "Application of Space Technology in Fisheries" was held in New Delhi, chaired by Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh and attended by Minister of State George Kurian.

The DoF is implementing a system for Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance of marine fishing vessels, with a plan to install 100,000 transponders across 13 coastal states/UTs.

Dr. Chandra Prakash from ISRO presented an overview of space technologies used in fisheries, focusing on communication and navigation systems.

DoF and ISRO collaborated on key projects like the Vessel Communication and Support System and Oceansat-3.

**56.** FloodWatch India Version 2.0 is a mobile application launched by the Central Water Commission (CWC) under the **Union Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

This app delivers up-to-date information and forecasts concerning flood conditions across India.

Expanding its coverage from 200 to 592 flood monitoring stations, the app now provides a more extensive overview of flood situations.

It also offers insights into the storage status of 150 major reservoirs, which is crucial for effective flood management.

- **Key features include:**

- Real-time river flow data and flood predictions extending up to 7 days ahead.
- State-wise and basin-wise flood forecasts and advisories.
- The app employs satellite data analysis, mathematical modelling, and real-time monitoring to provide precise and timely flood updates.
- Available in both English and Hindi, the app offers information in readable text and audio broadcast formats.

**57.** The **14th meeting** of the **India-Australia Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism** was convened in **New Delhi**.

The discussions focused on global counter-terrorism challenges and ongoing cooperation between the two nations.

Both countries **strongly condemned terrorism** in all its forms and stressed the need for enhanced international collaboration to combat terrorism.

The discussions included the **use of new technologies by terrorists**, misuse of the internet, radicalization, terror financing, and the nexus between organized crime and terrorism.

**K.D. Dewal**, Joint Secretary for Counter-Terrorism at the Ministry of External Affairs, led the Indian delegation.

**Richard Feakes**, Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, led the Australian delegation.

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- 58.** L&T Finance Ltd. reported a record consolidated net profit of **Rs. 685 crore** for the first quarter of FY25. This profit represents a **29% increase** compared to the same period in the previous year.

The net profit for Q1FY25 is the highest ever reported by the company, demonstrating robust financial health and operational efficiency.

Alongside profit growth, the company's consolidated loan book expanded by **13% year-on-year** to **Rs. 88,717 crore**.

Retail loans now constitute **95%** of the total loan book, amounting to **Rs. 84,444 crore**, underscoring the company's strong focus on retail lending.

- 59.** The Indian Association for Gold Excellence and Standards (IAGS) is the first self-regulatory body for the Indian gold sector, formed with the assistance of the World Gold Council.

It is set to become operational by early next year.

The main goal is to address the **trust deficit** among consumers by providing increased **transparency** and **confidence** in the gold business.

The IAGS will cover the **entire value chain** of the gold industry, including bullion trade, refinery, manufacturing, retailing, and digital platforms.

It is not intended to replace existing associations like the Indian Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) or the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) but to work alongside them.

The presence of the IAGS logo will signify adherence to **high standards** of business integrity.

- 60.** A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between **Prasar Bharati and Sansad Television** to facilitate resource sharing, training, and cross-promotion of programs.

The MoU was exchanged in the presence of key officials, including CEO Sansad TV Rajit Punhani and CEO Prasar Bharati Gaurav Dwivedi.

**Key objectives of the MoU:**

- The MoU aims to facilitate content and program sharing between Prasar Bharati and Sansad TV. It includes provisions for telecasting Sansad TV content on Prasar Bharati's OTT platforms.
- The MoU also covers the use of training facilities to enhance personnel skills.
- The MoU allows for resource sharing, including human resources, technology, and equipment. It includes the broadcast of special coverage, interviews, documentaries, live feeds, and archives produced by both networks.
- Both networks agreed to promote and advertise each other's programs.
- Prasar Bharati will provide the facilities of PB-SHABD to Sansad TV for content sharing.

- 61.** India hosted the **3rd Voice of Global South Summit** on 17th August 2024, in virtual format, with the overarching theme, **"An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future"**.

Around 123 countries participated in the 3rd VOGSS. However, China and Pakistan were not invited.

India had hosted the 1st VOGSS on 12-13th January 2023, and the 2nd VOGSS on 17th November 2023, both in virtual format.

**Key outcomes:**

The Prime Minister of India put forward a proposal for a comprehensive **four-fold Global Development Compact (GDC)** comprising four elements: Trade for development; Capacity building for sustainable growth; Technology sharing; and Project specific concessional finance and grants.

The Prime Minister of India announced a number of significant initiatives by India in advancing its development partnership with countries of the Global South, including

- A **USD 2.5 million fund** to boost trade promotion activities and
- A **USD 1 million fund** for capacity building in trade policy and trade negotiation.

India will work to make affordable and effective generic medicines available to the Global South countries, support training of drug regulators, and share experiences and technology in 'natural farming' in the agriculture sector.

3rd VOGSS was driven by a shared vision of a Global South that fully achieves the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and embarks on a rapid developmental trajectory beyond 2030.

**Voice of the Global South Summit:**

It is a new and unique India led initiative that envisages bringing together countries of the Global South and share their perspectives and priorities on a common platform across a whole range of issues.

It is a reflection of India's philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, or "One Earth, One Family, One Future", and Prime Minister's vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas.

- 62.** The Department of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions introduced a unique innovative centralized pension processing software called '**Bhavishya**' for all central government Ministries/Departments.

"Bhavishya" was made mandatory for all central civil Ministries and Departments w.e.f 01.01.2017. At present, 99 Ministries/ Departments, 1020 Offices and 8320 DDOs are on Board and 2,50,845 PPOs have been issued till 14.08.2024.

This software brought all the stakeholders who were till date decentralized on a single platform. The system laid down a common methodology incorporating all the rules and regulations of CCS Pension Rules, 2021.

**Bhavishya has been ranked 3rd best in NeSDA (National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment), 2021.**

**The following are the Best practices of Bhavishya:**

- **Auto Registration of Retirees:** the 'Bhavishya' software was integrated with payroll package and would auto fill of basic data of the retiring employees and provide the necessary MIS to the various departments as well as to the DOPPW the number of employees due to retire in the next 15 months.



- Self Registration of all the stakeholders i.e. DDO/HOO/PAO etc.
- Self-filling of pension form(s) by retiree.
- **Strict timelines:** The software has laid down strict timelines for various stages of pension processing across all stakeholders involved. The process starts online 15 months prior to retirement and the pensioner has to fill up a single form once. The system on its own keeps throwing up alerts to the pensioner as well as to the stakeholder for meeting out the deadlines prescribed for various stages.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** There is complete transparency and accountability in processing of a pension case and due to this system, it becomes very easy to identify the delay points if any, and fix responsibility.
- **Automatic Calculation of all the Retirement Benefits:** The automatic pension calculation cutting across all Ministries/Departments is accurate since it removes manual intervention and reduce the grievances.
- **Real time updates via email/SMS alerts:** The system is capable of giving real time updates via email/SMS alerts for every action due and performed relating to pension processing of central civil retirees up to the stage of first credit of pension in their respective bank's accounts.
- **e-PPO:** The 'Bhavishya' has also been integrated with the PFMS module of CGA and due to this it has now become possible to issue electronic PPOs (e-PPO). The e-PPO is transmitted by the concerned Ministry/Department's PAO to CPAO from where it goes to the Bank. The paying branch can view e-PPO online.
- **End to End digitization:** e-PPO makes the entire pension application, procession and payments process paperless by transferring and accepting data in encrypted form.
- **Digilocker:** Bhavishya automatically push the ePPO in the Digilocker account of the retiree to access it anywhere/anytime without logging into Bhavishya.
- Issue of Pensioners Identity card through Bhavishya
- **Integration with Banks:** Bhavishya has been integrated with pension portals of various banks, to provide post-retirement services like Form-16, Pension Slip, status of Life Certificate, due-drawn statement of arrears etc.
- As a result of implementation of Bhavishya, 83% Superannuation PPOs are issued either before retirement or within 30 days.

**63.** Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has constituted **six new Parliamentary Committees** for a tenure of **1 year** i.e. 2024-25.

| Parliamentary Committees | Origin | Composition | Functions | Chaired by (2024-25) |
|--------------------------|--------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
|--------------------------|--------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|

|   |   |   |  |                   |
|---|---|---|--|-------------------|
| <b>Public Accounts Committee (PAC)</b>  | Established in 1921 under the Government of India Act, 1919             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 members: 15 Lok Sabha + 7 Rajya Sabha;</li> <li>• Chairman from the Opposition,</li> <li>• Appointed by the LS Speaker.</li> </ul>                          | Examines public expenditure, scrutinizes CAG reports, and ensures efficient use of public funds.       | KC Venugopal      |
| <b>Committee on Estimates</b>           | Traces back to 1921; reconstituted in 1950 (recommended by John Mathai) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 members,</li> <li>• All from Lok Sabha;</li> <li>• Elected annually through proportional representation.</li> <li>• Minister CANNOT be a member.</li> </ul> | Examines budget estimates, suggests economic efficiencies, and recommends alternative policies.        | Dr Sanjay Jaiswal |
| <b>Committee on Public Undertakings</b> | Established in 1964 based on the Krishna Menon Committee                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 members: 15 Lok Sabha + 7 Rajya Sabha;</li> <li>• Chairman appointed by the Speaker,</li> <li>• Chosen from Lok Sabha members</li> </ul>                    | Examines accounts and reports of PSUs, and provides recommendations without interfering in operations. | Baijyant Panda    |
| <b>Committee on Welfare of OBCs</b>     | The committee was constituted in June 2012                              | It comprises 30 members, with 20 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha   | Focuses on the implementation of policies for OBC welfare, evaluates                                   | Ganesh Singh      |

|  |   |   |  |                        |
|--|---|---|--|------------------------|
|  |   |   | reservations, and suggests improvements.   |                        |
| <b>Committee on Welfare of SC/ST</b>       | It was first formed in 1968.  | The committee consists of 30 members, with 20 elected from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. | Ensures implementation of safeguards for SCs and STs, reviews welfare programs, and suggests enhancements. | Dr Fagga Singh Kulaste |
| <b>Joint Committee on Office of Profit</b> | Joint Committee on Office of Profit was established by the Lok Sabha on July 23, 2019 | 15 members; 10 Lok Sabha+ 5 from Rajya Sabha.   | Examines cases of MPs/MLAs holding offices of profit, determine qualification, and                         | -                      |

**64.** Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Virendra Kumar, inaugurated the 17th Divya Kala Mela in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

**Focus:** The week-long fair aims to empower artisans and entrepreneurs with disabilities by showcasing their talents and creativity.

**Participation:** Over 100 Divyang artisans and entrepreneurs from about 20 States/UTs will present a wide range of products, including home decor, lifestyle items, clothing, eco-friendly products, and packaged foods.

**Special Features:** The event includes the 'Divya Kala Shakti' Job Fairs and Loan Mela to support participants with financial assistance and promote business growth.

**Cultural Program:** The Divya Kala Shakti cultural program will feature performances in music, dance, and drama by Divyang artists.

**Historical Context:** This Mela is the 17th in a series of events held since 2022, following successful editions in cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal, and Guwahati.

**65.** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated three key maritime facilities along the Indian coastline.

- **ICG MRCC in Chennai:** The Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Chennai is a state-of-the-art facility designed to enhance coordination and effectiveness in maritime rescue operations. This center will significantly benefit mariners and fishermen by providing swift rescue responses in distress situations at sea.

- **RMPPRC in Chennai:** The Regional Marine Pollution Response Centre (RMPPRC), also located in Chennai, is the first of its kind in the region. It will play a crucial role in coordinating responses to marine pollution incidents, especially in managing oil and chemical spills.
- **CGAE in Puducherry:** The Coast Guard Air Enclave (CGAE) in Puducherry is set to enhance maritime security along the Puducherry and South Tamil Nadu coast. The facility is equipped with Chetak and Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), boosting aerial surveillance and emergency response capabilities.

**66.** The Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Army have jointly carried out a first-of-its-kind precise para-drop operation of the Aarogya Maitri Health Cube at a high-altitude area close to 15,000 feet.

These critical trauma care cubes have been indigenously developed under **Project BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita and Maitri)**.

The operation was conducted in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of providing critical supplies to Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) affected areas.

The IAF utilised its advanced tactical transport aircraft C-130J Super Hercules to airlift and precisely para-drop the cube.

The Indian Army's Para Brigade, known for its operational acumen and agility, played an instrumental role in the successful deployment of the trauma care cube, utilising their advanced precision drop equipment.

This demonstration underscored the capability of such specialised military assets to effectively support HADR operations, even in the most remote and mountainous regions.

**67.** The **National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)** organized its first **Advanced Leadership Development Programme** from **August 5th to August 16th, 2024**.

**40 distinguished civil servants** from **11 countries** participated, including **Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Madagascar, Fiji, Kenya, Maldives, and Mozambique**.

The programme was focused on public policy and governance and aimed at enhancing governance in the participating countries.

The programme included sessions on Geo-Political and Economic Potential, Cyber Security Policies, Digital India Programme, and Public-Private Partnership.

The valedictory session was addressed by Shri V. Srinivas, who emphasized the importance of knowledge exchange and strengthening bilateral ties.

The valedictory session was an opportunity for participants to present their learnings and experiences, which will help them in contributing to the SDG goals and the development of their countries.

- 68.** On August 1, 2024, **APEDA** (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) facilitated the export of India's first ready-to-drink fig juice made from GI-tagged Purandar Figs to Poland.

This milestone shipment was flagged off by **Abhishek Dev**, Chairman of APEDA, and departed from **Hamburg port in Germany**.

The fig juice was first introduced at the **SIAL 2023** trade show in Greater Noida, New Delhi, where it won an award.

It was also showcased at **Macfrut 2024** in Rimini, Italy, where it attracted positive responses from international buyers, including an inquiry from **MG Sales SP in Wroclaw, Poland**.

The fig juice, produced by **Purandar Highlands Farmers Producer Company Ltd.**, represents a significant innovation in India's agricultural exports.

APEDA's continuous support, including the first export of fresh GI-tagged Purandar Figs to Hamburg in 2022, has been crucial for this achievement.

- 69.** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has sanctioned **Rs. 1413 crore** for the development of a new civil enclave at **Bihta, Patna, Bihar**.

This project aims to address the saturation of capacity at the existing Patna Airport, which is currently facing limitations due to constrained land availability.

The development includes a new Integrated Terminal Building at Bihta Airport, covering an area of 66,000 sqm.

The terminal is designed to handle 3000 Peak Hour Passengers (PHP) and a total of 50 lakh passengers annually, with an eventual capacity of one crore passengers per annum.

The project includes the construction of an Apron with 10 parking bays suitable for A-321/B-737-800/A-320 aircraft and two link taxiways.

- 70.** Defense Minister Rajnath Singh has released a commemorative coin of **Rs.100** to mark the birth centenary of former five-time Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu **Kalaignar M Karunanidhi**.

The coin was released at the event organized by the Government of Tamil Nadu in Kalaivanar Arangam in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Rs.100 denomination coin weighs 35 grams, has a diameter of 44 millimeters, with 200 serrations on its edge. It will be composed of an alloy comprising 50 percent silver, 40 percent copper, 5 percent nickel, and 5 percent zinc.

Kalaignar M Karunanidhi was a writer, politician, and former **President of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)**.

He served as CM of Tamil Nadu for almost two decades over five terms between 1969 and 2011.

He is one of the longest-serving Chief Ministers in the history of India.

- 71.** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has handed over the Authority Holding Sealed Particulars (AHSP) of '**Nipun**' munition to Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) at Armament Research & Development Establishment (ARDE), Pashan, Pune.

NIPUN is a Soft Target Munition designed and developed by the **ARDE** in association with **High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL), Pune**.

After the successful completion of General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR)-based evaluation, NIPUN Munition has been inducted into the Indian Army.

Two Indian private industries, namely Economic Explosives Ltd (EEL), Nagpur and Premier Explosives Ltd (PEL), Secunderabad have absorbed the technology from DRDO. Both the industries have currently undertaken the bulk production against a purchase order from Indian Army.

More than 20 lots of munitions have been delivered to the Indian Army till now.

NIPUN is highly user-friendly and deadly against the enemy. It is completely safe during handling, transportation and laying.

- 72.** The **North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation** has successfully obtained **Oeko-Tex certification** for its **Eri Silk**.

Oeko-Tex certification is a standard that ensures textiles are tested for harmful substances and produced in environment-friendly conditions.

Eri Silk is known as the world's only vegan silk because the moth exits the cocoon naturally without killing it.

Eri Silk is produced from the silkworm **Philosamia ricini**, which is **reared indoors** 5-6 times a year.

**Note:** India produces all the five types of silk: Mulberry, Eri, Tropical & Temperate Tasar, and Muga.

- 73.** The **National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL)** has introduced **indigenous (Swadeshi) kamikaze drones**, "do-and-die" unmanned aerial vehicles, designed with home-built engines, that can fly up to **1,000 kilometers** and loiter over target areas for up to nine hours.

It is also known as **loitering munitions** which have been extensively used by Ukraine forces to target Russian infantry and armoured vehicles.

The Indian kamikaze drones, each approximately 2.8 meters in length with a wingspan of 3.5 meters, weigh around 120 kilograms.

These drones are powered by a **30-horsepower Wankel Engine**, a creation of NAL, enabling them to reach speeds of up to 180 kilometers per hour.



With a range of up to 1,000 kilometers, these UAVs are equipped to carry an explosive payload of 25 kilograms, making them formidable in any combat scenario.

- 74.** The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** launched an innovative project to tackle the growing concern of microplastic contamination in food on August 18, 2024, in New Delhi.

Recognizing microplastic pollution as an emerging threat that requires immediate attention, the project - **"Micro-and Nano-Plastics as Emerging Food Contaminants: Establishing Validated Methodologies and Understanding the Prevalence in Different Food Matrices"** – was started in March 2024 to develop and validate analytical methods for detecting micro and nano-plastics in various food products, as well as assess their prevalence and exposure levels in India.

The primary objectives of the project include developing standard protocols for micro/nano-plastic analysis, conducting intra- and inter-laboratory comparisons, and generating critical data on microplastic exposure levels among consumers.

This study is being implemented in collaboration with leading research institutions across the country, including the CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (Lucknow), ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (Kochi), and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science (Pilani).

In a recent report, the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** highlighted the presence of **microplastics in common food items such as sugar and salt**. While the report underscores the global prevalence of microplastics, it also emphasizes the need for more robust data to fully understand the implications for human health and safety, particularly in the Indian context.

- 75.** The **"Shaurya Sampravah 1.0"** event was a landmark gathering aimed at interacting with senior veteran officers to incorporate their insights into the **Indian Army's** future plans.

General Upendra Dwivedi, the Chief of the Army Staff, led the initiative, emphasizing the importance of integrating veterans' wisdom into the Army's strategic vision.

The event featured detailed briefings on the "Decade of Transformation" roadmap, focusing on modernisation, technological advancements, and enhancing operational capabilities.

The interaction encouraged active participation from veterans in discussions about the Army's ongoing initiatives, including modernization and the Agnipath Scheme.

The Army aims to leverage veterans' experience to support the strategic objectives of Viksit Bharat 2047 and improve overall military effectiveness.

- 76.** **Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh** and **External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar** hosted the **3rd India-Japan 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue**. The event took place in **New Delhi on August 20, 2024**.

**Japanese Minister of Defense Mr. Kihara Minoru** and **Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms. Yoko Kamikawa** participated in the event.

During the dialogue, they reviewed bilateral cooperation and explored new initiatives to strengthen engagements.

Discussions also included regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The event aims to enhance the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan.

- 77.** Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare & Chemicals and Fertilizers, J.P. Nadda, has inaugurated the '**First Policy Makers' Forum**'.

To elevate India's position in the global pharmaceutical sector, the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the Ministry of External Affairs, hosted an international delegation of policymakers and drug regulators from 15 countries.

The forum featured the launch of innovative digital platforms for pharmacopeia and drug safety monitoring.

The forum witnessed participation from various countries including **Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Malawi, Mozambique, Nauru, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Syria, Uganda and Zambia.**

The forum aims to foster meaningful discussions on the recognition of the IP and the implementation of India's flagship Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP), popularly known as the Janaushadhi Scheme.

During the event, Union Minister launched two significant digital platforms —the **IP Online Portal** and the **Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring System (ADRMS) software.**

- The IP Online Portal represents a major step towards digitalizing the Indian Pharmacopoeia, making drug standards more accessible to stakeholders worldwide. This initiative aligns with the Government of India's commitment to promoting environmentally friendly solutions under the 'Digital India' campaign.
- The ADRMS software, developed as part of the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India, is India's first indigenous medical product safety database tailored to the needs of the Indian population. It facilitates the collection and analysis of adverse events related to medicines and medical devices, thereby significantly strengthening the country's pharmacovigilance infrastructure. This software not only streamlines the reporting process but also empowers consumers and healthcare professionals to directly report adverse events, ensuring a more comprehensive capture of safety information.

- 78.** The **National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) and Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC)** have officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance passenger travel experiences under the '**One India – One Ticket**' initiative.

- This collaboration enables seamless ticketing for Namo Bharat trains on the Delhi–Ghaziabad–Meerut RRTS Corridor through the IRCTC platform.
- The MOU marks a significant step towards integrating travel services across Indian Railways and Namo Bharat trains.

- Each ticket will feature a unique QR code for a hassle-free journey, with additional features such as flexible cancellation and easy payment options.
- This initiative aims to simplify and enhance the travel experience for all passengers, promoting digitalization and seamless connectivity.

**79.** The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Chamber of Accounts, Republic of Uzbekistan, in Tashkent.**

The agreement, inked by the two Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs), aims to enhance collaboration and exchange of expertise in the field of auditing between the two nations.

The signing of the MoU marks a significant milestone in promoting closer ties and collaboration among the SAIs of India and Uzbekistan, underscoring a shared commitment to excellence in auditing practices.

This MoU establishes a collaboration platform for exchange of knowledge and experience amongst auditing professionals to develop capacity for conducting audits.

Adej Muzaffarovich Boboyev, President of the Chamber of Accounts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, emphasized the importance of the Agreement in developing and strengthening the professional capacity and audit practices of his institution.

**80.** The **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)** and **Laghu Udyog Bharati (LUB)** formalized their collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This MoU is set to transfer selected CSIR technologies to Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) associated with LUB.

**Key Points of the MoU:**

- The goal is to **transfer 100 CSIR-developed technologies to designated MSEs** within a 100-day timeframe.
- The range of technologies includes Pesticide Detection Kits, Multi-copter Drones, Air Quality Monitoring Systems, and Gluten-free biscuits.
- The partnership will enable CSIR to broaden the reach of its technologies, supporting both export opportunities and import substitution.
- MSEs will have access to cost-effective and efficient technologies, improving their operations and competitive edge in the market.
- This collaboration aims to enhance the technological capabilities of MSEs in India, driving innovation and contributing to economic growth.

**81.** **Reliance Foundation (RF)** has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)**, part of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), to enhance weather information access for climate-vulnerable communities across India.

The MoU aims to improve weather forecasts, early warnings, and agro-advisories through the use of advanced technologies.

The MoU was signed by Dr. Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of Meteorology at IMD, and Jagannatha Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of Reliance Foundation, in New Delhi. Representatives from both organizations were present at the signing.

Importance of the MoU:

- The partnership will focus on collaborative research, stakeholder meetings on climate adaptation, and improving weather forecasting and early warning communication methods.
- RF, in conjunction with IMD and other partners, seeks to enhance the use of weather data, boost disaster readiness, and increase climate resilience, thereby improving personal safety and livelihoods in India.
- The RF will also work to make weather information more accessible and understandable for the most at-risk communities.

**82.** The **Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA)** in Delhi became the first airport in India to achieve **Net Zero Carbon Emission** status. This milestone was accomplished under the Airport Council International's (ACI) Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) program, surpassing the 2030 target by six years.

The airport reached this status by adopting a range of strategies, such as transitioning to renewable energy sources, encouraging the use of electric vehicles, and enhancing infrastructure to support eco-friendly practices.

This achievement not only sets a new benchmark for sustainability in the aviation sector within India but also on a global scale.

**83.** The Government of India has unveiled the **Offshore Areas Mineral Trust Rules, 2024**, to boost offshore mineral exploration and extraction.

**Key aspects of these rules include:**

- **Financial Contributions:** Operators holding production leases are required to allocate 10% of their royalty payments to the Trust, which will fund a range of initiatives.
- **Sustainable Exploration:** The Trust is designed to encourage environmentally friendly exploration practices and support community welfare.
- **Technological Innovation:** The Trust will back advancements in technology and innovation for offshore mineral exploration.
- **International Collaboration:** The rules also aim to foster global cooperation in the exchange of technology and knowledge.

**84.** On August 21, 2024, the Ministry of Labour & Employment introduced the **Building and Other Construction Workers (BoCW) Management Information System (MIS) portal** to improve the administration and effectiveness of welfare programs for construction workers across India.

- The BoCW MIS portal aims to streamline data management, facilitating improved decision-making and the development of welfare policies for BoCW workers.
- States and Union Territories must register on the portal to provide updates on fund use, worker registrations, and benefits from various central and state social security schemes.
- As of June 30, 2024, approximately 5.7 crore workers are listed with the Building and Construction Workers Welfare Boards. About Rs 1.15 lakh crores have been gathered in cess funds, with more than Rs 66,000 crores allocated to welfare initiatives.
- The Ministry is working to extend central government benefits to BoCW workers, including issuing Ayushman Cards for 1.3 crore workers under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- Over 85,000 workers have received insurance through the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PM-JJB), and 1.24 lakh workers have been covered against disability under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PM-SBY).
- States such as Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Madhya Pradesh have utilized cess funds to build schools for the children of BoCW workers, and other states are encouraged to pursue similar projects.

**85.** The **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** and the **Department of Posts** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the physical verification process of new units under the **Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)**.

- Postal employees nationwide will conduct physical verification of PMEGP units and receive training from KVIC.
- Through this, KVIC will get the benefit of the services of 1,65,000 post offices spread across the country, out of which 139,067 are working in rural areas.
- The MoU was signed by Dy. General Manager Dr. Amanpreet Singh (Department of Posts) and Dy. CEO, PMEGP Shri Rajan Babu (KVIC).
- PMEGP has promoted entrepreneurship across the country and created new employment opportunities. Since the inception of the scheme, PMEGP has helped in setting up more than 9.69 lakh new projects and generated employment for more than 84.64 lakh entrepreneurs.
- So far, a margin money subsidy of Rs 25563.44 crore has been distributed through this scheme against a loan of Rs 69021.29 crore.

**86.** The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) has recently approved a **20% premium** over the regulated or APM price for any natural gas produced from new wells or well interventions in the nominated fields of state-owned companies: **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), New Delhi, and Oil India Limited (OIL), Noida, Uttar Pradesh.**

APM is an **Administrative Price Mechanism**.

The gas produced from nominated fields of ONGC and OIL will get a premium of a total of 12 percent of the Indian crude basket price, as under the current policy, linked to crude price.

As per guidelines for domestic gas pricing, domestic natural gas price (APM price) was fixed at 10 percent of the Indian Crude basket price as announced by Petroleum Planning and Analysis (PPAC) on a monthly basis.

The implementation of the policy decision aligns with the national vision of achieving the target of share of natural gas in the Indian energy basket from 6 percent to 15 percent by 2030.

- 87.** Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting (I&B), **Ashwini Vaishnaw**, launched **25 Challenges** as part of the '**Create in India Challenge - Season 1**' for **World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES)**.

These challenges, hosted by leading industry associations and organizations, cover a wide range of disciplines including animation, filmmaking, gaming, music, and visual arts. These challenges are being done in the run up to the main event.

### **List of 'Create in India' Challenges - Season 1**

1. Anime Challenge by Media and Entertainment Association of India
2. Animation Filmmakers Competition by Dancing Atoms
3. Game Jam by India Game Developer Conference
4. Esports Tournament by Esports Federation of India
5. City Quest: Shades of Bharat by E-gaming Federation
6. Handheld Educational Video Game Development by Indian Digital Gaming Society
7. Comics Creator Championship by Indian Comics Association
8. Young Filmmakers Challenge by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry and Whistling Woods International.
9. XR Creator Hackathon by Wavelaps and XDG
10. AI Film Making Competition by InVideo
11. WAVES Promo Video Challenge Indian Broadcasting & Digital Foundation
12. TruthTell Hackathon by India Cellular & Electronics Association
13. Community Radio Content Challenge by Community Radio Association
14. Theme Music Competition by Indian Music Industry
15. WAVES Hackathon: Adspend Optimizer by Advertising Agencies Association of India
16. WAVES AI Art Installation Challenge by Internet and Mobile Association of India



17. WAVES Explorer by Internet and Mobile Association of India
18. Reel Making Challenge by Internet and Mobile Association of India
19. Film Poster Making Competition National Film Archive of India – National Film Development Corporation
20. Virtual Influencer Creation Contest by AVTR meta labs
21. Battle of the Bands by Prasar Bharati
22. Symphony of India by Prasar Bharati
23. India: A Bird's Eye View by Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited
24. Anti-Piracy Challenge by Confederation of Indian Industry
25. Trailer Making Competition by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry

- 88.** The Union Ministry of Power has introduced three new online platforms—**PROMPT, DRIPS, and JAL VIDYUT DPR**—to boost efficiency, transparency, and effectiveness within the power sector.

These platforms were launched by Union Minister of Power and Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, in New Delhi.

**Portal for Online monitoring of Projects – Thermal (PROMPT):**

NTPC assisted in developing the PROMPT portal.

The newly launched PROMPT portal is designed to facilitate real-time tracking and analysis of thermal power projects. This online platform enables project managers and stakeholders to make informed decisions swiftly, ensuring that potential delays and issues are identified early and addressed promptly.

**Key Features and Advantages of PROMPT:**

- **Real-Time Tracking and Analysis:** The portal provides a centralized platform for monitoring all aspects of project execution, enabling swift identification and resolution of potential issues.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** By digitizing the monitoring process, the portal ensures greater transparency in project management, leading to timely resolution of issues, reduction in time and cost overruns, and enhanced project execution efficiency.

- **Resource Optimization:** The portal supports predictable resource availability, aiding in meeting the country's electricity demand at a reasonable price, ultimately benefiting consumers.

### **JAL VIDYUT DPR Platform:**

The JAL VIDYUT DPR (Monitoring Survey and Investigation Activities of Hydroelectric Projects and Pumped Storage Projects) offers real-time updates on the progress of hydroelectric and pumped storage projects, enhancing coordination and management.

### **DRIPS Portal:**

The Disaster Resource Inventory for Power Sector (DRIPS) portal is designed to quickly manage power disruptions resulting from natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, and floods. It connects nodal officers across various power sector departments and agencies to ensure rapid restoration of power in affected areas.

89. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test-fired the indigenously-built **Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MP-ATGM)**. The test was conducted at a field firing range in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

### **MP-ATGM:**

- The MP-ATGM is a shoulder-launched, portable missile system designed specifically to destroy enemy tanks and armoured vehicles.
- This advanced ATGM system is equipped with both day and night capabilities, top attack functionality, and a dual-mode seeker.
- The MPATGM is a lightweight, cylindrical missile featuring two sets of four radial fins. It is equipped with a high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) shaped charge warhead.
- The missile measures approximately 130 cm in length and 12 cm in diameter and is used with a collapsible tripod and launch tube.
- The total system weight is 14.5 kg, with an additional 14.25 kg for the command launch unit (CLU).
- The missile has an operational range of 200 to 300 metres at the minimum and up to 4 km at the maximum.
- It is equipped with an advanced imaging infrared homing (IIR) sensor and integrated avionics, enabling top attack capability.

90. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has carried out a successful maiden flight test of **Long-Range Glide Bomb (LRGB), GAURAV** from the **Su-30 MK-I** platform of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The test was conducted off the coast of **Odisha**.

GAURAV is an air-launched **1,000 kg** class glide bomb capable of hitting targets at long distances.

GAURAV has been designed and developed indigenously by the **Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad**.

GAURAV utilizes a hybrid navigation system combining the Inertial Navigation System (INS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) data for precise target acquisition.

During the flight test, the glide bomb hit the target with pinpoint accuracy.

- 91.** US aerospace giant **Boeing** has partnered with India's **AI Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL)** to provide overhaul services to the Indian Navy's fleet of **12 P-8I** maritime surveillance aircraft.

As part of the partnership, the first landing gear overhaul of a P-8I aircraft was recently completed at the naval base INS Rajali in Tamil Nadu.

This signifies the growth in India's indigenous capabilities for undertaking complex Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) services.

The Boeing India-AIESL partnership is the latest initiative under the **Boeing India Repair Development and Sustainment (BIRDS)** hub programme, which aims to build a robust MRO ecosystem for defense and commercial aircraft in India.

The Boeing P-8I, a multi-role long-range maritime reconnaissance anti-submarine warfare (LRMR ASW) aircraft, is integral to the Indian Navy's maritime surveillance missions in the Indian Ocean.

Besides India, the aircraft is being operated by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, and Germany.

- 92.** The DARPG - **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances** conducted a review of the existing processes to enhance the Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS).
- The 2024 Policy Guidelines reiterate the Government's commitment to Effective Grievance Redressal and manifest the technological improvements undertaken with the **10-step reform process** adopted.
  - The CPGRAMS portal has redressed nearly 60 lac Public Grievances in the period 2022-2024 and has mapped 1.01 lac Grievance Redressal officers of Ministries/ Departments and States/ Union Territories.
  - The Grievance Redressal timelines under the 2022 policy guidelines were 30 days, which have been brought down to **21 days**.
  - The status of the grievance filed in CPGRAMS can be tracked with the unique registration ID provided at the time of registration of the complainant.

- 93.** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman released the '**My Stamp – 165th Income Tax Day**' in New Delhi to commemorate 165 years of Income Tax in India.

The stamp was unveiled during an event organized by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to mark this milestone anniversary.

Income Tax Day is celebrated annually on 24th July, recognizing the introduction of income tax in India by Sir James Wilson in 1860. The 165th Income Tax Day was observed on 24th July 2024.

During the event, Minister Sitharaman presented the 'CBDT Certificate of Excellence' to the Income Tax Department team for their record-breaking cash seizure of approximately Rs 352 crore in a 2023 raid on a distillery group in Odisha.

- 94. The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Indian Institute of Technology - Banaras Hindu University (IIT-BHU) Varanasi, and the Government of Denmark have launched a Smart Laboratory on Clean Rivers (SLCR) Project in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.**

This project is part of the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark, focusing on rejuvenating small rivers through innovative and sustainable methods.

The initiative features a hybrid lab model at the IIT-BHU and an on-field living lab at the Varuna River to test and scale solutions in real-world settings.

The SLCR Secretariat will receive initial funding of Rs. 16.80 crore from the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) and a Rs. 5 crore grant from Denmark to support long-term sustainability and project development.

The NMCG operates under the Department of Water Resources, River Development, and Ganga Rejuvenation (DoWR, RD & GR) within the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

- 95. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)'s Space Applications Centre (SAC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AlphaMERS Limited to create an Artificial Intelligence (AI) model designed to detect and profile marine pollution, particularly focusing on macro plastics and oil spills in India's coastal waters.**

This collaboration aims to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of identifying pollutants through remote sensing technology, thereby improving the monitoring and management of marine environments.

The collaboration signifies a significant step towards environmental conservation and technological advancement in combating marine pollution.

- 96. INS Arighaat**, the 2nd Arihant-Class Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN), was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 29th August 2024 at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

It maintains the same displacement of 6,000 tonnes and is powered by an 83-megawatt pressurized light-water reactor with enriched Uranium, similar to INS Arihant.

INS Arighaat features several technological upgrades and was constructed using advanced design and manufacturing technologies, detailed R&D, special materials, and complex engineering.

It is **India's 2nd indigenous nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine** and is expected to operate under the Strategic Forces Command (SFC), responsible for India's nuclear arsenal.

- 97.** The Indian space agency, ISRO, has successfully demonstrated a technique to capture data on soil moisture, surface inundation, and ocean surface wind and wave measurements, using a satellite-based sensor that is 475 km above the earth.

This novel method is known as Global Navigation Satellite System- Reflectometry (GNSS-R).

An instrument capable of performing this role was mounted on ISRO's EOS-08 satellite which was launched on August 16, and it began operations on 18th August 2024.

The GNSS-R instrument, developed by the Space Applications Centre (SAC-ISRO), is India's first space-borne precision receiver.

It collects ground-reflected GNSS signals and measures their power and other signal characteristics.

These measurements are used to derive scientific information about the regions covered by the receiver, including soil moisture, surface inundation, and ocean surface wind and wave measurements.

The instrument provides a resolution of 15 km x 15 km over oceans and better than 1 km x 1 km over land. Delay-Doppler Maps (DDMs) are the primary outputs from GNSS-R raw data processing.

These DDMs are used to derive parameters such as reflectivity and Normalized Bistatic Radar Cross-Section (NBRCS), which are then used for the retrieval of various scientific parameters.

- 98.** Union Minister Annapurna Devi of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) launched the **SHe-Box portal**, a centralized platform for registering and monitoring complaints of sexual harassment of women at the workplace.
- The new She-Box portal serves as a centralized repository of information related to Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) formed across the country, encompassing both the government and private sectors.

It offers a common platform to file complaints, track their status, and ensure time-bound processing of complaints by ICs.

It provides assured redressal of complaints and a streamlined process for all stakeholders. The portal through a designated nodal officer will enable real-time monitoring of complaints.

**Note:** The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, serves to protect women from sexual harassment in the workplace and address their grievances.

**99. Cyclone Asna** has brought heavy rainfall to various places in Gujarat and adjoining areas of Pakistan. It is notable for being the first cyclonic storm in the Arabian Sea in August 2024 since 1976.

It is only the fourth cyclonic storm to form in the Arabian Sea in August since 1891. The previous instances occurred in 1891, 1923, 1976, and now 2024.

**100.** The Indian Army has placed an order for **73,000 more SIG716 rifles** from **SiG Sauer**, a US-based company.

This new order will increase the total number of SIG716 rifles in service with the Indian Army to 145,400.

The initial contract for **72,400 SIG716 rifles** was signed in 2019.

These rifles are set to replace the older 5.56x45 mm INSAS rifles currently in use.

The SIG716 rifles are also used by the US Armed Forces and other European nations. Additionally, India and Russia are collaborating on producing AK-203 rifles at a facility in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh.

**101. Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE) and National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)** have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance infrastructure connectivity in India.

The MoU, signed by Dr. Krishan Kumar, MD of NHIDCL, and Commodore PR Hari, CMD of GRSE, focuses on the construction and delivery of Class 70R Double-Lane Bridges.

These bridges will be strategically important for improving connectivity in critical forward areas along India's borders, thus facilitating the deployment of troops and equipment.



Notably, GRSE's Double-Lane Steel Bridge is the only indigenous solution of its kind, which aligns with the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. GRSE has a proven track record, having supplied 44 similar bridges across India under a prior MoU with the Border Roads Organization (BRO).

- 102.** The Ministry of Science & Technology developed the **Mixed Matrix Membrane (MMM)** for the detection of ammonia or other amine leaks. The MMM is designed to aid in detecting hazardous gases like ammonia, which are used in various industries and are toxic and corrosive.

The membrane changes color in the presence of these gases, facilitating effective environmental monitoring and preventing potential gas leak disasters.

The Research team of Dr Monika Singh at the Institute of Nano Science and Technology, Mohali which is an autonomous Institute of the Department of Science and Technology have developed this membrane.

- 103. Goa Shipyard Ltd** has launched India's first pollution control vessel, named **Samudra Pratap**, for the Indian Coast Guard. The vessel is designed to aid in oil spill response operations within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

It measures 114.5 meters in length and 16.5 meters in breadth, with a displacement of 4170 tons. The project boasts over 60% indigenous content, showcasing India's shipbuilding capabilities.

Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) is an Indian government-owned shipbuilding company located in Vasco da Gama, Goa. Established in 1957, GSL specializes in the design and construction of advanced ships and vessels for the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, and other clients.

- 104.** The **ASSOCHAM Environment and Carbon Conference**, inaugurated by Union Minister Kirti Vardhan Singh in New Delhi, is themed "**Fostering a Collaborative Ecosystem for Achieving Net Zero by 2070**".

The conference focuses on creating a collaborative approach to achieve net zero by 2070. The Minister highlighted the government's commitment to addressing climate change and achieving the Vikshit Bharat 2047 goal. He also discussed the positive impact of the Jal Jeevan Mission on rural India.

The ASSOCHAM Environment and Carbon Conference focuses on environmental sustainability, carbon management, and climate change mitigation strategies. It provides a platform for discussing renewable energy, green technologies, and fostering dialogue between industry leaders and policymakers on sustainable practices.

**105. Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA)** has been recognized as the **Best Airport at the India Travel Awards**, marking its **third consecutive win**. The award highlights RGIA's excellence in social media engagement and exceptional airline support.

In 2023, RGIA received the Skytrax 'Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia 2024' award in Frankfurt, Germany.

Airport Facts:

- Opened on March 23, 2008, RGIA serves Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
- It is the largest airport in India by area, covering 5,500 acres.
- RGIA introduced domestic e-boarding in December 2015 and international e-boarding in October 2020.

**106. India signed the Charter and memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the establishment of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) Secretariat** along with Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Mauritius.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, along with representatives from Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka, signed a charter and memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) Secretariat.

The core objective of the CSC is to promote regional security by addressing transnational threats and common challenges faced by its Member States.

Bangladesh was welcomed as the fifth member state of the CSC during its eighth Deputy NSA-level meeting held virtually on July 10, 2024.

Seychelles participated in the meeting as an observer.

The five pillars of cooperation under CSC include Maritime Safety and Security, Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation, Combating Trafficking and Transnational Organised Crime, Cyber Security, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

**107.** The Government of India granted '**Navratna**' status to Sutej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) Limited, NHPC Limited, RailTel Corporation of India Limited, and Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited.

**RailTel became the 22nd Navratna, followed by Solar Energy Corporation of India as the 23rd, NHPC as the 24th, and SJVN as the 25th Navratna in India.**

The Navaratna companies in India are a select group of public sector enterprises that have been granted enhanced financial autonomy and operational flexibility.

- 108.** The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Institute of Fisheries Education (ICAR-CIFE)** and the **Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM)** entered into a collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU was signed at the ICAR-CIFE campus in Mumbai, Maharashtra, by Dr. Ravishankar CN, Director and Vice Chancellor of ICAR-CIFE, and Dr. Hema Yadav, Director of VAMNICOM.

The primary focus of this collaboration is to explore opportunities in fishery education, research, capacity building, and consultancy, with an emphasis on improving cooperative management practices within the fisheries ecosystem.

- 109.** The **Indian Railways (IR)** has integrated its recruitment portal with **DigiLocker**, aiming to reduce the recruitment process duration from 18-24 months to less than 6 months.

DigiLocker, a digital document wallet under the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), allows job applicants to link their digital documents, which are treated as equivalent to original physical ones.

This integration will streamline document verification, minimize the chances of fake document submissions, and also enable the issuance of medical check-up calls and appointment letters through DigiLocker.

- 110.** The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the expansion of the Central Sector Scheme under the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)** to enhance the scheme's effectiveness and inclusivity.

The measures are as follows:

**Viable Farming Assets:** To allow all eligible beneficiaries of the scheme to create infrastructure covered under 'viable projects for building community farming assets'.

**Integrated Processing Projects:** To include integrated primary secondary processing projects in the list of eligible activities under AIF. However, **standalone secondary projects would not be eligible and would be covered under MoFPI (Ministry of Food Processing Industries) schemes.**

**PM KUSUM Component-A:** To allow convergence of Component-A of PM-KUSUM with AIF for farmer/group of farmers/ Farmer Producer Organizations/ Cooperatives/ Panchayats. The alignment of these initiatives aims to promote sustainable clean energy solutions alongside the development of agricultural infrastructure.

**NABSanrakshan:** In addition to CGTMSE, it is proposed to extend AIF credit guarantee coverage of FPOs through the NABSanrakshan Trustee Company Pvt. Ltd. also.

AIF, launched in 2020, has been instrumental in supporting the creation of 6623 warehouses, 688 cold stores, and 21 silos projects, resulting in additional storage capacity of about 500 LMT in the country. This includes 465 LMT of dry storage and 35 LMT of cold storage capacity.

With this additional storage capacity, 18.6 LMT of food grains and 3.44 LMT of horticulture produce can be saved annually.

**Rs. 47,575 Crore** has been sanctioned for 74,508 projects under AIF till date.

**Other Cabinet approvals:**

- The Cabinet also approved the third batch of ascending e-auctions to establish **730 Private FM radio channels across 234 new cities**, with a reserve price of Rs 784.87 crore. Additionally, funding was approved for Hydro Electric Projects in the North Eastern Region.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved **three railway projects** with a total cost of **Rs 6,456 crore** to improve connectivity and reduce CO2 emissions, and 12 new industrial nodes under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme with an investment of **Rs 28,602 crore**.

**111.** The Department of School Education and Literacy, in collaboration with NCERT, released the e-magazine '**Sapno ki Udaan**' to commemorate the 1st anniversary of the landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the lunar South Pole.

The inaugural National Space Day was celebrated in 2024 on 23rd August.

The e-magazine is a quarterly publication featuring a mix of poetry, essays, stories, and riddles contributed by students, teachers, and parents. Plans are in place to make it a monthly publication.

**112.** A Tamil Nadu-based start-up successfully launched **India's first reusable hybrid rocket, "RHUMI 1,"** from a mobile platform in Thiruvudandai, Chennai.

The rocket's mission is to advance research on global warming and climate change.

It carried three CUBE satellites to monitor atmospheric conditions such as cosmic radiation intensity, UV radiation, and air quality.

Additionally, the rocket deployed 50 Pico satellites to investigate various atmospheric factors, including accelerometer readings, altitude, and ozone levels.

## STATES AFFAIRS

- 113.** The **Government of Nagaland** inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **SBI General Insurance** for the implementation of **Disaster Risk Transfer Parametric Insurance Solution (DRTPS)** for a period of **three years** with immediate effect.

With this, Nagaland became the **1<sup>st</sup> state in India** to implement a disaster risk management insurance solution.

DRTPS will aid in protecting the state's critical infrastructure and reduce economic losses due to a disaster.

The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) will be implementing DRTPS in the state in partnership with SBI General Insurance as insurer and **GIC-Re India and Munich Re** as re-insurers.

The DRTPS program, which came into effect on June 1, 2024, and is scheduled to conclude on May 30, 2027, will bring a new model of parametric insurance for disaster risk transfer and a paradigm shift in building a more resilient future in the event of a major disaster.

- 114.** Dr. Jitendra Singh has deployed **10 X-Band Doppler Weather Radars (DWRs)** at strategic locations in the **Northeastern states** and **Lahaul & Spiti District**.

The **key locations** include Guwahati, Dhubri, Jorhat, Tezpur, and Silchar in Assam; Aizawl in Mizoram; Dimapur in Nagaland; Imphal in Manipur; and Mandala Top and Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh.

An X-Band DWR was installed in the Lahaul & Spiti District of Himachal Pradesh.

This initiative is part of the government's broader efforts to enhance **meteorological infrastructure**, enabling more **precise and timely weather predictions**.

These radars significantly improve weather forecasting in regions prone to sudden weather changes, helping in disaster management and reducing property damage.

- 115.** The visit of INS Tabar to London highlights the enduring historical ties and current cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Royal Navy.

During its stay, professional interactions are planned, and the crew will engage in community service at an Old Age Home for retired Royal Army personnel.

The visit underscores the bilateral maritime relationship and aims to enhance cultural exchange.

**INS Tabar, commanded by Captain MR Harish**, is a stealth frigate built in Russia, part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet, and is equipped with advanced weapons and sensors.

- 116.** The Maharashtra government officially launched the **"Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin"** scheme, which will provide eligible women with a monthly stipend.

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde indicated that if the ruling Mahayuti alliance is re-elected, the stipend could rise from **Rs 1,500 to Rs 3,000**.

The scheme is aimed at **married, divorced, and destitute women** aged 21-60.

Beneficiaries' annual family income should not exceed **₹2.5 lakh**.

The scheme has received a huge response, with 1.5 crore women registered so far.

The state government will deposit the installments for **July and August on 17th August**.

**117.** The **Madhya Pradesh government** has announced a **20% increase** in the honorarium for elected public representatives of all urban bodies.

This increase applies to **mayors, chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and councilors**.

Specifically, the honorarium for the **Mayor of the Municipal Corporation** has increased from **₹22,000 to ₹26,400** per month.

The honorarium for the Vice-Chairperson has been increased from ₹18,000 to ₹21,600, and for councillors, it has been increased from ₹12,000 to ₹14,400.

This decision was made by Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav during the Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Women Public Representatives Conference in Bhopal.

The new honorarium rates will take effect starting next month.

**118.** The International Youth Day event was organized at Parade Ground, Panchkula, where Haryana's Chief Minister launched three key initiatives i.e., the **Drone Didi** program, **IT Saksham Yojana**, and **Contractor Saksham Yojana**.

These initiatives are aimed at empowering youth in technology, IT skills, and entrepreneurship.

The Chief Minister also honored the winners of the state skill competition, **Ideathon**, by awarding prizes.

### Key Points

- **Contractor Saksham Yuva Yojana:** The government plans to offer skill training to 10,000 engineering diploma and degree holders over three months, helping them become self-reliant. Additionally, these youths will have access to an interest-free loan of Rs 3 lakh for one year. They will also be eligible to apply for state government contracts valued at up to Rs 25 lakh, particularly through the Panchayati Raj Department.
- **IT Saksham Yuva Yojana:** This initiative by the state government aims to provide IT training to graduate and postgraduate youth, equipping them with skills in coding, Java, web design, networking, digital marketing, and more to help them build a career in the IT sector.
- **Drone Didi Yojana:** In 2024-25, the state government will offer training in drone operation and management to 5,000 young women. As part of this scheme, the government will cover 80% of the cost for drones and related equipment.

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**119.** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini announced the scheme during Hariyali Teej at Jind.

Under this scheme, a target has been set that gas cylinders will be made available to 50 lakh BPL families for ₹ 500.

The scheme will provide an annual benefit of Rs 1500 crore to women.

The Haryana government will bear the extra cost of the cylinder, and the subsidy will be refunded directly to the consumer's account.

Consumers can take up to 12 cylinders per year under this scheme.

The objective of this scheme is to provide gas cylinders to poor and Antyodaya families at cheap prices, so that their expenses can be reduced a bit and they can get relief.

**120.** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that the state has established eight specialized elephant task forces across all major conflict zones to mitigate human-elephant conflicts.

These task forces, led by officers of Deputy Conservator of Forests rank, have been crucial in responding to over 1200 incidents in the last year, successfully driving elephants back to their forest habitats.

In the last decade, Karnataka witnessed **2500 human-elephant conflict incidents**, resulting in **350 human fatalities** and significant crop damage, highlighting the severity of the issue.

Karnataka has the **highest elephant population in India**, with **6395 elephants**. This large population poses challenges in managing human-elephant conflicts.

The state's **Karnataka Aranya Samarasya Project** focuses on **water availability, habitat improvement**, and **community participation** to prevent human-elephant conflicts.

**121.** Jharkhand Chief Minister **Hemant Soren** has launched the '**Mukhyamantri Maiya Samman Yojana**' to empower the women of the state by making them financially strong at Pukar, Jharkhand.

He transferred the first installment of Rs.1000 each to the bank accounts of 57,120 women beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Under this scheme, women aged from **21 to 50 years** will receive financial assistance of **one thousand rupees** each per month, amounting to 12,000 rupees annually.

The '**Mukhyamantri Maiya Samman Yojana**' in Jharkhand aims to benefit 48 lakh women statewide.

**122.** A joint team of **Assam Rifles and Manipur Police** recovered arms and ammunition in **Kangpokpi district**, including an improvised 7.62 mm SLR and a 9mm CMG.

The operation took place in the Kangpokpi district of Manipur.

The team found several arms and ammunition, including:

- Improvised 7.62 mm SLR
- Improvised 9mm CMG
- Short-range improvised Mortar
- Other war-like stores

**123.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various development projects of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation worth Rs 1003 crore in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

- He has inaugurated the 'Oxygen Park' in Thaltej (Ahmedabad) and planted trees under the 'Mission 3 Million Tree Scheme' in Vejalpur and also inaugurated the newly built swimming pool and gym in Makarba.
- The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has resolved to plant 30 lakh trees in 100 days for future generations.

**124.** The **Government of Maharashtra** has declared geoglyphs and petroglyphs in **Ratnagiri** as '**Protected Monuments**' under the **Maharashtra Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1960**. These include rock carvings that date back to the Mesolithic era, roughly 20,000-10,000 years ago.

Ratnagiri has almost **1,500 such artworks** spread across 70 sites, seven of which are on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s tentative World Heritage List (WHL).

The newly protected petroglyphs are found in the Konkan region of Maharashtra, specifically in areas such as Deud in Ratnagiri. Other notable sites include Umbarle village in Dapoli taluka and Borkhat village in Mandangad taluka.

These areas are part of the 900 km stretch along the Konkan coast, which also extends into Goa.

### **Geoglyphs:**

These are large designs or motifs created on the ground, often made by arranging stones or earth. They are visible from above and were typically created by ancient cultures for ceremonial or symbolic purposes.

### **Petroglyphs:**

These are images or symbols carved directly into rock surfaces. The petroglyphs in Ratnagiri depict various animals like rhinos, deer, monkeys, and footprints, reflecting the artistic expression of Mesolithic humans.

**125. Himachal Pradesh** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has launched the 'Mukhyamantri Bal Poshtik Aahar Yojana' to provide nutritious food to school children as well as a scheme to provide

free tablets to primary school teachers to promote digitization in the state educational and administrative system.

The scheme was launched by Chief Minister Sukhu at a function held in Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh on 17 August 2024.

**Mukhyamantri Bal Poshtik Aahar Yojana:**

- The Chief Minister Bal Poshtik Aahar Yojana is only for children of government schools.
- Students from nursery to class VIII will be provided boiled eggs or fruits once a week. Fresh fruits will be taken from local markets based on the choice of the children.
- The scheme will complement the existing mid-day meal scheme and is designed to provide nutritious food to children in government schools.
- It will have around 5,34,293 students from 15,181 government schools in the state as beneficiaries.
- The state government has allocated Rs 12.75 crore for the 'Mukhyamantri Bal Poshtik Aahar Yojana' for 2024-25.

**126.** In **Uttar Pradesh**, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has introduced a new initiative named the "**Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (MYUVA)**" to support young entrepreneurs. This program provides interest-free loans for business projects up to Rs 5 lakh.

**Key features of the MYUVA scheme:**

- **Interest-Free Loans:** MYUVA offers interest-free loans to young entrepreneurs for projects valued at up to Rs 5 lakh.
- **Annual Objective:** The initiative aims to train one lakh young entrepreneurs each year.
- **Financial Provision:** A significant budget of Rs 1,000 crore has been allocated for the fiscal year 2024-25 to support this scheme.
- **Focus on Educated and Skilled Youth:** The program targets educated and skilled youth throughout the state, providing them with self-employment opportunities.
- **Eligibility Requirements:** Eligible candidates are those who have completed training in various government-supported schemes or possess relevant educational qualifications.
- **Repayment and Expansion Opportunities:** Participants who successfully repay their initial loans may qualify for additional financing to further expand their businesses.
- **Promotion of Digital Transactions:** The scheme encourages digital transactions and offers grants to promote the use of digital payment methods.
- **Online Application:** The application process is streamlined through an online platform to ensure easy access for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- **Partnership with Financial Institutions:** The scheme collaborates with banks and other financial institutions to facilitate broad access to funding.

The MYUVA initiative is designed to empower young people in Uttar Pradesh by providing them with the necessary support and resources to start and grow their businesses, contributing to the state's economic development.

**127.** The Chief Minister of **Maharashtra** Eknath Shinde has launched the first '**Solar Village**' in the state. The Manyachiwadi village in the Patan Taluka of Satara district has become the first 'Solar Village' in Maharashtra.

The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company (MSEDCL) has announced an ambitious plan to provide up to 100% solar-powered electricity to two villages in each district.

Following Manyachiwadi, over 70 other villages across Maharashtra will also be part of this project.

**128.** The **Government of Uttar Pradesh** has proposed a **new Digital Media Policy 2024** aimed at enhancing public awareness of government programs and achievements.

A notable feature of this policy is the provision of **cash rewards of up to Rs eight lakh per month** for **social media influencers** who effectively promote and popularize the state's policies.

The policy also includes stringent penalties, including **punishment ranging from a three-year jail term to life imprisonment** for anti-national posts.

The primary objective is to spread awareness about the government's achievements and their benefits to the public.

**129.** The Himachal Pradesh State Assembly passed the **Prohibition of Child Marriage (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2024**.

This Bill amends the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, raising the minimum age of marriage for women **from 18 to 21 years**, becoming the **first state in India** to do so.

This initiative is aimed at promoting gender equality and providing better opportunities for higher education.

**130.** **Maharashtra** has become the first state to adopt the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** for its employees, effective from **March 2025**.

The Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), introduced by the Maharashtra government, will provide 50% of an employee's average salary over the last 12 months as a pension.

This scheme marks a significant step in pension reforms and aims to streamline pension benefits for state employees.

**131. Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC)**, a Maharatna PSU under the Ministry of Power, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)**.

This MoU involves REC providing up to Rs 45,000 crore in funding for various infrastructure projects.

The agreement will support the development of the Vadhavan Port in Maharashtra, a significant project in the region.

JNPA, which is a major container-handling port and manages around 50% of the total containerized cargo across India's major ports, will use the funds to implement these projects.

The Vadhavan Port, planned to be a mega port in the Palghar district of Maharashtra, has a total projected cost of Rs 76,220 crore.

JNPA holds a 74% interest in this project through the Vadhavan Port Project Limited (VPPL), a special purpose vehicle formed with the Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB).

**132. Tripura** witnessed a record-breaking 288.8 mm of rainfall in a single day on 20th August 2024. Experts have blamed human-induced climate change for the floods in Tripura that have claimed the lives of 31 people so far.

The Government of India approved **Rs.40 Crore** in advance as the central share from State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), to provide relief to the flood-affected people in Tripura.

Heavy rainfall has caused the Dumbur dam in Gandatwisa sub-division, Dhalai district, Tripura, to overflow, causing severe flooding in nearby areas.

Bangladesh, already facing a political crisis, is reporting that the released water from the dam has flooded several villages and the city of Feni.

**133.** The Bharatiya Janata Party Government, led by Chief Minister of Odisha Mohan Majhi, has announced the **Subhadra scheme**, which will provide Rs.50,000 over five years to one crore women aged between 21 to 60.

Each eligible woman will receive Rs.10,000 annually in two installments: Rs.5,000 on Rakhi Purnima Day and Rs.5,000 on International Women's Day (March 8). This amounts to a total of Rs.50,000 per beneficiary over the five-year period.

The Women and Child Development Department will establish a Subhadra Society to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the scheme.

- 134.** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has announced that **five new districts** will be created in **Ladakh**, increasing the total number of districts in the Union Territory to seven. Currently, Ladakh has two districts, Leh and Kargil, and has faced administrative challenges due to its large area and difficult terrain.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given in-principle approval for the new districts and has asked the Ladakh administration to establish a committee to handle details such as boundaries and infrastructure.

Ladakh residents have long been advocating for statehood. Ladakh became a Union Territory on August 5, 2019, following the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir and the revocation of Article 370.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- 135.** The Indian government has decided to double its **grant assistance** for upgrading the infrastructure facilities of **schools in the plantation sector** in **Sri Lanka**. The Indian government has agreed to increase the total grant from 300 Million rupees to **600 Million** owing to rising prices due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

A Memorandum of Understanding for this initiative was signed in February 2020.

The project envisages the upgradation of the infrastructure of 9 plantation schools as identified by the Government of Sri Lanka under Indian grant assistance.

- 136. India and Vietnam**, two nations with a rich and intertwined maritime history, have collaborated to develop the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** in **Lothal, Gujarat**. This collaboration highlights the enduring bond between the two countries and their commitment to preserving and celebrating their shared heritage.
- For this purpose, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Vietnam at Hyderabad House in New Delhi, in the presence of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and the **Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh**.
  - The complex will emphasize the historical and cultural ties between India and Vietnam, highlighting the closeness and longevity of their shared maritime history.
  - Both countries will work together on the exchange and loan of artifacts, replicas, paintings, archival data, and other antiquities related to their maritime histories.
  - Vietnam and India will also collaborate on promoting international tourism focused on maritime heritage, sharing design know-how, and developing a Marine Heritage and Conservation Laboratory.



- The Government of Gujarat has allocated 400 acres of land in the Saragwala village for NMHC and has also undertaken the development of external infrastructure for the project.
- The project, which commenced in March 2022, is being developed at a cost of around Rs. 4500 crores.

Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh was on a three-day state visit to India from 30 July to 1 August 2024. During his visit, India and Vietnam signed **nine agreements** to deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership and enhance cooperation in the fields of customs, agriculture, legal, radio and television broadcast, culture, and tourism.

**137.** The **Ministry of Ayush**, Government of India, inked a **Donor Agreement** with the **World Health Organization (WHO)** during a signing ceremony organized at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The agreement was inked by H.E Arindam Bagchi, Permanent Representative of India to the UN, Geneva and Dr. Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director-General for Universal Health Coverage and Life Course on behalf of the Ministry of Ayush and WHO respectively.

Under this agreement, the Government of the Republic of India will donate **US\$ 85 million** over a period of 10 years (2022-2032) to support the operations of the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre (GTMC) in Jamnagar, Gujarat, India.

The Donor agreement recognizes the establishment of the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre as a key knowledge hub for evidence-based Traditional Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM) aiming to advance the health and well-being of people and the planet.

**138.** The **5th meeting** of the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) Joint Committee** was held in the ASEAN Secretariat, **Jakarta, Indonesia** from 29th July to 1st August 2024, marking a significant milestone in enhancing economic cooperation between ASEAN and India.

The meeting was co-chaired by **Rajesh Agrawal**, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, India, and **Mastura Ahmad Mustafa**, Deputy Secretary General (Trade), Ministry of Investment, Trade & Industry, Malaysia.

Delegates from all 10 ASEAN Countries and India participated in the meeting.

AITIGA Joint Committee had initiated discussions for review of AITIGA in May 2023 and after finalising its Terms of Reference and Negotiating Structure, AITIGA JC and its Sub-Committees started negotiations in February 2024.

The first 2 rounds of negotiations were held in February 2024 in New Delhi and in May 2024 in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

During the 3rd round of negotiations in Jakarta, Indonesia, all 8 Sub-Committees dealing with 'National Treatment and Market Access', 'Rules of Origin', 'Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment Procedures', 'Sanitary and Phytosanitary', 'Legal and Institutional Issues', 'Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation', 'Trade Remedies' and 'Economic and Technical

Cooperation' met alongside 5th AITIGA JC and held substantive discussions making significant progress during this round.

All the Sub-Committees reported the outcomes of their discussions to the 5th AITIGA JC which provided them further guidance to steer their future work.

ASEAN is an important trade partner of India with about 11% share in India's global trade.

The review of AITIGA, signed in 2009, will help create further opportunities for businesses on both sides to enhance the level of India-ASEAN trade.

The next meeting of the AITIGA Joint Committee will be held in India from 19-22 November 2024.

**139. China** successfully launched a new high-orbit internet services satellite, **Weixing Hulianwan Gaogui-02**, into space from Xichang Satellite Launch Center, southwest China.

The satellite was launched aboard a **Long March-3B** carrier rocket.

This launch was the **529th** flight mission of the Long March carrier rocket series.

This is the second high-orbit internet services satellite launched by China.

**140. Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin** has appointed Nobel laureate **Mohammad Yunus** as head of an interim government after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stepped down and fled the country amid a mass uprising against her rule led mostly by students.

Mohammad Yunus was awarded the **2006 Nobel Peace Prize** for his work developing microcredit markets. He has been hailed for bringing thousands out of poverty through Grameen Bank, which he founded in 1983, and which makes small loans to business people who wouldn't qualify for regular bank loans.

The President has also dissolved the Parliament.

**141.** The Addu Reclamation and Shore Protection Project aims to boost economic development in Addu, Maldives.

India has invested **80 million US dollars** in various projects, part of a larger **220 million US dollars** investment in Addu.

The initiative is designed to improve **employment, entrepreneurship, and trade** opportunities in the region.

The projects include **reclamation** for tourism and overall regional growth.

**Addu Reclamation Project:** Focuses on land reclamation for tourism and economic growth.

**Shore Protection Project:** Aims to protect the coastline and enhance regional infrastructure.

**142.** The "**Sri Lanka-India Friendship Arch**" was unveiled at the National Sandalwood Garden in Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte by Sri Lankan Parliament Speaker **Mahinda Yapa Abeyawardena** and Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha as part of the **Plant4Mother campaign**.

Sri Lankan Minister Prasanna Ranatunga and members of the Sri Lanka-India Parliamentary Friendship Association also took part in the event by planting Murutha saplings, symbolizing a shared dedication to environmental sustainability.

**143.** The drought has destroyed over half of Zimbabwe's harvest, causing a critical food shortage, leaving about **7.6 million** people at risk of acute hunger.

The economic strain has also resulted in more than 20% of school-aged children being out of school and severe water shortages.

The UN has called for increased international support following assessments by UN officials Reena Ghelani and Valerie Guarnieri.

- **Effects of El Niño**

- The drought caused by El Niño has reportedly put pressure on Zimbabwe's economy, with more than a fifth of children unable to attend school and water supply shortages across the country.
  - The UN and some of its partners are working with the Zimbabwean government to provide assistance to citizens.
  - However, these teams need more funding, as a \$429 million flash appeal launched in May that aims to help more than 3 million people has only been funded by 11 percent.
  - The El Niño drought has also affected other southern African countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi and others. Each of these countries is in great need of humanitarian intervention as the drought has led to a significant increase in food insecurity.
- Officials' data showed that **57 percent of people in "rural" parts of the country are set to become food insecure between January and March 2025** - the peak period of hunger there.

**144.** The 10th edition of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Military Exercise MITRA SHAKTI began on August 12, 2024, at the Army Training School in Maduru Oya, Sri Lanka.

The Indian contingent is represented by a Battalion of the **Rajputana Rifles**.

The Sri Lankan contingent is represented by the **Gajaba Regiment** of the Sri Lankan Army.

The exercise aims to enhance joint military capabilities for counter-insurgency operations in semi-urban environments.

Tactical drills will include responses to terrorist actions, the establishment of command posts, and use of drones among other activities.

This exercise will foster **interoperability, camaraderie, and defence cooperation** between India and Sri Lanka.

**145.** **Prabowo Subianto** is a 72-year-old politician and the current Minister of Defense of Indonesia.

He will be **sworn in as President** in October 2024 when the current President **Joko Widodo** ends his term.

Nusantara is Indonesia's new capital, a significant national development project.

Prabowo Subianto will be Indonesia's third president with a military background, following **Suharto** and **Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono**.

### Nusantara

- **Nusantara is the planned new capital city of Indonesia**, set to replace Jakarta as the capital.
- It is being built in **East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo**, chosen for its strategic location and lower risk of natural disasters compared to Jakarta.
- The move aims to address environmental concerns such as Jakarta's sinking land, overpopulation, and pollution.

**146.** Thailand's Constitutional Court dismissed Prime Minister **Srettha Thavisin** for violating ethical standards.

The court ruled that Srettha breached the constitution by appointing **Pichit Chuenban** as a minister, who had been jailed 16 years ago.

The decision was made by a narrow margin of **5-4** votes.

The court's decision came just a week after dissolving the **Move Forward Party** for attempting to amend a royal defamation law.

**Deputy PM Phumtham Wechayachai** is expected to serve as caretaker PM until a new prime minister is elected by Parliament.

**147.** The **14th India-Vietnam Defence Policy Dialogue** was held in **New Delhi** on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024. It was co-chaired by **Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane** and Deputy Minister of National Defence of Vietnam Senior Lieutenant General Hoang Xuan Chien.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the range of bilateral defence cooperation issues and noted the transformative progress in the ties after the signing of the 'Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030' in June 2022 during the visit of Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh to Vietnam.

Vietnam proposed five focus areas for cooperation which included delegation exchanges and dialogue, staff talks; Service-to-Service cooperation; Education and training; and Defence Industry cooperation.

After the meeting, the Defence Secretary and the Deputy Minister of National Defence of Vietnam signed a **Letter of Intent** to strengthen cooperation in the field of training including exchange of instructors and experts.

Vietnam is an important partner in India's Act East Policy and in the Indo-Pacific Region.

**148.** India has sent anti-cancer medicines to **Syria**. The consignment weighs approximately **1,400 kilograms**, highlighting the scale of the support provided.

The drugs are intended to help the Syrian government and its people combat cancer, a critical need amid ongoing challenges in the region.

**149.** The **World Health Organization (WHO)** declared Monkeypox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on **14th August 2024** due to the global rise in Monkeypox cases.

WHO has determined that the upsurge of mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a growing number of countries in Africa constitutes a PHEIC under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR).

This PHEIC determination is the second in two years relating to Mpox.

**Mpox:**

- Mpox, previously known as monkeypox, is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus, a species of the genus Orthopoxvirus.
- Mpox was first detected in humans in 1970 in the DRC. The disease is considered endemic to countries in central and west Africa.
- There are two distinct clades of the virus: clade I (with subclades Ia and Ib) and clade II (with subclades IIa and IIb).
- In 2022–2023 a global outbreak of Mpox was caused by the **clade IIb** strain.
- Common symptoms of mpox are a skin rash or mucosal lesions which can last 2–4 weeks accompanied by fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, and swollen lymph nodes.
- Mpox can be transmitted through close contact with someone who has mpox, with contaminated materials, or with infected animals. During pregnancy, the virus may be passed to the fetus, or to the newborn during or after birth.

**150.** The passenger ferry service has been resumed between **India and Sri Lanka**. The services were launched earlier in October 2023 between **Nagapattinam in India and Kankesanthurai near Jaffna** in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

- The ferry Sivagangai run by a private operator, IndSri Ferry Services, completed its maiden journey between Nagapattinam and KKS in approximately 4 hours with around 50 passengers on board.
- This resumption of ferry service is a testament to the broader effort to enhance maritime connectivity between India and Sri Lanka.
- The Government of India has decided to provide financial assistance of over 25 million Sri Lankan Rupee (LKR) per month, for a period of one year, to cover relevant charges and operating costs at Nagapattinam port.

**151.** The **UAE Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology** has joined its **BRICS counterparts** on the launch of a **Centre for Industrial Competences** in partnership with the **United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)** to support the development of Industrial skills and capabilities.

The declaration was made at the 8th BRICS Industry Ministers Meeting, bringing industry, trade and technology ministries together from the UAE, Russia, Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, and South Africa.

The meeting, chaired by Russia, took place under the theme of "strengthening multilateralism for equitable global development and security".

The centre will promote partnerships within the framework of the New Industrial Revolution (NIR) to identify interests, challenges, and opportunities in the rapidly evolving industrial landscape.

In addition, the centre aims to enable industry and the develop industrial skills of its members.

**Note:** Brazil will host the 9th BRICS Industry Ministers Meeting in 2025.

**152.** **India and Israel** have joined hands for the establishment of a new water technology center at the prestigious **Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**.

The collaboration seeks to address critical challenges in water management and promote integrated water resource management between the two countries.

The **Center of Water Technology** is set to be a key hub for innovation, research, and capacity-building in water technologies, with a special emphasis on sustainable urban water supply solutions.

A Joint Statement of Intent was signed to establish a Center of Water Technology between the **Embassy of Israel, IIT Madras, and the AMRUT mission of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.

To kickstart this initiative, a capacity-building course on '24/7 Water Supply in Urban Areas' was organized at IIT-Madras from 5<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

**153.** For the first time in recent years, **the 51st Fighter Wing at Osan Air Base in the Republic of Korea is integrating its regular readiness exercise into Ulchi Freedom Shield 24**. The exercise began on 19 August and continued till 23 August 2024.

- During this period, the 51st FW conducted local flying missions and agile combat employment (ACE) operations to boost its readiness and support Seventh Air Force and U.S. Forces Korea's command-and-control training efforts.



- Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS) 24 is an annual exercise conducted by the Republic of Korea and the United States. Its purpose is to improve combined, joint, multi-domain, and interagency operations by strengthening the combined defense posture and alliance response capabilities through live, virtual, and constructive training scenarios that address various security threats.

**154.** India's Designated Authority for Cross-Border Trade has approved an **additional 251 MW of power exports** from 12 hydropower projects in **Nepal**. For the first time, Nepal would be exporting power to **Bihar** through a medium-term power sales agreement.

This takes the total allowed quantum from 690 MW from 16 projects to **941 MW** from **28 projects**.

Even before this 251 MW approval, Nepal had already become a net exporter of electricity and net revenue generator in the last fiscal year selling NPR 16.93 billion worth of electricity.

In October 2021, India approved 39 MW of power exports from Nepal to India for the first time.

Nepal first began its power exports by selling in the Day Ahead Market of the Indian Energy Exchange. Since then, India has also granted access to the Real-Time Market.

The Nepal Electricity Authority has also entered into medium-term power sales agreements with distribution companies in Haryana and Bihar.

The Agreement for Long-Term Power between India and Nepal envisages the sale of up to 10,000 MW of power from Nepal to India in the next 10 years. This is the first year of the Agreement signed in January 2024 and around 1000 MW exports have already been reached.

**155.** India and the US have recently signed a **Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA) and a Memorandum of Agreement for the Assignment of Liaison Officers**.

These agreements are the latest additions to a series of bilateral military pacts that have strengthened defense and security cooperation between the two nations over the past decade. Under SOSA, the US and India will provide reciprocal priority support to each other for goods and services that promote national defense. It will enable both countries to acquire the industrial resources they need from one another to resolve unanticipated supply chain disruptions to meet national security needs.

India is the 18th SOSA partner of the US.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) regarding the Assignment of Liaison Officers is a progression on a decision taken earlier to increase information-sharing between India and the USA and to post Indian armed forces officers in key strategic US Commands.

India will deploy the first Liaison Officer to the US Special Operations Command headquarters in Florida.

**156. Girish Chandra Murmu**, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and **Dr. Hussam Al-Angari**, President of the Saudi General Court of Audit, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Riyadh.

The agreement aims to promote cooperation and exchange expertise between the two countries in the field of public sector audit, including joint training programs and the exchange of audit manuals and methodologies.

This agreement is also significant as Saudi Arabia is set to take over the chairmanship of the Association of Asian Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) from India next year.

**157.** The annual meeting of the **Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)** was held in **Nuku'alofa, Tonga**, starting on August 26, 2024.

The meeting saw participation from over 1,500 delegates representing around 40 countries.

Key topics discussed included climate change and the China-US battle for influence in the strategic Pacific region.

The Pacific Islands Forum is an intergovernmental organization with 18 member countries in the Pacific, aiming to promote economic growth, political governance, and regional security. Australia and New Zealand are prominent members, alongside Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, and others. The forum's vision is for a resilient Pacific region characterized by peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity.

The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is a regional political and economic policy organization that includes countries and territories from the Pacific Ocean region. Established in 1971, the forum aims to enhance cooperation between member nations on issues of common interest, such as economic development, trade, security, environmental sustainability, and regional stability.

**158.** Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha handed over the first payment for hybrid power projects on three **Sri Lankan islands—Delft, Nainativu, and Analaitivu**.

The ceremony was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with Dr. Sulakshana Jayawardena, Secretary of the Minister of Power and Energy, and Ranjith Sepala, Chairman of Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority (SLSEA), present.

This project is funded under grant assistance of **USD 11 million** from the Government of India.

The project, which is expected to be completed by early March 2025 and handed over by late April 2025, aims to install a hybrid renewable energy system on the islands.

These islands are not connected to the national grid, making this initiative crucial for meeting their energy needs. The projects follow a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2022, replacing a previous Chinese venture.

## REPORTS & INDICES

**159. NITI Aayog** has published a report titled “**Strategy for the Development of Seaweed Value Chain**”. Seaweeds are numerous types of marine plants and macroalgae that thrive in rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water.

The cultivation of seaweeds is part of aquaculture.

The **fishing and aquaculture sector** contributes **1.5% of India's GDP**.

### Importance of Seaweed Farming:

- It is valuable for bioactive compounds and applications in food, pharmaceuticals, etc.
- It plays an important role in Carbon Sequestration & climate resilience.
- It provides vital minerals and Vitamins like A, B1, B12, etc.

The **PM Matsya Sampada Yojana** sets a target of **1-million-ton** seaweed production per year by **2025**.

**160.** The World Trade Organization (WTO) released its annual flagship publication, the **World Trade Statistical Review (WTSR) for 2023**. It provides data on merchandise and services trade, categorized by geographical origin, product groups, and sectors.

Despite a drop in its agriculture exports in 2023 to **\$51 billion** from \$55 billion in 2022, India maintained its position as the **world's eighth largest exporter of agriculture products** in the year.

The fall in agriculture exports in India can be attributed to geopolitical factors such as the **Red Sea crisis** and the continuing **Russia-Ukraine war**.

Additionally, India's export bans on key agricultural products also contributed to the decline. These bans included: **Wheat in May 2022, Non-basmati rice in July 2023, and Sugar in October 2023.**

The EU maintained its top position in 2023 by exporting agricultural produce valued at \$836 billion compared to \$799 billion in 2022. The US, too, continued at the second spot despite a drop in agriculture exports in 2023 to \$198 billion as opposed to \$222 billion in the previous year.

Brazil's agriculture exports increased to \$157 billion in 2023 from \$148 billion in 2022 while it retained the third spot.

Globally, India ranked **18th in merchandise exports** and **7th in services exports**.

China, the USA, and Germany remained the top three merchandise exporters in 2022.

**161.** The **Quality Council of India (QCI)** introduced the **QCI Surajya Recognition & Ranking Framework**, an empowering initiative designed to drive excellence among states to improve the quality of life of citizens.

This framework is categorized under four pillars: **Shiksha (Education), Swasthya (Health), Samriddhi (Prosperity), and Sushasan (Governance).**

The Surajya Recognition acknowledges the outstanding performance and commitment to quality by states and organisations in these vital areas.

The August rankings focus on Shiksha, Swasthya, and Samriddhi, with Sushasan to feature in future editions.

In the Shiksha Rankings, **Uttar Pradesh** leads with the highest number of accreditations, assessments, and ratings. Delhi, as a union territory, also ranks prominently.

In the Swasthya category, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Mizoram, and Manipur stand out with complete certification in the Ayushman Arogya Yojana (NABH), while **Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra** lead in the Medical Entry Level Testing Labs (MELT) rankings (NABL).

Among the union territories, **Chandigarh excels with 100% certification in Ayushman Arogya Yojana**, and Jammu & Kashmir shows commendable performance with a 71.43% certification rate. Delhi, followed by Jammu & Kashmir, excels in MELT.

In the Samriddhi category, **Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan** lead with the highest number of ZED certifications, particularly in the Micro category. Jammu & Kashmir and Delhi also achieved significant certifications in ZED. For the MSME Competitive LEAN Scheme, **Maharashtra and Bihar** are the top performers.

The rankings have been compiled, incorporating both monthly and cumulative figures across various initiatives to ensure a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.

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**162.** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India, released the **25th issue of its publication titled "Women and Men in India 2023".**

By 2036, the population of India is expected to reach **152.2 Crore, with a slightly improved female percentage of 48.8% as compared to 48.5 percent in 2011.**

The publication highlights that women's voter turnout has surpassed men's in recent elections, with 67.2% participation in 2019, contrary to earlier trends.

India's population in 2036 is expected to be more feminine compared to the **2011 population, as reflected in the sex ratio which is projected to increase from 943 in 2011 to 952 by 2036,** highlighting a positive trend in gender equality.

**Adolescent Fertility Rate** was 33.9 for illiterate population whereas 11.0 for the literate in 2020. This rate is considerably lower for even those who are literate but without any formal education (20.0) as compared to illiterate women reemphasizing the importance of imparting education to women.

**Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** is one of the SDG indicators and to bring it down to 70 by 2030 is explicitly laid down in the SDG framework.

Owing to efforts by the Government, India has successfully achieved the major milestone of bringing down its MMR (97/lakh live births in 2018-20), well in time and it should be possible to achieve the SDG target as well.

**Infant Mortality Rate** has been decreasing over the years for both male and females. Female IMR had always been higher than that of male but in 2020, both were equal at the level of 28 infants per 1000 live births.

The Under 5 Mortality Rate data shows that it has decreased from 43 in 2015 to 32 in 2020. So is the case for both boys and girls and the gap between boys and girls has also reduced.

As per the **Periodic Labour Force Survey**, Labour Force Participation Rate of persons aged 15 years and above has been increasing from 2017-18 onwards for both male and female population. It is seen that male LFPR has gone from **75.8 to 78.5 during 2017-18 to 2022-23 and female LFPR has gone from 23.3 to 37 during the same period.**

**163.** The IIP growth rate for the month of June 2024 over the corresponding period of previous year is 4.2 percent. The IIP growth rate in June 2023 was 4.0 percent. The growth rates of the three sectors, Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity for the month of June 2024 over June 2023 are 10.3 percent, 2.6 percent and 8.6 percent respectively.

Within the manufacturing sector, the growth rate of the top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP for the month of **June 2024 are – “Manufacture of basic metals” (4.9%), “Manufacture of electrical equipment” (28.4%), and “Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers” (4.1%).**

Based on use-based classification, the top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP for the month of June 2024 are – Primary goods, Consumer durables and Infrastructure/Construction goods.

**164. Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** has secured the 1st position in the Overall Category of India Rankings 2024.

- This institution has consistently held this position from 2019 to 2024.
- IIT Madras has demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and innovation, reflecting the core principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- This achievement underscores its continued commitment to academic excellence and global recognition.
- The ranking highlights IIT Madras's leading role in shaping higher education standards in India.

**Three new categories** were introduced in the India Rankings 2024: State Public Universities, Open Universities, and Skill Universities.

These additions aim to broaden the scope of the ranking framework, recognizing diverse types of institutions.

The inclusion of these categories aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, promoting diverse aspects of higher education.

The growth in the number of applications aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, encouraging healthy competition and improvement in educational standards.

**165. IIFT Delhi** made a significant leap in the **NIRF 2024 rankings**, moving up **12 spots from 27th to 15th**.

This achievement is the **highest improvement** since the NIRF rankings began in 2016.

**IIFT's focus** on improving teaching, learning, research, and outreach initiatives has been recognized.

IIFT is on the path of rapid transformation into a world class B-School of global repute with special focus on international trade and business making it a unique institute that conducts highly sought after educational programmes such as **Ph.D., MBA (International Business), MBA (Business Analytics) and MA Economics specialising in International Trade and Finance**.

As a part of new initiatives, the institute is in the process of establishing a state of art **Centre for International Negotiations (CIN) to provide training to corporates and policy makers on international negotiations**.

Besides, IIFT is also establishing Foreign Trade Case Study Centre (FTCSC) to work closely with exporters, governments and businesses and develop world class case studies on the lines of Harvard and share Indian experiences on International Trade with the rest of the world.

IIFT is also contemplating to commence an offshore **campus in Dubai** with active support from the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



**166.** The National Coal Index (Provisional) has shown a significant decline of **3.48 %** in June 2024 at **142.13 points** compared to June 2023, where it was at 147.25 points. This notable decrease indicates sufficient availability of coal in the market to meet the growing demands.

- The premium on coal auctions indicates the pulse of the industry, and the sharp decline in coal auction premiums confirms the sufficient coal availability in the market.
- The impressive growth of 14.58 % in the country's coal production during Jun '24 as compared to the corresponding period of last year ensures a stable supply to various sectors reliant on coal, significantly contributing to the overall energy security of the nation.
- The National Coal Index (NCI) is a price index that combines coal prices from all sales channels, viz. Notified Prices, Auction Prices, and Import Prices. It considers prices of coking and non-coking coal of various grades transacted in the regulated (power and fertilizer) and non-regulated sectors. It was established with the base year as FY 2017-18.

**167. Suman Bery**, Vice-Chairperson of **NITI Aayog**, released a report titled "**Pathways and Strategies for Accelerating Growth in Edible Oil Towards the Goal of Atmanirbharta**".

The report, presented by Dr. Neelam Patel, Senior Advisor (Agriculture), NITI Aayog, outlines strategic interventions to achieve projected **edible oil supplies of 36.2 million tonnes (MT) by 2030** and **70.2 MT by 2047**.

The report proposes strategic retention and diversification of oilseed crops, focusing on areas potentially lost to cereal cultivation, which could increase the country's edible oil production by 20% in 9 states, adding 7.36 MT of oil production and reducing import dependence by 2.1 MT.

Additionally, utilizing 33% of rice fallow areas in 10 states for oilseed cultivation could further boost production by 3.12 MT and reduce imports by 1.03 MT.

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**168.** Brand Finance in the annual report '**Brand Finance Food & Drink 2024**' ranked the world's most valuable and strongest food, dairy, and non-alcoholic drink brands in 2024, assessed using over 35 parameters.

**Nestlé** remains the leader in the most valuable brand in the F&B sector, valued at \$20.8 billion.

Lay's has risen to the second position with a brand value of \$12 billion, marking a 9% increase.

Notably, one of the biggest Canadian brands and the best Latin American brands, the new entrant whole grains brand, Viterra (ranking 81), has recorded the fastest growth among food brands, with a remarkable 37% increase in brand value, now at \$1.1 billion.

In the non-alcoholic beverages market, **Coca-Cola and Pepsi** remain the leaders, valued at \$35 billion and \$20.2 billion, with a 5% and 10% increase in brand value, respectively.

Notably, India's oldest dairy company with over seven decades of history—**Amul India**, an acronym for Anand Milk Union Limited—for the second time in a row has been identified as the world's strongest food brand in the report, with an impressive Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 91 out of 100, ranking 22nd and achieving an AAA+ rating globally.

**169. Mumbai and New Delhi** have ranked **2nd and 3rd** respectively among 44 global cities in the annual price increase of prime residential properties during Q2 2024, according to the "**Prime Global Cities Index (PGCI)**" by Knight Frank.

Mumbai recorded a 13% year-on-year price rise, moving up from 6th place in Q2 2023, while New Delhi also showed significant growth.

Manila, the capital of the Philippines, topped the list with a 26% annual increase in prime residential prices.

In contrast, Wellington, New Zealand, ranked last on the list.

## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

**170.** The **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** has launched the **Women Entrepreneurship Program** in partnership with **Britannia Industries Limited**. This program is designed to address the distinct challenges that women face when starting and growing businesses.

This initiative aims to tackle the challenges faced by women in entrepreneurship by offering crucial skills, knowledge, and networking opportunities.

This program will be implemented in multiple phases to ensure comprehensive support and maximum impact. Divided into two phases, NSDC, with support from the **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD)**, will offer free online self-learning entrepreneurship courses through the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH).

Upon completion of these courses, participants will receive a co-branded certificate from NSDC, Britannia Industries, and National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), acknowledging their entrepreneurial skills and competencies.

This initiative aims to empower approximately **25 lakh women** across India, providing them with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to start and grow successful businesses.

Britannia Industries will award financial grants of **10 lakh rupees** each to 10 of the most successful contestants.

**171.** Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution **Pralhad Joshi** has launched the **Version 4.0 Price Monitoring System (PMS) Mobile App**.

During the launch event, **16 additional commodities** are included under price monitoring by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

Already 22 commodities were being covered under monitoring of daily prices.

Now, the price of a total of **38 commodities** will be monitored.

The Department has been monitoring the daily prices from 550 centers across 34 States/UTs.

The price data monitored by the Department provides advance inputs for policy decisions for the Government, RBI, and analysts regarding CPI inflation.

The 38 commodities constitute close to **31%** of the total CPI weights as against **26.5%** of CPI weights captured by the 22 commodities.

The newly added 16 items included are ***Bajra, Jowar, Ragi, Suji (wheat), Maida (wheat), Besan, Ghee, Butter, Brinjal, Egg, Black Pepper, Coriander, Cummin seed, Red chilies, Turmeric powder and Banana.***

The increase in coverage of food items under daily price monitoring will play a crucial role in policy interventions to stabilize price volatility in food items and to control overall inflation.

**172.** The **Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS)** has launched the **Electronic Services e-Health Assistance and Tele-consultation (E-SeHAT)** module to provide health care services through safe and structured video-based clinical consultations.

The E-SeHAT Tele-consultancy would enable ECHS beneficiaries to obtain online Tele-consultation for medical treatment from their homes without visiting the ECHS Polyclinic.

The pilot project has been launched at **12 ECHS Polyclinics**.

The 12 ECHS Polyclinics include seven in Delhi NCR (Shakurbasti, Timarpur, Faridabad, Palwal, Khanpur, East Delhi, and Hindon) and five in remote locations of Baramulla, Imphal, Churachandpur, Dimapur, and Aizawal, before its pan India rollout in November 2024.

The module adheres to telemedicine practice guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in consultation with NITI AAYOG in March 2020.

IT hardware and equipment have been provided to all 427 ECHS Polyclinics, and staff have been trained to offer online medical advice.

Future phases will include pre-consultation vital checks, and home delivery of medicines, and referral to empanelled hospitals by the Medical Officers.

The E-SeHAT initiative aligns with the Digital India vision of the Government of India aimed at promoting digital inclusivity and efficiency in public services.

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**173.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation **Amit Shah** launched the **e-Sakshya, Nyaya Setu, Nyaya Shruti and e-Summon apps** for the three new criminal laws in **Chandigarh**.

The Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh, **Gulab Chand Kataria**, and the Union Home Secretary were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

The new criminal laws, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) came into effect on July 1, 2024. These laws repealed and replaced the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

- Under **e-Sakshya**, all videography, photography, and testimonies will be saved on the e-evidence server, which will also be available in the courts immediately.
- Under the **e-Summon**, it will be sent electronically from the court to the police station and also to the person to whom the summons is to be sent.
- Police, Medical, Forensic, Prosecution, and Prisons are interlinked together on the **Nyaay Setu** Dashboard, which will provide the police with all the information related to the investigation in just one click.
- Through **Nyaay Shruti**, the court will be able to hear witnesses through video conferencing. This will save time and money and also settle the cases faster.

**174.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, **Amit Shah**, inaugurated the **24x7 Water Supply Project** completed at a cost of about **Rs 75 crore** at **Manimajra** in the Union Territory of **Chandigarh** under the Smart City Mission.

More than one lakh people will benefit from this project and this settlement spread over 855 acres will now be able to get water round the clock through a new pipeline having a total length of **22 km**.

The arrangements have been made to ensure 24-hour water availability by building two huge reservoirs.

The Government of India has spent more than Rs.1000 crores under the Smart City project in Chandigarh.

**175.** A total of **52.81 crore** Jan-Dhan accounts with a deposit balance of **Rs. 2,30,792 crores** have been opened as of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2024 under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**. Out of the same, **29.37 crore (55.6%)** Jan-Dhan accounts belong to women and about **35.15 crore (66.6 %)** PMJDY accounts have been opened in rural and semi-urban areas.

The Government initiated the National Mission for Financial Inclusion (NMFI), namely, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) in August 2014 to provide universal banking services for every unbanked household based on the guiding principles of banking the unbanked, securing the unsecured, funding the unfunded and serving unserved and underserved areas.

Since 14<sup>th</sup> August 2018, the objective of PMJDY has been to cover all unbanked adults.

#### **Benefits under PMJDY:**

- One basic savings bank account is opened for unbanked person.
- There is no requirement to maintain any minimum balance in PMJDY accounts.
- Interest is earned on the deposit in PMJDY accounts.

- Rupay Debit card is provided to PMJDY account holders.
- Accident Insurance Cover of Rs.1 lakh (enhanced to Rs. 2 lakh for new PMJDY accounts opened after 28.8.2018) is available with a RuPay card issued to the PMJDY account holders.
- An overdraft (OD) facility up to Rs. 10,000 to eligible account holders is available.
- PMJDY accounts are eligible for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Bank (MUDRA) scheme.

**176. The Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**

launched the initiative "**Million Designers, Billion Dreams.**" This innovative program aims to empower individuals across India with systems design know-how to tackle complex societal challenges.

The initiative is spearheaded by **LEAP** in collaboration with the DAY-NRLM.

The program targets rural leaders, frontline change agents, and village entrepreneurs, equipping them with the skills to create impactful, scalable solutions.

The program's primary objectives are to enhance participants' proficiency in design frameworks to drive systems change, promote collaboration among diverse stakeholders to address complex challenges, and foster confidence and agency to shape better futures through creativity and ownership.

**177. The Government of India (GoI) completed and operationalized four major projects under the Namami Gange Mission 2.0 in the first quarter of fiscal year 2024-25. These initiatives are located across the mainstream of the River Ganga in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.**

These projects built for **Rs. 920 crores**, will add **145 MLD of sewage treatment capacity**, provide better sewer networks, and intercept numerous drains.

- The project at **Munger (Bihar)** will improve the sewer network, and establish a Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) at an estimated cost of Rs. 366 crores.
- The project at **Mirzapur (Uttar Pradesh)** is for the Interception, Diversion, and Treatment Works for abatement of Pollution of the River Ganga. This project is built at an estimated cost of Rs. 129 crores.
- The project in **Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh)** has been established for interception, diversion, and treatment works for abatement of pollution of River Ganga, with a sanctioned cost of Rs. 153 crores.
- The project in **Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh)** is built at an estimated cost of Rs. 271 crores for interception, diversion, and sewage treatment works.

These projects based on the Hybrid Annuity PPP (HAM) model have been designed on the basis of Advanced Sequencing Batch Reactor technology and meet the stringent standards prescribed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT).



**178.** The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** has inaugurated the **Digital Shakti Center** to combat cybercrimes against women in **New Delhi**.

The center is a dedicated facility that aims at raising awareness about cybercrimes. It will provide essential technical support for registering and addressing complaints.

This initiative is crucial in empowering women to navigate and protect themselves in the digital world.

Building on the success of its Digital Shakti campaign, which was launched in 2018, the center will offer expert guidance to ensure timely and effective resolution of cybercrime complaints.

There has been a surge in cybercrime cases in India, rising from 52,974 in 2021 to 65,893 in 2022.

In 2023, the NCW registered 608 such complaints, accounting for 2.2% of the total, and as of August 1st, 2024, this number has reached 386, making up 2.5% of all complaints.

**179.** The Government of India will launch a monthly radio program called '**Kisano Ki Baat**' to quickly deliver scientific knowledge to farmers. This program will be modeled after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly Mann Ki Baat on Akashvani.

The primary goal of "Kisano Ki Baat" is to make **science and agricultural information** accessible to farmers across India. The program aims to directly interact with farmers and provide them with practical knowledge and updates relevant to agriculture.

**180.** The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW) has introduced the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP), a major step towards a sustainable maritime future in India. The initiative focuses on replacing traditional diesel-powered tugs with zero-emission green tugs.

**Key Details of the GTTP:**

- **Phase 1:** Commences on October 1, 2024, and will run through December 31, 2027.
- **Initial Implementation:** Four key ports—Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, Deendayal Port Authority, Paradip Port Authority, and V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority—will each acquire or lease at least two green tugs.
- **Investment:** Approximately INR 1000 Crores will be allocated for the construction of these green tugs.
- **Technologies:** The initial tugs will utilize battery-electric technology, with plans to incorporate hybrid, methanol, and green hydrogen technologies in the future.
- **Make in India:** All tugs will be built in Indian shipyards, supporting local innovation and manufacturing.

This program is anticipated to generate substantial employment in shipbuilding and design while advancing India's environmental and economic objectives.

**181.** The Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog, in partnership with CSIRO, Australia, has launched the **Climate Smart AgriTech cohort** of the India Australia **Rapid Innovation and Start-up**



**Expansion (RISE) Accelerator** – a program designed to support businesses aiming for international expansion between the two countries.

This marks a significant milestone in fostering innovations that address India and Australia's most pressing shared challenges in the agriculture sector.

The cohort will commence in October 2024.

The Climate Smart AgriTech cohort of the RISE Accelerator will focus on start-ups and MSMEs with technologies and solutions that enhance agricultural productivity and resilience in the face of growing climate variability, resource scarcity, and food insecurity.

**RISE Accelerator program:**

- The **India Australia Rapid Innovation and Start-up Expansion (RISE) Accelerator**, launched in 2023, is a purpose-built program to support and accelerate Indian and Australian start-ups.
- The program is designed to support businesses aiming for international expansion between the two countries.
- RISE Accelerator aims to enable start-ups with mature tech-based innovations to fast-track their cross-border social, economic, and environmental impact through a cross-border innovation ecosystem
- RISE Accelerator is operationalized through a powerful partnership between the **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, **NITI Aayog**, the Government of India's flagship initiative to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, and **CSIRO**, Australia's national science agency.
- The RISE Accelerator addresses India and Australia's shared challenges with a focus on **environment and climate issues** by supporting the expansion of innovative agritech solutions across borders.

**182.** As part of the **Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) -Mukt Bharat initiative**, the vaccination of pastoral sheep and goats has been extended across the country.

**Ladakh** is among the first to begin this vaccination process.

The vaccination aims to prevent the spread of FMD and establish the absence of the virus in the environment.

**National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP):**

- The National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) is a flagship scheme launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in September 2019 for control of Foot & Mouth Disease and Brucellosis by vaccinating 100% cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat and pig population for FMD and 100% bovine female calves of 4-8 months of age for brucellosis with the total outlay of Rs.13, 343.00 crore for five years (2019-20 to 2023-24).

- The overall aim of the National Animal Disease Control Programme for FMD and Brucellosis (NADCP) is to control FMD by 2025 with vaccination and its eventual eradication by 2030.
- This will result in increased domestic production and ultimately in increased exports of milk and livestock products. An intensive Brucellosis Control programme in animals is envisaged for controlling Brucellosis which will result in effective management of the disease, in both animals and humans.
- The NADCP is a Central Sector Scheme where 100% of funds shall be provided by the Central Government to the States / UTs.

**183.** The **Coal India Limited (CIL)**, its subsidiaries, NLCIL are making a profound impact on community well-being, with an annual commitment of approximately Rs.800 crores towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

This substantial investment highlights the Coal CPSEs' dedication to fostering people-centric development, with a special emphasis on health, education, skill development, environmental sustainability, women empowerment, and comprehensive community development.

#### **Health Sector Achievements:**

##### **Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (TBSY) by CIL:**

- CIL's flagship health initiative, the Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana, has reached a significant milestone with the successful completion of 500 Bone Marrow Transplants (BMTs).
- This program provides financial assistance of up to ₹10 lakh per patient for the treatment of Thalassemia Major and Aplastic Anemia, benefiting 356 underprivileged children across India.
- Launched in 2017, the scheme supports families with an annual income below ₹8 lakh.
- With an investment of ₹70 crore, TBSY has been recognized with 'The Green Environment Award' and continues to offer vital financial support for medical treatments through an online portal and physical applications.

##### **Dialysis Centre in Government Hospital, Cuddalore by NLCIL:**

NLCIL has significantly enhanced healthcare access with the establishment of a Dialysis Centre in Government Hospital, Cuddalore. This initiative provides 13,000 dialysis cycles annually, improving the availability of essential medical care for patients in the region.

##### **Medical Oxygen Plants:**

In response to the critical need for medical oxygen during the pandemic, NLCIL and its joint ventures have set up 28 Medical Oxygen Plants with a combined capacity of 2,500 beds across Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. This effort has substantially strengthened the nation's healthcare infrastructure.

##### **Project Nanha Sa Dil:**

Addressing the urgent need for Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) interventions, Coal India Limited has launched Project Nanha Sa Dil. This initiative focuses on screening approximately 18,000 children for CHD through village and district camps in Jharkhand. The project aims to provide surgical or catheter-based interventions for 500 children and train over 50 young professionals in

pediatric cardiac care. Funded at ₹9.37 crore, the project will initially operate in four districts with plans for future expansion.

**Other Notable Health-Related CSR Efforts are mentioned below:**

- Establishment of a home for outpatients undergoing cancer treatment in Kolkata.
- Provision of healthcare services to underserved populations through mobile units.
- Funding for the development and repair of basic infrastructure and procurement of medical equipment for COVID-19 care centers.
- Enhanced socio-economic support at Ranchi Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, including collaboration with Tata Cancer Care for cancer detection and treatment.
- These impactful CSR initiatives underscore the commitment of Coal CPSEs to enhancing healthcare services and improving the quality of life for communities across the nation.

**184.** The Union Cabinet approved the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** for central government employees on **24<sup>th</sup> August 2024**. This scheme will be effective from **April 1, 2025**, and will benefit 23 lakh central government employees.

**Key Features of the UPS are as follows:**

- **Assured Pension:** 50% of the average basic pay drawn over the last 12 months prior to superannuation for a minimum qualifying service of 25 years. Proportionate for lesser service period up to a minimum of 10 years of service
- **Assured Family Pension: 60% of the pension** of the employee immediately before her/his demise
- **Assured Minimum Pension: Rs.10000 per month** on superannuation after a minimum **10 years of service**
- **Inflation Indexation:**
  - On assured pension, on assured family pension, and assured minimum pension.
  - Dearness Relief based on the All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW) as in the case of serving employees.

**Benefits:**

- Lump-sum payment at superannuation in addition to gratuity
- 1/10th of monthly emolument (pay + DA) as on the date of superannuation for every completed six months of service
- This payment will not reduce the quantum of assured pension

**Other Features of UPS:**

- Provisions of UPS will apply to past retirees of NPS (who have already superannuated).
- Arrears for the past period will be paid with interest @PPF rates
- UPS will be available as an option to the employees. Existing as well as future employees will have the option of joining NPS or UPS. Choice, once exercised, will be final.

- Employee contribution will not increase. The government will provide additional contributions for implementing the UPS.
- Government contribution increased from 14 to 18.5%.

**185.** The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the '**BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment) Policy for Fostering High-Performance Biomanufacturing**' of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) aimed at accelerating India's transition to green growth and a 'Net Zero' carbon economy.

In the Interim Budget 2024-25, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laid the groundwork for the BioE3 policy, introducing a new scheme for bio-manufacturing and bio-foundry aimed at providing eco-friendly alternatives like biodegradable polymers, bio-plastics, biopharmaceuticals, and bio-agri inputs.

The salient features of BioE3 policy include innovation-driven support to R&D and entrepreneurship across thematic sectors.

This will accelerate technology development and commercialization by establishing Biomanufacturing & Bio-AI hubs and Biofoundry. Along with prioritizing regenerative bioeconomy models of green growth, this policy will facilitate the expansion of India's skilled workforce and provide a surge in job creation.

**186.** The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has introduced the **Vehicle Scrapping Policy**, also known as the **Voluntary Vehicle Modernization Program (VVMP)**, aimed at creating a system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles across India.

This policy will be executed through a network of Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) and Automated Testing Stations (ATSS).

Under this policy, state governments are required to provide a concession on motor vehicle tax - up to **25% for non-transport vehicles** and up to **15% for transport vehicles**.

Additionally, MoRTH has now included a waiver on any pending liabilities that the vehicle to be scrapped may have, enhancing the policy's attractiveness and facilitating the scrapping process.

**187.** The **Spices Board of India**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), has introduced the **SPICED** scheme (**Sustainability in the Spice Sector through Progressive, Innovative, and Collaborative Interventions for Export Development**) with a budget of **Rs 422.30 crore**.

The scheme aims to significantly boost spice exports, enhance productivity, and upgrade post-harvest quality.

The primary goal of SPICED is to significantly improve the export of spices and value-added spice products. It aims to upgrade the post-harvest quality of spices to meet international standards and enhance cardamom productivity.

The scheme will implement various programs to achieve these objectives, focusing on innovation and sustainability within the spice sector.

It includes sub-components like Mission Value Addition, Mission Clean and Safe Spices, and the promotion of GI (Geographical Indication) spices.

Additionally, the scheme will support entrepreneurship through Spice Incubation Centres and empower farmer groups, including Farmer Producer Companies and Self-Help Groups (SHGs), with targeted assistance for post-harvest improvements and creating exportable surpluses.

**188.** Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Labour & Employment, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya launched the **“Retired Sportsperson Empowerment Training” (RESET) Programme** on the occasion of National Sports Day in New Delhi.

- The RESET Programme will support retired athletes in their career development journey by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- It aims to bridge the gap between generations by enabling retired sportspersons to share their unique skills with the new generation of athletes.
- The athletes, who have retired from an active sports career and are aged between 20-50 years and who have been winners of an International Medal/participants in international events or have been National medallists/State medallists/participants in competitions recognized by National Sports Federations/Indian Olympic Association/Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports are eligible to apply for courses under RESET Programme.
- The program will be implemented in two levels based on educational qualifications and will be led by the Lakshmibai National Institute of Physical Education (LNIPE).
- The programme will be offered in hybrid mode consisting of self-paced learning through a dedicated portal, along with on-ground training and internship.
- Internships will be provided in sports organizations, sporting competitions/training camps, and leagues. Further, placement assistance, guidance for entrepreneurial ventures, etc. will be provided upon successful completion of the course.

**189.** During his 78th Independence Day address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the success of the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, which has ensured clean drinking water for **15 crore beneficiaries across India**.

This achievement marks a significant milestone in the country's efforts to provide safe and accessible water to its rural population.

The target of JJM is to provide Fulltime Household Tapwater Connection (FHTC) at service level @ **55 litres per capita per day (LPCD)** to each family household

The Government of India has a long history of supporting rural water supply initiatives, beginning in 1972 with the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme. This initiative was later rebranded in 2009 as the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP), with the aim of providing safe and adequate drinking water to all households.

The goals of the NRDWP are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically targeting universal access to safe drinking water by 2030.

**190.** The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of the three umbrella schemes, merged into a unified central sector scheme namely '**Vigyan Dhara**' of the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The scheme has three broad components:

- Science and Technology (S&T) Institutional and Human Capacity Building
- Research and Development
- Innovation, Technology Development and Deployment

The proposed outlay for the implementation of the scheme is Rs.10,579.84 crore during the 15th Finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

#### **Objectives:**

- To promote S&T capacity building as well as research, innovation, and technology development towards strengthening the Science, Technology, and Innovation ecosystem in the country.
- To strengthen S&T infrastructure and equip R&D labs in academic institutions.
- To merge existing schemes for better fund utilization and synchronization.
- To support basic, translational, and collaborative research, with international cooperation.
- To build a critical human resource pool and expand the R&D base of the country towards improving the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) researcher count.
- To promote women's participation in S&T with goals for gender parity.
- To encourage innovation from school to industry, with increased collaboration between academia, government, and industries.

The **Department of Science & Technology (DST)** will act as the nodal department for organizing, coordinating, and promoting S&T activities in the country.



All the programs proposed under the 'Vigyan Dhara' scheme would be aligned with the 5-year goals of DST towards realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

The research and development component of the scheme will be aligned in line with the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).

**191.** The Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil recently highlighted that the **Jal Jeevan Mission**, which began in 2019, has made substantial progress by delivering tap water connections to over **77%** of rural households across India.

As of the latest update, **15 crore households** have been connected. This provision of **clean and safe drinking water** has been credited with saving over **eight lakh crore rupees** by reducing disease incidence, demonstrating the scheme's substantial public health and economic benefits.

**192.** The new legislation will replace the Boilers Act of 1923, originally established to maintain consistent technical standards for boiler regulation across India.

- The Indian Boilers (Amendment) Act of 2007 previously updated this law to allow for inspection and certification by independent third-party authorities.
- More recently, the Act was revised to include decriminalized provisions, aligning with the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023.
- **Key features of Bill**
  - The Bill defines a "competent authority" as an institution recognized according to specified regulations. This authority is responsible for certifying welders who work on boilers and boiler components.
  - **Punishment for Unauthorized Alterations:** If anyone makes structural changes, additions, or renewals to a boiler without getting permission from the Chief Inspector, they can face punishment. This may include imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of up to one lakh rupees, or both.
  - **Central Government's Power:** The Central Government has the authority to resolve any issues in implementing the provisions of the Boilers Act, 2024. This power is valid for three years from the date the Act comes into effect.
  - **Central Boilers Board:** The Central Government will establish a Central Boilers Board. This board will oversee the regulation of the design, manufacture, installation, and use of boilers and their components.
- **Objective of the Bill**
  - The Bill aims to regulate the manufacturing and usage of boilers to protect lives and property from the risks associated with boiler explosions.
  - It prohibits the operation of boilers that are not registered or certified, requires the reporting of any accidents, and promotes consistent processes for the registration and inspection of boilers during their manufacturing, installation, and usage.
  - Industrial boilers are crucial because they involve burning large amounts of fuel, reaching high temperatures and pressure levels, and managing high-energy steam.

**193.** The government has introduced the New Industrial Development Scheme, named **UNNATI (Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme), for 2024.**

It is managed by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**, this scheme offers a **10-year term**, with 8 years allocated for fulfilling committed obligations.

It is a Central Sector Scheme designed to promote economic growth and industrial development in the **North-Eastern Region (NER) of India.**

Industrial units eligible for the scheme must start their production or operations within 4 years of receiving their registration.

Districts are divided into two zones:

Zone A for more developed industrial districts and Zone B for less developed ones.

Each unit can receive up to **Rs. 250 crore in total benefits from all parts of the scheme.**

**Funding is allocated with 60% set aside for 8 northeastern states and the remaining 40% distributed on a First-In-First-Out (FIFO) basis.**

The scheme is managed by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in collaboration with state governments.**

**194.** On 9th August, the Lok Sabha approved a motion to create a Joint Committee of Houses tasked with examining the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

This Committee will comprise 21 members from the Lok Sabha, including **Jagdambika Pal, Nishikant Dubey, Tejasvi Surya, and Asaduddin Owaisi.**

Additionally, ten members from the Rajya Sabha will be part of this Committee.

The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha and referred to a joint committee of Parliament after a heated debate, with the government asserting the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques and the opposition calling it targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution.

**195.** Second phase of the Bi-annual Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for Lymphatic Filariasis elimination launched by Union Minister Prataprao Ganpatrao Jadhav.

India's efforts to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) have seen significant progress with the launch of the Enhanced Strategy for LF Elimination by 2027.

This strategy includes the mission mode Annual Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign, conducted biannually on 10th February and **10th August alongside National Deworming Day (NDD).**

As of 2023, 138 endemic districts stopped MDA after successful Transmission Assessment Surveys. MDA campaigns in 2023 achieved **82% coverage nationally.**

The first phase of the 2024 MDA campaign covered 96 districts across 11 states with 95% coverage against the eligible population.

Campaign focuses on 63 endemic districts across 6 states: **Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.**

Campaign aims to eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis in India ahead of the global target, with a focus on **90% drug compliance in eligible populations.**

The campaign emphasizes the importance of avoiding mosquito bites and consuming anti-filarial medicines to prevent transmission.

Efforts are being made to ensure pucca houses for vulnerable populations living in mud houses and to develop a vaccine for Lymphatic Filariasis.

Disability certificates are being provided to those affected by Lymphatic Filariasis.

**196.** The PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, approved on 29th February 2024, aims to boost solar rooftop capacity and empower households.

Under the scheme, a total financial outlay of **₹800 crore** is allocated for the 'Model Solar Village' component.

Each selected **Model Solar Village** will receive **₹1 crore** as financial assistance.

Villages must be a revenue village with a population of over **5,000** (or **2,000** in special category states) to qualify.

Selection involves assessing villages on their overall distributed renewable energy capacity installed within **6 months** of being declared a potential candidate.

Implementation is overseen by the **State/UT Renewable Energy Development Agency** with supervision from the **District Level Committee (DLC).**

**197.** The Jiyo Parsi scheme was launched by **Kiren Rijju**, Union Minister of Minority Affairs.

The scheme aims to reverse the declining trend of the **Parsi population** by providing financial support for medical treatments and childcare.

- **Key Features:**

- The scheme offers financial assistance for medical treatment under standard protocols.
- It also provides childcare support and assistance to dependent elderly Parsis.
- A **web portal** has been launched to facilitate online applications, status tracking, and disbursement of financial aid through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** mode.

- **The scheme comprises of three components**

- **Advocacy Component:**
  - Organizes workshops and advertising campaigns to raise awareness.
- **Health of the Community Component:**
  - Provides support for child care and creche facilities.
  - Assists elderly individuals.

- **Medical Component:**
  - Offers financial aid for infertility detection and treatment.
  - Supports fertility treatments.
- Since its inception, the scheme has supported more than **400 Parsi children**.
- The scheme is part of the government's effort to preserve the rich heritage and culture of the **Parsi community**.

**198.** The Union Minister for Power and Housing & Urban Affairs, Shri **Manohar Lal**, recently reviewed the performance of Power Distribution Companies and Power Departments in India.

**The review highlighted the rapid power demand growth** of 8-10% annually in Gurugram and Faridabad.

To address this, **projects worth Rs. 3,600 Cr** were approved for modernization and upgradation of power distribution infrastructure.

These projects will **cover 500 feeders** and involve setting up **20 new Gas Insulated Substations**, 3,500 km of underground cabling, and **5,000 new Distribution Transformers**.

The work will also include **bifurcating 486 feeders into 821** and **automating the network** for improved fault detection and restoration.

Benefits include improved power quality, reliability, and enhanced aesthetics in congested areas due to underground cabling.

Gurugram areas benefiting are Manesar and Badshahpur.

Faridabad areas included are Old Faridabad, NIT, Ballabhgarh, and Greater Faridabad.

The project involves setting up new Gas Insulated Substations, underground cabling, and new distribution transformers.

The initiative aims to cater to the growing power demand and ensure a reliable electricity supply for consumers.

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## BUSINESS & ECONOMY

**199.** The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** and **Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUAT)** have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to facilitate the development of the first of its kind '**Standardized Agriculture Demonstration Farm**' (**SADF**) in India.

The primary objective of this MoU is to develop SADFs at **GBPUAT, Udham Singh Nagar (Uttarakhand)** in collaboration with BIS.

These farms will serve as experimental sites for testing and implementing various agricultural practices and new technologies in accordance with Indian Standards.

**200. Innovations for Defence Excellence-Defence Innovation Organisation (iDEX-DIO)**, the flagship initiative of the Ministry of Defence, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)** to launch the **Medical Innovations and Research Advancement (MIRA)**.

The MoU aims to foster innovation and research in developing novel medical technologies and their induction into the Armed Forces.

The initiative will be propelled by the launch of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC) edition MIRA, targeting the critical medical challenges faced by the Armed Forces.

It will leverage the unique strengths and expertise of both organizations to foster cutting-edge advancements in medical technologies.

**201.** The Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up three state-of-the-art testing facilities under the **Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC)**.

Under the MoU, one facility will be established in **Lucknow in the Mechanical & Material (M&M) domain**, and two in **Kanpur** - one each in the **Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and Communications domains**.

The MoU was signed under the Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS).

For the M&M facility, MIDHANI is the lead SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle) member, with some private sector companies being the consortium members.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Bharat Electronics Limited are the lead SPV members in the UAS and Communications testing facilities respectively.

**202. India and Saint Christopher & Nevis** signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the **field of sports**. The MoU was inked between **Mansukh Mandaviya**, Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of the Republic of India, and **Dr. Denzil Douglas**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Federation of Saint Christopher and Nevis.

Salient areas of cooperation under this MoU are as under:

- Training and competition of athletes and athletic teams,
- Training and technical assistance for coaches,
- Exchange programs and visits of sports leaders, officials, sports administrators, professionals, technicians, and sports support personnel,
- Exchange of youth/junior in various disciplines including badminton, Shooting, Wrestling, Kabaddi, and Athletics,

- Training, exchange, and attachment programs for sports sciences personnel and other development assistance in sports sciences,
- Training, exchange, and attachment programs in the areas of coach education, curriculum development, sports education, sports management, and sports infrastructure development and management,
- Training, exchange of technology for infrastructure and programs in the development of information and research in the field of sports;
- Collaboration in the area of sports research & development in training;
- Collaboration in the areas of sports science, research & development, and anti-doping programs;
- Collaboration in the area of physical education and fitness development programs between the universities or physical education institutes of the two Countries.

**203.** In August 2024, the **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre** (ISLRTC) and the **Army Welfare Association Society** (AWES) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi.

The signing ceremony was chaired by Shri Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).

This strategic partnership is designed to enhance the proficiency of Indian Sign Language (ISL) among the faculty of Army Public Schools.

The MoU aims **to broaden the reach of ISL initiatives and contribute to the empowerment and inclusion of the Deaf community.**

The partnership will focus on training school administrators, students, parents, and teachers to improve ISL skills and create a more accessible and supportive educational environment.

**204.** An MoU was signed between the **Ministry of External Affairs**, Government of India and **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** to grant assistance for the launch of Munal satellite.

The MoU was signed by Shri Anurag Srivastava, JS (North) from MEA and Shri Arunachalam A, Director from NSIL. Dr. Rabindra Prasad Dhakal, Secretary, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST), Dr. Surendra Thapa, Chargé d'affaires of Nepali Embassy and Dr. Abhas Maskey, Founder, Antarikhya Pratishan Nepal (APN) were also present at the occasion.

Munal Satellite is an indigenous satellite developed in Nepal, under the aegis of NAST. APN, a Nepali space startup, has assisted Nepali students in the design and fabrication of this satellite. The satellite aims to build a vegetation density database of the Earth's surface.

The satellite aims to create a vegetation density database of Earth's surface.

**205.** The **Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga** signed three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in a single day with **Gargi College**, University of Delhi, **National Security Guard** (NSG), and the **Central Industrial Security Force** (CISF).



The collaborations aim to promote the benefits of Yoga across diverse sectors, from educational institutions to National Security Forces.

MoU between MDNIY and Gargi College, University of Delhi

- The first MoU was signed between MDNIY and Gargi college, University of Delhi in the presence of Dr. Kashinath Samagandi, Director MDNIY, and Prof. Sangeeta Bhatia, Principal of Gargi College.
- It aims at introducing **certification courses** such as, Foundation course, Protocol Instructor course (CCYPI), Wellness course Instructor (CCYWI) etc, developing professional competency among girl students, and exploring the possibility of starting a full-time Diploma course exclusively for women for the purpose of women empowerment.

MoUs signed between MDNIY, NSG and CISF

- These collaborations aim to conduct regular Yoga training programs and related activities for NSG & CISF.
- The second agreement was made with the National Security Guard (NSG) Training Centre in Manesar, Gurgaon, Haryana, signed by Dr. Kashinath Samagandi, Director MDNIY, and Brig Shankar Ji Tiwari, DIG (Ops. & Trg.) HQ NSG.
- Simultaneously, the third MOU was with the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Training Centre in the presence of Shikha Gupta, IG (R&T) of CISF.

The scope of these agreements includes organising specialized Yoga protocols, workshops, conferences, and research activities to study the impact of Yoga on uniformed personnel. This marks a significant step towards integrating Yoga into the wellness regimens of India's security forces, potentially enhancing their operational effectiveness and personal well-being.

**206.** India and Maldives renewed an MoU to train 1,000 Maldivian civil servants by 2029.

Under the guidance of the Ministry of External Affairs, the National Centre of Good Governance NCGG has successfully conducted capacity building programs for civil servants from **Bangladesh, Tanzania, Gambia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia**, along with multi-country programs for Latin American countries and FIPIC/IOR countries.

As part of the capacity building initiatives, an MoU was signed between National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Government of India and Maldives Civil Service Commission, Republic of Maldives for capacity building programs for 1000 Maldivian Civil Servants on June 8, 2019.

**By 2024, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) achieved the** remarkable milestone by fulfilling the mandate of **training a total of 1000 Civil Servants including Permanent Secretaries**, Secretary Generals and High-Level Delegates from Maldives over a total of 32 Capacity Building Programmes in Field Administration for the Civil Servants of Maldives including one programme for Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and one for Information Commission Office of Maldives (ICOM).

**207.** The **National Health Authority (NHA)** and **Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to enhance Digital Health education in India.

The collaboration introduced the **Digital Health Foundation Course (DHFC)**, developed by MUHS, to NHA and co-develop additional digital health programs.

**MUHS** will offer the DHFC to **medical students, in-service doctors, and healthcare professionals** to better prepare them for the implementation of the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**.

The **ABDM**, launched on **27th September 2021** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to establish a robust digital health ecosystem in India.

The partnership also focuses on the **capacity-building** of health workers, which is crucial for the successful implementation of the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** and other health initiatives.

**208.** Singapore-headquartered **Sembcorp Industries** will be investing **Rs 36,238 crore** to establish a green hydrogen and green ammonia manufacturing unit in the **Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu**.

This will make Tamil Nadu the **first state** in the country to roll out commercial production of hydrogen molecules.

The company will operate and produce green ammonia from the plant, spread over 160 acres in the key port area of the district.

The plant will initially produce 200,000 metric tonnes of green ammonia per annum for exporting to Japan.

**209.** On August 20, 2024, the **Indian Navy** entered into a crucial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **BEML Ltd.**, a prominent player in defense and heavy engineering manufacturing.

The agreement, finalized at the Naval Headquarters in New Delhi, represents a major advancement in developing indigenous marine engineering capabilities as part of the Government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

This strategic collaboration is aimed at boosting self-reliance in defense production by focusing on the Indigenous Design, Development, Manufacture, Testing, and Product Support of essential marine equipment and systems, thus reducing reliance on foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).

The MoU was signed by Rear Admiral K Srinivas, ACOM(D&R) of the Indian Navy, and Shri Ajit Kumar Srivastav, Director of Defence at BEML.

**210.** **Zomato** has recently approved the acquisition of **Paytm's** entertainment and ticketing division for **₹2,048 crore** in a cash deal. This strategic move signifies Zomato's expansion into the lifestyle

services sector, encompassing dining, movies, sports ticketing, live events, shopping, and staycations. Concurrently, Paytm plans to redirect its focus towards its core financial services.

- 211.** India's Credit Rating Agency, **ICRA Limited**, formally known as **Investment Information and Credit Rating Agency of India Limited**, has projected that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth will moderate to **a six-quarter low of 6%** in the first quarter (April-June) of the Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25), down from 7.8% in the fourth quarter of FY24.

This decline is attributed primarily to **reduced government capital expenditure** and a drop in urban consumer demand.

ICRA has estimated that for the full FY25, India's GDP growth will be 6.8%, while Gross Value Added (GVA) growth is expected to be 6.5%. The GVA growth is predicted to decrease from 6.3% in Q4 FY24 to 5.7% in Q1 FY25.

Additionally, ICRA noted that the Government of India's capital expenditure is expected to expand by **39%** year-on-year in the July to March period of FY25 to meet the full year's budget estimate.

- 212. Berkshire Hathaway**, under the leadership of Warren Buffett, became the first non-technology company to reach a market value of \$1 trillion.

A key factor in this achievement was the decision to sell nearly half of its shares in Apple, which helped the company accumulate a massive cash reserve of \$280 billion.

This strategic move, along with a focus on other high-potential investments, enabled Berkshire Hathaway to secure its place in financial history.

- 213.** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its annual report for the Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24), revealing that **India's tele density** grew from 84.51% in March 2023 to **85.69%** in March 2024, marking a 1.39% annual growth.

The report is based on data from service providers and the Ministry of Telecommunications, presenting key parameters and growth trends for telecom services in India during FY 2023-24.

This comprehensive report offers a broad perspective and serves as a valuable reference for stakeholders, research agencies, and analysts.

**Note:** The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established on 20th February 1997 by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.

**214.** Singapore-headquartered **Sembcorp Industries** will be investing **Rs 36,238 crore** to establish a **green hydrogen and green ammonia manufacturing unit in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu.**

This will make Tamil Nadu the first state in the country to roll out commercial production of hydrogen molecules.

The company will operate and produce green ammonia from the plant, spread over 160 acres in the key port area of the district.

The plant will initially produce **200,000 metric tonnes of green ammonia per annum for export to Japan.**

**215.** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has launched Cochin International Airport Limited's (CIAL) new venture, **0484 AERO LOUNGE**, at Cochin Airport's Terminal 2.

The lounge is designed to provide a world-class airport experience at budget rates and reflects the unique beauty of Kerala with elements of tradition, art, and landscape.

Spanning over 50,000 square feet, it features 37 rooms, 4 suites, 3 boardrooms, 2 conference halls, a co-working space, a gym, spa, library, cafe lounge, and restaurant.

**216.** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman revealed that the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** aims to open approximately 3 crore new accounts this **financial year (FY25).**

Since its inception, the scheme has significantly grown, with the number of accounts expanding from 14.72 crore in March 2015 to 53.13 crore by August 2024.

The total deposits have also seen substantial growth, increasing from Rs 15,670 crore to over Rs 2.31 lakh crore.

This expansion reflects the scheme's success in increasing financial inclusion and improving access to banking services for millions of Indians.

**217. Moody's ratings** raised India's GDP from **7.2%** up from its previous estimate of 6.8%. The agency also revised its growth projection for 2025 to 6.6% from 6.4%.

Moody's attributed the revised projections to robust and widespread growth driven by resilient private consumption and improved business conditions.

Despite tight monetary policy and fiscal consolidation efforts, the Indian economy grew 7.8% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024.

- 218.** The **World Bank** has updated its **GDP growth forecast** for India for the fiscal year 2024-25, raising it by 20 basis points from its earlier estimate of 6.4% to **6.6%**.

This adjustment reflects the World Bank's increased confidence in India's economic performance. The revision indicates a positive outlook for India's growth in the upcoming fiscal year.

Basis points in the context of the World Bank's GDP forecast refer to the unit of measure used to describe changes in interest rates or other percentages, where 1 basis point equals 0.01%. When the World Bank revises its GDP growth forecast, it often does so in terms of basis points.

- 219. ReNew Power Private Limited (RPPL)**, a subsidiary of ReNew Energy Global PLC, announced the signing of a clean power sale agreement of 437.6 Megawatt (MW) with **Microsoft Corporation**, a tech company based in the United States of America (USA).

The agreement is expected to generate over 1 million units of green electricity attributes annually, supporting Microsoft's goal to become carbon-negative by 2030.

This deal stands as one of India's largest corporate Renewable Energy (RE) agreements, with ReNew contributing nearly 10% of India's total solar and wind energy generation.

- 220.** The **Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST)** has developed an affordable, portable, smartphone-based optical sensor system using a fluorescence turn-on mechanism to detect low levels of **L-dopa** in biological samples.

By detecting whether biological samples from the patient have low levels of L-Dopa, the sensor could help adjust the required dosage for effective control of the disease.

L-dopa is used as an anti-Parkinson's drug because it is converted into dopamine, which helps address the reduction of dopamine levels due to neuron cell loss in Parkinson's disease.

Proper L-dopa levels are crucial; too much can cause side effects like dyskinesia and psychosis, while too little can lead to a return of Parkinson's symptoms

## BANKING & FINANCE

- 221. Shriram Capital** received in-principle approval for its **asset reconstruction company (ARC)** from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The company will enter the ARC sector in the financial year 2024-25.

The company had submitted the application to RBI in November 2023. The ARC will be a 100 percent subsidiary of Shriram Capital.

**222.** The **NIIT Institute of Finance, Banking and Insurance (NIIT IFBI)**, a subsidiary of NIIT, has launched the **ACE Banker Program** in collaboration with **HDFC Bank**.

The ACE Banker Program is designed to address the evolving needs of the banking sector by equipping participants with the essential skills and knowledge required to excel in customer service roles at HDFC Bank.

This comprehensive full-time program includes 45 days of residential training at NIIT University's Campus.

The program is a key component of NIIT's Talent Pipeline as a Service (TPaaS) initiative.

This program aims to recruit and train customer service professionals for HDFC Bank.

Upon completion of the course, candidates will receive a joint certificate from HDFC Bank and NIIT and would be offered jobs, subject to the terms and conditions of the Program.

**223.** The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** and the **Government of India** signed a **USD 200 million** (about Rs 1,700 crore) loan to improve solid waste management and sanitation in **100 cities** across **eight states** in the country.

The loan agreement is named the **Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 -Comprehensive Municipal Waste Management in Indian Cities Program**.

The programme supports the objectives of the government's Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission - Urban 2.0 by enhancing sanitation and solid waste management infrastructure, including waste segregation, collection, and disposal.

**224.** The **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** has collaborated with **C2treds** and **UGRO Capital** to facilitate loans to the MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) sector.

SIDBI has onboarded C2treds, a platform that offers MSMEs liquidity within 24 hours through an online bidding process.

C2FO is an on-demand working capital platform that provides fast, flexible, and equitable access to low-cost capital to nearly 2 million businesses worldwide.

**225.** **Tata Power Solar Systems Ltd (TPSSL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL), has teamed up with the **Bank of India (BoI)** to facilitate easy financing for rooftop solar installations and establishment of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations.

With this, TPSSL became the **first solar company** to collaborate with BOI for both solar and EV Charging Station financing and strengthening its leadership as a green energy solutions provider



This collaboration supports the government's initiatives to promote rooftop solar installations, targeting a wide spectrum of customers, including residential users under the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, housing societies, and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

**226. Sanjay Shukla** assumed charge as the **Managing Director (MD)** of the **National Housing Bank (NHB)** on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Earlier, he was the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Non -Banking Financial Company (NBFC) Centrum Housing Finance.

He is a Chartered Accountant who started his career in 1991 as an officer in the LIC Housing Finance Limited.

**227.** The Government of India and the **World Bank** have signed a **\$500 million** agreement to construct the **Green National Highway Corridors Project (GNHCP)**, spanning **781 kilometers** across **Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh**. The total project cost is estimated at **\$1288.24 million (Rs. 7,662.47 crore)**.

The scheduled date for the completion of the GNHCP project is **May 2026**.

The project incorporates demonstrating safe and green highways keeping in view climate resilience and the use of green technologies by incorporating the following aspects:

- conservation of natural resources using cement-treated sub-base/reclaimed asphalt pavement;
- promote the use of local/ marginal materials such as lime, fly ash, waste plastic; and
- use of bio-engineering measures for slope protection like coco fibre/Jute erosion control blanket with shrub/grass plantation, hydroseeding, Shotcrete crib wall with vegetation, Bamboo Plantation, Hedge Brush Layer, interlink chain mesh with grass strips, Geocell with hydroseeding, etc. in slope protection works;

**228. HDFC Securities**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of HDFC Bank, joined hands with **Vested Finance**, a popular US-based investment platform, to offer access to global investing for Indians & NRIs through **Global Investing 2.0**.

Global Investing 2.0 will provide a leap to all investors wanting augmented protection, innovative features, and deep portfolio diversification.

As part of this collaboration, HDFC Securities seeks to provide its clients with greater investment opportunities and features, enhanced through the platform of Vested, that will, in turn, enrich their overall investment experience.

A new Vested account with HDFC Securities can easily be opened and funded within minutes.

With Global Investing 2.0, HDFC Securities will empower investors with the tools and access needed to diversify their investments and realize financial aspirations on a global scale through their Invest right application.

**229.** Travel services provider **Thomas Cook (India)** collaborated with the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** to launch its first **RuPay prepaid forex card** for Indian travelers visiting the **UAE**.

The partnership commences with the UAE as a pilot, which will be followed by a global rollout in a phased manner.

Thomas Cook is the **first and the only company** to have partnered with NPCI to launch RuPay AED prepaid forex card.

Travelers can use Thomas Cook's RuPay AED (United Arab Emirates Dirham) card extensively across the UAE for transactions and ATM withdrawals.

**230.** The **Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT Madras)** has joined hands with **IDBI Bank** to launch a cybersecurity lab to develop and deploy security solutions in crucial sectors such as healthcare, fintech, and aerospace.

The '**IDBI – IITM Secure Systems Lab' (I2SSL)** will focus on creating market-ready IPs in cybersecurity, productization, and commercialisation of research work, especially for mobile technologies.

The lab would focus on cybersecurity in systems deployed in industries such as banking, automotive, power, and telecommunications, and undertake experimental evaluation and assessment exercises.

The I2SSL will also work on developing tools for automated security evaluation.

**231.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the Department of Financial Services for the appointment of **Challa Sreenivasulu Shetty** as the **Chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI)** for a period of **three years** with effect from the date of assumption of charge.

He will replace incumbent chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

He is currently serving as the Managing Director (MD) of the State Bank of India (SBI). He was appointed as MD in 2020.

ACC also approved the appointment of **Rana Ashutosh Kumar Singh** as a Managing Director of SBI.

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**232.** The NSE achieved a significant milestone, surpassing **10 crore** unique registered investors.

The median age of these investors has decreased from **38 years** to **32 years** over the last five years.

This shift highlights the growing involvement of younger investors in the stock market.

**As of July 31, 2024, the benchmark Nifty 50 index has generated a return of 11.8 percent, while the Nifty 500 index has delivered a strong 16.2 percent gain** during the same period.

Annualised return over the last five-year period ending July 2024 has been 17.5 percent and 21.1 percent for Nifty 50 and Nifty 500, respectively.

Demography wise North India led the registrations with a share of 42 percent followed by West India (25 percent), South India (18 percent) and East India (14 percent).

Among the states, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra continued to lead in new investor registrations, together accounting for more than a quarter of these investors.

Over 46.5 percent of all new investor registrations in the last five months originated from districts beyond the top 100 districts (by number of new registrations in the period).

Currently, the highest number of unique registered investors are from Maharashtra with 1.7 crore investors, followed by Uttar Pradesh with 1.1 crore investors and Gujarat with 87 lakh investors.

**233.** FPEL aims to expand its renewable energy portfolio to 3.5 GW by 2026. It currently has an installed base of 1.5 GW of green assets.

FPEL is set to commission a 575 MW wind-solar hybrid project in Karnataka under the ISTS route later this quarter.

IFC leads the consortium with an investment of USD 125 million. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) contributes USD 100 million, and Germany's DEG adds USD 50 million.

IFC's investment aims to expand FPEL's renewable energy offerings, increasing the supply of affordable, clean energy in India.

It is estimated that India's renewables sector will attract an annual investment of USD 25 billion through 2030.

**234.** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has introduced significant amendments to **mutual fund regulations, mandating Asset Management Companies (AMCs) to combat market abuse** practices such as **front-running** and **insider trading**.

**Front-running** refers to the illegal practice of trading based on advance, non-public information to benefit before client orders are executed.

AMCs are now required to **establish institutional mechanisms** to identify, deter, and prevent such illegal activities, enhancing **market integrity**.

The **management of AMCs**, including the CEO, MD, and Chief Compliance Officer, will be held **accountable** for the implementation and effectiveness of these mechanisms.

SEBI also mandated the creation of a **whistle-blower policy** within AMCs. This policy provides a **confidential channel** for employees and stakeholders to report any suspected fraudulent or unethical practices without fear of retaliation.

For investors, these regulations bring **increased transparency and protection**, fostering a **more secure investment environment** by ensuring ethical management practices in the mutual fund industry.

**235.** Setu, an API infrastructure provider owned by Pine Labs, has collaborated with Axis Bank to introduce **UPISetu**. This platform is designed to cater to businesses and developers by supporting a wide range of UPI products. These products include basic **QR code payments, UPI Autopay, EMI, and Third-Party Validation (TPV)** services.

UPISetu goes beyond basic UPI services, offering advanced features like **brand and bank offers, advanced dispute resolution, instant cashbacks**, and refunds. These services are provided through APIs, enhancing the user experience and operational efficiency.

Setu was acquired by Pine Labs in 2022 for approximately **\$70 million**. This acquisition has strengthened Pine Labs' position in the fintech space, enabling it to offer a comprehensive suite of payment solutions.

The launch of UPISetu aligns with the growing popularity of UPI in India, particularly with the integration of credit cards, wallets, and credit lines. The platform is seen as a crucial development in driving payment transaction success rates and catering to the increasing adoption of UPI.

Setu was acquired for **\$70 million**, not \$100 million.

**236.** NIPL, a subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has announced surpassing the **100,000-mark** in cross-border UPI person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions in Nepal.

This milestone follows NIPL's collaboration with **Fonepay**, Nepal's largest payment network, launched in March 2024.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is India's mobile-based payment system that facilitates **instant personal and merchant payments**, now extending its services internationally.

The UPI system simplifies transactions for **Indians traveling to Nepal** and allows Nepalese travelers to India to use UPI payments through the **UPI One World app**.

With a large number of Indian visitors to Nepal, **NIPL anticipates continued growth** in UPI transactions, contributing to economic development in both nations.

UPI, launched in 2016, has expanded to several countries including the **United Arab Emirates, Peru, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Singapore, France, Bhutan, and Nepal**.

NPCI has also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the **Maldives** for introducing UPI, marking another step in UPI's global expansion.

**237.** The launch of the 'Primus' credit card reflects Axis Bank's aim to solidify its presence in the premium segment, leveraging the success of its Burgundy Private offering.

The card is invite-only, catering exclusively to ultra-high-net-worth individuals.

- **Fees and Benefits:**

- **Joining Fee:** Rs 5 lakh
- **Annual Fee:** Rs 3 lakh
- **Welcome Benefits:** Choice of substantial ITC gift voucher or EDGE miles.

- **Rewards and Perks:**

- **Rewards Program:** Earn 1 EDGE Mile for every Rs. 100 spent.
- **Forex Markup:** Zero forex markup.
- **Travel Benefits:** Includes complimentary companion airfare, private jet access, and airport transfers.
- **Hotel and Dining:** Complimentary stays, upgrades at luxury hotels, and exclusive dining privileges.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Protection against delayed baggage and lost card liability.
- **Concierge Services:** Dedicated lifestyle managers for personalized assistance.

**Luxury Experiences:** Cardholders gain access to bespoke luxury experiences, including exclusive events and fine dining.

**238.** DBS Bank's "**DBS Golden Circle**" program offers senior citizens an additional 0.50% interest per annum on fixed deposits with tenures of 376–540 days.

This means senior citizens can earn up to 8.00% p.a. on fixed deposits, compared to **2.50–7.50% p.a. for the general public**.

The "DBS Golden Circle" program also offers senior citizens:

- **Up to 7% p.a. interest** on savings account balances between **INR 4 lakhs and INR 5 lakhs**
- **50% off locker rent for the first year** on lockers opened after July 1, 2024

- Five free virtual consultations with over 20 specializations, plus a 30% discount after free consultations

DBS Bank offers fixed deposit tenures ranging from 7 days to 5 years and above. They also offer monthly, quarterly, or cumulative interest payouts on fixed deposits. There's no penalty for premature withdrawal on fixed deposits with a tenure of 1 year or more. These features address financial security, convenience, and ease of access, aligning with DBS's commitment to providing a tailored banking experience for the elderly.

**239. Ageas Federal Life Insurance**, one of India's top private life insurers, has forged a partnership with PhonePe to offer Instant Term Insurance to its large customer base.

This effort aims to increase insurance penetration in India, particularly in Tier 2, 3, and 4 cities, by using PhonePe's vast network of 20 crore monthly active users.

Users can choose a sum assured ranging from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 25 lakh and make monthly or yearly premium payments starting at Rs. 5,000 per year.

**240. Property Share** has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first Fractional Ownership Platform in India to receive the Small and Medium Real Estate Investment Trust (SM REIT) license from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

The company plans to **launch its inaugural SM REIT scheme**, aiming to raise **Rs 330 crore** through this initiative.

**Property Share**, headquartered in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**, was established in **2015** and is led by CEO **Kunal Moktan**.

This development marks a significant advancement in India's real estate investment landscape, providing new opportunities for fractional ownership and investment in real estate.

**241. Jakson Engineering Limited** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **State Bank of India (SBI)** to develop solar projects aimed at commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors.

This partnership is part of the **Surya Shakti Solar Finance initiative**, designed to promote **energy sustainability** and reduce **power costs**.

The initiative will leverage **SBI's banking experience** and **Jakson's solar technology expertise**.

**SBI** is offering loans worth **Rs 100 million** to support commercial and industrial users in adopting solar energy.



Jakson Engineering Limited, an **energy solutions provider**, has a diverse portfolio, including **distributed energy, solar power, alternative fuels, and high-tech energy storage systems**.

In August 2023, Jakson Engineering Limited collaborated with **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi**, to install a **9 kW solar plant** capable of producing **13,140 units per annum**, meeting the institute's entire power requirements.

**242.** Muthoot Finance achieved its highest-ever Consolidated Loan AUM at ₹98,048 crores as of June 30, 2024.

This represented a significant growth of ₹21,249 crores, or **28%**, compared to the previous year.

The Consolidated Profit after Tax for Q1 FY25 also reached a record high of ₹1,196 crores, marking a 14% increase YoY.

On a standalone basis, the company's Loan AUM was ₹84,324 crores, with a YoY growth of 23% and a Profit after Tax of ₹1,079 crores, up by 11% YoY.

Muthoot Finance raised USD 650 million through a global bond issuance, enhancing its financial stability.

The company opened 218 new branches across India.

Muthoot Finance was the only Indian NBFC selected for the FATF On-site Mutual Evaluation Report, with India receiving an Outstanding Outcome.

**243.** Kotak Mahindra Bank's wholly-owned subsidiaries, **Sonata Finance Private Limited** and **BSS Microfinance Limited**, have announced a Scheme of Amalgamation.

The merger is subject to approval by the shareholders and creditors of both companies, the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)**, and possibly other regulatory bodies.

As of March 31, 2024, the combined net worth of Sonata and BSS is less than **2% of Kotak Mahindra Bank's total net worth**. Sonata's net worth was ₹389 crore, with a revenue of ₹596 crore, while BSS's net worth was ₹1,010 crore, with a revenue of ₹931 crore.

The merger is expected to enhance operational efficiency, reduce expenses, and optimize asset utilization by combining the complementary business operations of both entities, which focus on microfinance and small-value loans.

**BSS will issue 1,931 equity shares for every 10,000 shares of Sonata.** This ratio aims to maximize shareholder value and improve operational synergy.

The transaction complies with arm's length pricing and is exempt from **SEBI Regulations 23(2), (3), and (4)**, as well as Section 188 of the Companies Act, 2013, based on Ministry of Corporate Affairs Circular No. 30/2014.

**244.** The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill 2024 seeks to update key banking legislation to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of banking regulations in India.

By amending the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, the State Bank of India Act, 1955, and the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts of 1970 and 1980, the bill aims to reflect modern financial practices and enhance regulatory oversight.

This legislative move demonstrates the government's commitment to modernizing the banking sector.

#### Key Provisions of the Bill:

| Key Provisions  | Description  |
|---|--|
| Nominee Option  | Allows account holders to designate up to four nominees for their bank accounts and lockers.   |
| Simultaneous and Successive Nominations                   | Includes options for making both simultaneous and sequential nominations.  |
| Substantial interest in shareholding                      | The minimum shareholding requirement for holding a directorship has been raised from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 2 crore.  |
| Provision for Cooperative Banks                           | Increases the term length for directors in cooperative banks from 8 years to 10 years.   |
| Transfer to Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) | Unclaimed dividends, shares, interest, or bond redemptions will be moved to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF). People can still claim these assets later.  |
| Amendments to Existing Laws                               | <p>Suggests changes to the following laws:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RBI Act, 1934</li><li>• Banking Regulation Act, 1949</li><li>• State Bank of India Act, 1955</li><li>• Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts of 1970 and 1980</li></ul> |

**245.** **Razorpay** has once again made it to the **Forbes Cloud 100 list for 2024**, marking its third consecutive year on the prestigious list. It is the only Indian company to feature this year, securing the **70th position**.

Leading the rankings, OpenAI is celebrated for its advancements in artificial intelligence, especially with its GPT-4 model.

The list showcases a range of companies from fintech, AI, cybersecurity, and enterprise software sectors.

Although the majority of companies are from the U.S., there is notable representation from other regions, including Europe and Asia.

Razorpay's inclusion underscores its role as a pioneering force in the fintech sector, known for its innovative payment and banking solutions for businesses.

**246. NPCI** has created a new entity, **NPCI-BHIM Services Ltd (NBSL)**, as a wholly-owned subsidiary to oversee the Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM).

**Lalitha Nataraj**, formerly of IDFC FIRST Bank and ICICI Bank, will be the CEO of this new entity.

**Rahul Handa**, previously the chief business officer at BHIM and executive vice president at ONDC, will take on the role of chief business officer at NBSL.

The formation of NBSL is part of NPCI's strategy to address the duopoly in India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) market.

The BHIM application is undergoing a revamp to better align with growing digital transaction demands, market expectations, and financial inclusion goals.

**247. L&T Finance Ltd.** transitioned from an NBFC-Core Investment Company (NBFC-CIC) to a Non-Banking Financial Company (Investment and Credit Company) (NBFC-ICC).

This shift follows the successful **merger** of L&T Finance with its wholly owned subsidiaries, including **L&T Infra Credit Ltd.** and **L&T Mutual Fund Trustee Ltd.**

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued the certificate of registration to L&T Finance, marking its official status as an NBFC-ICC.

This change is aligned with the company's strategy to enhance its focus on **investment and credit** operations.

**248. Sonata Finance Private Ltd and BSS Microfinance Ltd**, both wholly-owned subsidiaries of **Kotak Mahindra Bank**, have approved a scheme of amalgamation.

The scheme would be subject to the approval of the respective shareholders and creditors of Sonata and BSS and the approval of the concerned National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and other regulatory authorities.

As per the scheme, Sonata Finance will merge with BSS Microfinance Ltd.

BSS would issue and allot to the shareholders of Sonata shares in proportion of 1,931 shares of face value of Rs 10 each in BSS for every 10,000 shares of face value of Rs 10 each held by them in Sonata pursuant to the scheme of amalgamation.

**249. DSP Mutual Fund** has introduced **India's first-ever Nifty Top 10 Equal Weight Index Fund and ETF**, which equally weights the top 10 Indian companies based on free-float market capitalization within the Nifty index.

This new offering, the DSP Nifty Top 10 Equal Weight Index Fund, and DSP Nifty Top 10 Equal Weight ETF, aims to capitalize on the relatively favorable valuations of these top 10 stocks when compared to broader indices such as the Nifty 50 and Nifty 500, based on metrics like price-to-earnings ratio, return on equity, and return on assets.

The new fund offer for the DSP Nifty Top 10 Equal Weight Index Fund and ETF opened on 16 August 2024, and remained open for subscription till 30 August 2024.

The fund replicates the Nifty Top 10 Equal Weight Index, ensuring that it holds the same stocks in identical weights.

Each company in the portfolio is allocated an equal 10% weight, which is rebalanced quarterly to maintain this allocation.

The portfolio undergoes semi-annual adjustments to account for any changes in the index, such as the addition or removal of stocks.

**250. RBL Bank Limited**, formerly known as Ratnakar Bank Limited, has introduced a special fixed deposit scheme called '**Vijay Fixed Deposits**' to honor the bravery and sacrifices of India's military personnel. The scheme aims to provide significant financial rewards while paying tribute to the service members of the country.

The 'Vijay Fixed Deposits' offer interest rates of **8.85%** per annum for super senior citizens, **8.60%** for senior citizens, and **8.10%** for regular fixed deposits.

The fixed deposit has a distinctive tenor of **500 days** for deposits of less than **Rs.3 crore**.

Customers can book this FD through the RBL Bank **MoBank app** or by visiting the nearest RBL Bank branch.

**251. Udaan**, a B2B e-commerce company, has collaborated with the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** to transform Fair Price Shops (FPSs) into '**Jan Poshan Kendras (JPK)**.'

- The primary goal of this initiative is to improve the income of Fair Price Shops (FPS) dealers. It simultaneously focuses on enhancing the nutritional outcomes for the beneficiaries who rely on these outlets.
- The initiative is currently being piloted across four states: Rajasthan (Jaipur), Uttar Pradesh (Ghaziabad), Telangana (Hyderabad), and Gujarat (Ahmedabad).

- In this pilot phase, 60 Fair Price Shops (15 from each selected district) have been identified for transformation into Jan Poshan Kendras.
- SIDBI will offer credit facilities to the Jan Poshan Kendras.
- As part of the pilot project, Udaan will provide access to over 3,500 products across various staples and FMCG categories.
- JPKs will allocate 50 percent of their stock to nutritional products, with the remainder for household items.

Jan Poshan Kendras is a new initiative by the Government of India to transform regular ration shops (Fair Price Shops or FPS) into nutrition-focused community centers.

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**252.** The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has recently introduced a new feature called '**UPI Circle**' on its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) platform to delegate payment responsibilities to trusted secondary users.

UPI Circle-Delegate Payments is a feature where a UPI user acts as a primary link with their trusted secondary users on their UPI App for either partial or full delegation.

The Reserve Bank of India introduced this facility during its August 2024 MPC (Monetary Policy Committee) meeting.

The "Delegated Payments" would allow an individual (primary user) to set a UPI transaction limit for another individual (secondary user) on the primary user's bank account.

- Primary User: The account holder who initiates the Circle and controls the delegation.
- Secondary User: A trusted individual granted partial or full access to the account for making payments.

UPI Circle enables two types of delegation:

- Full Delegation: The primary user authorizes the secondary user to initiate and complete transactions within predefined spending limits, without requiring further approval.
- Partial Delegation: The secondary user can initiate transactions, but the primary user must authenticate and finalise the payment using their UPI PIN.

A primary user can delegate up to 5 secondary users and a secondary user can accept delegation from only one primary user. Members shall ensure that the primary authorizes the secondary user on either full or partial delegation.

Members shall ensure limited control is available for the primary to set usage controls over their secondary users. For full delegation, members shall ensure a maximum monthly limit of Rs.15,000 per delegation and a maximum per transaction limit of Rs.5000.

Existing UPI limits shall be applicable in case of partial delegation. Members shall ensure that during the cooling period - first 24 hours, a daily transaction limit of Rs.5000 shall be prescribed after successful linking of primary and secondary users for both full and partial delegation.

Members shall adhere to RBI guidelines on 'Harmonisation of Turn Around Time' and customer compensation for failed transactions using authorized payment systems.

**253.** The **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)**, a unit of the World Bank, has issued the **Amazon Reforestation-Linked Outcome Bond**.

The **9-year USD 225 million bond** was priced on **August 13, 2024**, and is due **July 31, 2033**.

Through the transaction, approximately USD 36 million of additional capital is mobilized from investors to support the reforestation activities of Mombak, a Brazilian-based company.

Financial returns are linked to the generation of Carbon Removal Units (CRUs) from reforestation projects in Brazil's Amazon rainforest, marking the 1<sup>st</sup> bond linking investors' financial return to the removal of carbon from the atmosphere.

**254. ICICI Lombard General Insurance** has joined hands with **seven** different financial institutions for bancassurance partnerships to expand its distribution network and make insurance more accessible to customers across the country.

The seven financial institutions are **Aye Finance, Bandhan Bank, Karnataka Bank, Muthoot Mini, Nivara Home Finance Pvt Ltd, NSDL Payment Bank, and The Andhra Pradesh State Co-operative Bank**.

**Bancassurance:**

Bancassurance is an insurance distribution model where insurance companies partner with banks to sell policies. Both the bank and the insurance company get to benefit from this arrangement. While the bank earns a commission from the insurance company, the insurer gains from the distribution network of the bank.

**255. Punjab National Bank (PNB)** has launched the **PNB ANTAH DRISHTI Braille Debit Card**, a new debit card specifically designed for visually impaired customers.

This contactless NCMC (National Common Mobility Card) Debit Card is available on the **RuPay network**.

Visually impaired individuals with savings or current accounts in PNB are eligible to obtain this debit card from any of the nearest PNB branch.

The **ATM limit** (cash withdrawal) per day is **Rs 25,000**, and the PoS and eCom limits (combined) per day are **Rs 60,000**. Contactless transactions are accessible for individual transactions up to Rs. 5000/- without a PIN at NFC-capable POS Terminals, with a daily overall limit of Rs. 5000.



This debit card has a **rounded notch** on the opposite side of the chip. This facilitates the cardholder to know about the direction of the card while dipping the same in ATM / POS.

This debit card has a **glossy spot UV lamination effect** with raised texture on the Bank's logo and **silk screen rough spot UV** on the contactless symbol. This helps visually impaired customers to locate the bank's logo easily and read the card's contactless symbol, making it easy for them to use the debit card.

This debit card is easily distinguishable due to its **contrasting colours** which makes it easier for visually impaired customers to read the card details.

**Note:** Braille is a system of touch reading and writing for blind persons in which raised dots represent the letters of the alphabet.

**256.** The Reserve Bank of India has approved the conversion of **Tata Capital Limited's (TCL)** conversion from a Non-Banking Financial Company-Core Investment Company (NBFC-CIC) to a **Non-Banking Financial Company-Investment Credit Company (NBFC-ICC).**

This change comes after Tata Capital merged with **Tata Cleantech Capital and Tata Capital Financial Services.**

The conversion is a sign that Tata Capital is shifting to an operating company, which could lead to a potential listing.

The RBI has also classified Tata Capital and its parent company, Tata Sons, as NBFCs with an upper-layer distinction, requiring both companies to go public by September 2025.

**257.** Rural fintech startup **Jai Kisan** has received an **NBFC license** through its majority strategic acquisition of **Kushal Finnovation Capital Private Limited.**

With the NBFC license, Jai Kisan will now be able to design and distribute more customized and diverse credit products to its farmer and business customers. The company will also co-lend in partnership with leading financial institutions including public sector banks in India.

Founded in 2017 by Arjun Ahluwalia and Adriel Maniego, Jai Kisan is a rural-focused neo-bank that offers credit for transactions in online and offline rural commerce environments to individuals and rural businesses.

**258.** Naspers-backed fintech firm **PayU** has collaborated with **Amazon Pay Later** to provide instant digital credit access to Indian shoppers.

As per the collaboration, Amazon Pay Later will be incorporated into PayU's checkout system, enabling online merchants to offer instant credit lines to their customers, which is expected to enhance business revenues.

PayU recorded an **11% growth** in its India revenue, reaching **\$444 million** in fiscal year 2024, up from \$399 million the previous year. Payment services contributed 46% to its core revenue in this segment, accounting for 60% of the total payment volume (TPV).

**259. India** has signed a **USD 500 million loan** agreement with the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** for the '**Maharashtra Tertiary Care and Medical Education Sector Development Program (SDP)**' aimed at improving access to quality and affordable tertiary healthcare and medical education in Maharashtra.

ADB, headquartered in Manila, is supporting the state with various policy actions, including implementing performance-based incentives to attract and retain quality healthcare professionals, formulating a new talent management policy, and establishing India's first state-led healthcare and medical education centers of excellence.

The loan agreement was signed by Juhi Mukherjee, Joint Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, representing the Government of India; Mio Oka, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, representing ADB; and Dinesh Waghmare, Principal Secretary of the Medical Education and Drugs Department, representing the Government of Maharashtra.

**260. Yes Bank Limited (YES Bank)** has forged a co-lending partnership with **Newtap Finance Private Limited (formerly Parfait Finance and Investments Private Limited)**.

This partnership will leverage the payment platform CRED to offer personalized financing solutions to creditworthy individuals.

Newtap Finance is registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a non-deposit-taking Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).

Bengaluru-based Dreamplug Technologies Private Limited (DTPL), which operates CRED, will act as the Lending Service Provider (LSP) for both YES Bank and Newtap Finance.

This strategic partnership is aligned with YES Bank's goal of fostering fintech collaborations to drive quality growth and provide CRED members with competitive rates and a superior, digital-first experience.

**261. Thrissur (Kerala)-based ESAF Small Finance Bank** has introduced the **INORI RuPay Platinum Credit Card**, a premium financial product designed to provide cardholders with exclusive benefits and privileges.

They aim to provide banking services to underserved and unbanked segments of the population, including small businesses, micro-enterprises, and low-income households.

The name 'INORI' is derived from the Japanese word for 'wish,' reflecting the bank's commitment to fulfilling the desires and expectations of its customers.

Developed in partnership with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), the card offers an elevated banking experience and is supported by the secure RuPay network. It serves as a gateway to convenience, rewards, and enhanced security for its users.

**262. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) Housing Finance Limited (LIC HFL)** has launched the '**Griha Rakshak**' scheme, a special home loan initiative dedicated to the Indian armed forces.

This scheme offers discounted interest rates and benefits to both serving and retired personnel.

Eligible candidates with a Credit Information Bureau India Limited (CIBIL) score of 750 or above can apply for home loans under this scheme.

The scheme provides loans of up to **Rs 2 crore** at an affordable **8.4%** annual interest rate.

Additionally, the processing fees for these loans have been eliminated by LIC HFL as part of a limited-period offer.

**263. Jio Financial Services Ltd** has received approval to increase its foreign investment limit from the current 17.55% to **49%**. This change allows foreign investors to hold a greater share of the company's equity.

Despite this, the company reported a 6% decline in its net profit for the first quarter ending June. In addition, Jio Financial introduced new services, including mutual fund loans and auto insurance, in July 2024.

**264.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a penalty of **Rs 2.68 crore** on **UCO Bank** for violations related to the opening of current accounts, interest rates on deposits, and the classification of frauds.

This action underscores the RBI's commitment to enforcing compliance with banking regulations and ensuring that financial institutions adhere to proper governance standards.

**265. Tata AIA Life** has launched the '**Sampoorna Raksha Promise**' insurance product, which includes features such as an immediate ₹3 lakh payout upon death claim intimation, premium deferral options, and a terminal illness benefit.

The product provides coverage up to age 100 and includes options for a refund of premiums if the policyholder survives to maturity.

**266. Capitalmind Financial Services**, under the leadership of Deepak Shenoy, has been granted SEBI's in-principle approval to launch a mutual fund. This move aligns with the company's 10th-anniversary celebrations and reflects its commitment to bringing innovative investing solutions to the growing mutual fund sector in India.

The firm currently manages Rs 2,200 crore in assets, and the mutual fund launch aims to cater to 4.5 crore investors.

**267.** The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** introduced two transformative digital payment solutions: the **Bharat BillPay System (BBPS) for Business** and the **Unified Payments Interface (UPI) Circle**.

These solutions were unveiled by Shaktikanta Das, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), at the Global FinTech Festival (GFF) 2024 in Mumbai.

The BBPS for Business is designed to streamline, simplify, and automate invoice payment processes across different Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and accounting platforms, enhancing the efficiency of Business-to-Business (B2B) transactions.

The UPI Circle aims to further digitalize the payment ecosystem by offering an interoperable platform with unique features such as business onboarding, invoice management, and integrated Accounts Receivable (AR) and Accounts Payable (AP) dashboards. This integration will provide businesses with a comprehensive digital solution for managing daily operations and transitioning from manual processes to digital efficiency.

**268.** **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** presented a dividend cheque of **Rs.3,662.17 crore** to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

This is part of a total dividend payout of Rs.6,103.62 crore for the fiscal year 2023-24, including a final dividend of Rs.6 per share and an earlier interim dividend of Rs.2,441.45 crore.

LIC, the Indian government's majority-owned life insurance corporation, continues to lead the market.

**269.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed a penalty of **Rs 2.1 lakh** on **Cent Bank Home Finance Ltd** for non-compliance with Know Your Customer (KYC) directions.

The RBI clarified that such penalties are for regulatory compliance issues and do not affect the validity of transactions or agreements between the banks and their customers.

**270.** The new **Payment Passkey Service** by **Mastercard**, was introduced at the Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai.

India aims to enhance online shopping security and convenience by using biometric authentication such as fingerprint or facial recognition.

This service replaces traditional methods like passwords and OTPs, addressing the significant increase in online fraud cases in India. Indian payment leaders and banks participated in the pilot, making India the first country to launch this innovative service.

**271.** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has imposed a five-year ban on Anil Dhirubhai Ambani from capital markets, in addition to a fine of Rs 25 crore.

This action follows allegations of fund siphoning from Reliance Home Finance.

SEBI has also barred key officials of **Reliance Home Finance** and 27 other entities from capital markets.

Reliance Home Finance has been fined Rs 6 lakh and barred from the securities market for six months. Additionally, SEBI has prohibited Reliance Home Finance from buying, selling, or dealing in securities and from any association with the securities market during this period.

**272. HDFC Bank** has partnered with **Zeta**, a banking technology provider, to deploy the Credit Line on UPI (CLOU)solutions.

This partnership aims to improve access to credit by connecting pre-approved credit lines with the UPI ecosystem, allowing the bank to offer a variety of new credit products. Zeta's Digital Credit as a Service (DCaaS) solution will support the bank in managing these products efficiently.

**273. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) department** in Maharashtra has imposed a penalty on **Yes Bank**, involving the disallowance of input tax credit (ITC), interest, and an additional penalty totaling Rs. 24,92,978.

This penalty is based on Section 73 of both the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, and the Maharashtra Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.

Yes Bank has stated that the tax and interest demand is below the materiality threshold and does not anticipate a significant impact on its financial or operational activities.

The Bank is considering a legal appeal against this order. Regulation 30 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 requires the disclosure of such material information.

**274. At the 2nd ICC Emerging Asia Banking Conclave & Awards 2024**, held in Delhi and organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), **J&K Bank** was honored with the "**Best Performance on Profitability**" award in the Private Sector Bank (Mid Size) category.

The event, themed "Leading in the Digital Paradigm", attracted key figures from the BIMSTEC region.

The award was presented to Rajesh Gupta, General Manager (Rest of India), recognizing the Bank's exceptional profitability performance among mid-sized private sector banks in India.

MD & CEO Baldev Prakash expressed gratitude, highlighting the Bank's commitment to innovation, customer-centricity, and sustainable growth, aligning with its strategic vision to serve diverse generations effectively.

**275. Paytm**, owned by One97 Communications Limited (OCL), has received approval from the Department of Financial Services (DFS), Ministry of Finance (MoF) for **downstream investment** into its payment services arm, **Paytm Payment Services Limited (PPSL)**.

With this approval, PPSL will resubmit its application for a Payment Aggregator (PA) license and continue to offer online payment aggregation services to its existing partners.

Downstream investment refers to an Indian company, which has received Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), investing in another Indian company's equity instrument or capital.

PPSL was established by OCL specifically to obtain a PA license. However, in 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) requested PPSL to resubmit its application to comply with FDI regulations. The PA framework, introduced by RBI in March 2020, requires payment gateways to acquire an aggregator license to provide digital payment acceptance solutions.

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**276. HDFC Bank Limited** has introduced **GIGA**, a comprehensive financial program tailored for India's rapidly growing gig economy, which includes workers from various sectors.

This initiative provides specialized financial products such as savings and current accounts, debit and credit cards, flexible investment options, health insurance, and retail asset products like loans.

The GIGA program aims to address the unique financial requirements of gig workers by offering flexible savings accounts with options like Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs), Fixed Deposits (FDs), and Recurring Deposits (RDs).

Additionally, it offers a business debit card with cashback and personal accident cover, as well as a business credit card with an interest-free credit period and curated offers.

Health insurance is provided through HDFC Ergo with affordable premiums, and retail asset products include collateral-free loans and vehicle financing.

The program also includes partnerships with platforms like Razorpay and Payoneer to facilitate payment collection from clients across multiple countries. The initiative underscores HDFC Bank's commitment to supporting the gig economy, which employs millions of workers across various sectors in India.

**277. Mynd IFSC Private Limited**, a subsidiary of Mynd Solutions Private Limited, has received approval from the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) to launch its ITFS (International Trade Financing Services) platform, '**M1NXT**', at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The M1NXT platform allows Indian Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to access global factoring services, bringing international liquidity to the sector. Indian MSMEs can now secure financing from foreign banks registered under the platform at lower costs.

The platform was launched in partnership with SBI (State Bank of India) GIFT City IBU, SBI Frankfurt, Yes Bank Limited, Union Bank of India (UBI), Drip Capital Inc., and various exporters and importers.



It aims to support global trade by converting trade receivables into cash quickly, addressing working capital needs, and contributing to India's export target of \$1 trillion by 2030.

**278.** The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** introduced new guidelines for borrowing by **Category-I and Category-II Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)**.

Under the rule, Category I and II AIFs are not allowed to borrow or use leverage for investments, except in limited cases for temporary needs.

These AIFs are allowed to borrow funds to address temporary funding needs or manage day-to-day operational expenses, with specific limitations.

Such borrowing is permitted for up to 30 days, can occur no more than four times in a calendar year, and must not exceed 10 percent of the investable funds.

SEBI allowed Category I and Category II AIFs to borrow for the purpose of meeting temporary shortfalls in the amount called from investors for making investments in investee companies ('drawdown amount').

**279. BOBCARD Limited**, formerly known as BOB Financial Solutions Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bank of Baroda (BOB), unveiled its new high-end credit card '**ETERNA**' at the prestigious **5th Global Fintech Festival (GFF) 2024** held in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

The card is designed to meet the needs of affluent consumers by offering exceptional value in dining, travel, retail, and luxury segments.

The luxury sector in India, expected to grow 3.5 times to USD 90 billion by 2030, is a key focus area.

BOBCARD Limited is registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC). The company is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra, with the tagline "Credit Reimagined."

**280. IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company Limited** (IndiaFirst Life) has marked a significant milestone by becoming the first Indian life insurer to commence operations in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The company inaugurated its International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Insurance Office (IIO) at GIFT City, aiming to provide foreign currency-denominated life insurance solutions.

Through its newly launched office, IndiaFirst Life plans to cater to international customers with a Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) product called the "IndiaFirst Life Wealth Wise plan," specifically designed for global Indians.

This initiative highlights IndiaFirst Life's strategic expansion into international markets, reinforcing its commitment to offering innovative insurance solutions globally.

**281.** According to the State Bank of India's Economic Research Department (ERD) report titled '**Ecowrap**', India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is anticipated to grow by 7.0% to 7.1% in the 1st Quarter (Q1: April-June) of Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25). This projection aligns closely with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) forecast.

The report also indicates that the Gross Value Added (GVA) is expected to fall between 6.7% and 6.8% with a downward bias.

Notably, around 4,000 listed entities reported a 9% growth in both top-line and bottom-line during Q1 FY25, compared to the previous year.

The corporate GVA rose by approximately 10.9% in Q1 FY25, down from 17% in Q4 FY24 and 26% in Q3 FY24.

Additionally, the report estimates that agricultural growth will rebound to 4.5% to 5% in FY25, which is about 30 basis points higher than the RBI's forecast.

**282. Tata Power Solar Systems Limited (TPSSL)**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL), has collaborated with **ICICI Bank** to offer financing solutions for residential and corporate customers looking to purchase solar panels or units.

With this partnership, customers can secure loans up to Rs 90 lakhs without the need for collateral, with repayment terms extending up to 5 years. For those needing larger sums, loans with collateral are available with repayment periods of up to 20 years.

Additionally, customers can benefit from flexible down-payment options, requiring only 20-25 percent of the loan amount upfront.

This collaboration aims to make solar energy investments more accessible and affordable, empowering individuals to embrace sustainable energy solutions.

## RBI IN NEWS

**283.** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has released the **Report on Currency and Finance** for the year 2023-24. This year's report is centered around the theme "**India's Digital Revolution.**"

### Key highlights:

- Over the last decade, the global digital economy has grown 2.5 times faster than the physical economy, now constituting **15%** of the global GDP.
- In India, the **digital economy** currently contributes **10%** to GDP and is expected to reach **20% by 2026**.
- Globally, India ranks **first** in biometric-based identification (Aadhaar) and real-time payments volume.

- As per the report, the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is going global through the Modular Open Source Identity Platform (MOSIP) program; interlinkage and broadening of UPI with other nations' fast payment systems like Singapore's PayNow, etc.
- Leveraging DPI, India has lifted **415 million people** out of poverty between 2005 and 2021 through Direct Benefit Transfer programs.

**Key challenges:**

- In 2022-23, **47% of RBI ombudsman complaints** were about digital payments.
- In India, the average cost of data breaches stands at **US\$ 2.18 million** in 2023, a 28 percent increase since 2020.
- Misleading design tactics in digital interfaces that manipulate users into unintended actions.

The report suggests promoting self-regulatory organizations (SROs) in the FinTech industry, scaling up cyber infrastructure, and implementing data localization measures.

**284.** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) **Digital Payments Index** (RBI-DPI) increased to **445.5** at the end of **March 2024**, compared to 418.77 in September 2023 and **395.57** in **March 2023**.

This results in a **12.6 percent** increase in digital payments in India as of March 31, 2024

The RBI-DPI index has increased across all parameters, driven by significant growth in payment performance and payment infrastructure across the country over the period.

**285.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted '**Fit & Proper**' certificates to three potential suitors for **IDBI Bank**, paving the way for their possible acquisition of the bank.

The candidates include Canada-based **Fairfax Financial**, UAE-based **Emirates NBD**, and **Kotak Mahindra Bank**.

The Centre, which owns a 45.48 percent stake, and LIC, with 49.24 percent, together plan to offload 60.7 percent of their holdings in IDBI Bank.

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**286.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted the **payment aggregator- cross-border (PA-CB)** licence to 3 merchant payment companies namely **BillDesk, Amazon Pay India, and Netherlands-based Adyen**.

The licence allows the fintech firms and payment solutions companies to offer payment services to users for imports and exports.

BillDesk received its cross-border licence for both exports and imports on **29<sup>th</sup> July 2024**, while Amazon Pay India and Adyen received the licence for imports only on **25<sup>th</sup> July 2024**.

The fintech firms seeking to gain a PA licence should register under the Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) to receive authorization for processing payments. Also, they need to keep a

minimum net worth of Rs 15 Cr when applying for the licence which will increase to 25 crore post-March 2026.

**Note:** Cashfree was the first company to secure the PA-cross-border licence on 22 July 2024.

**287.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of **Inderjit Camotra** as the MD & CEO of **Unity Small Finance Bank** for a period of two years.

He has been serving as the MD & CEO of Unity Small Finance Bank since 2022.

He has an experience of over 28 years in various leadership positions at global banking majors, including Standard Chartered Bank, ANZ, and Citibank.

Earlier, he was the executive director of Centrum Financial Services Limited, promoter of Unity Small Finance Bank.

**288.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has canceled the Certificate of Registration (CoR) of **Margdarshak Financial Services Limited (MFSL)**, headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, due to the company's high net Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and repayment defaults to lenders.

The cancellation means MFSL can no longer operate as a Non-Banking Financial Institution (NBFI) under Section 45-I(a) of the RBI Act, 1934.

As of March 31, 2021, MFSL failed to maintain the required Net Owned Fund (NOF) of Rs 5 crore and a minimum Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) of 15%, which are stipulated for Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)-Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs).

**289.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced the '**Unified Lending Interface (ULI)**' technology platform nationwide, following the success of its pilot program initiated in 2023.

The platform, announced by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das during the 'Global Conference on Digital Public Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies' in Bengaluru, Karnataka, on August 26, 2024, aims to streamline credit access, building on the success of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) launched in 2016.

The Unified Lending Interface (ULI) offers digital access to both financial and non-financial data, including land records, through a consent-based system. This system will feature standardized APIs, which simplify data access with a 'plug and play' approach, reducing technical integration complexity.

The potential benefits of ULI include a reduced paperwork process, and facilitating a smoother lending experience for smaller and rural borrowers.

It will also shorten appraisal time by consolidating data, providing centralized access to various data sources, and focusing on meeting the credit needs of agriculture and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

ULI will be part of the 'new trinity' of JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile), UPI, and ULI. This integration aims to enhance financial inclusion and address the large unmet credit demand.

**290.** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued revised instructions for treating **Bad and Doubtful Debt Reserve (BDDR)** by Cooperative Banks.

As per the instructions, all provisions as per **Income Recognition, Asset Classification, and Provisioning (IRACP)** norms, regardless of whether they are accounted for under the head "BDDR" or another head, must be charged as an expense to the P&L (Profit & Loss) account in the accounting period in which they are recognized.

The circular applies to all primary **UCBs (Urban Cooperative Banks), SCBs (Scheduled Commercial Banks), and Central Co-operative Banks.**

After accounting for all applicable provisions as per IRACP norms and other regulations, banks may make appropriations of net profits to BDDR below the line if required by applicable statutes or regulations.

To facilitate a smoother transition to an AS-compliant approach, a regulatory adjustment is prescribed:

- Banks must identify and quantify the BDDR balances as of March 31, 2024, which were created by appropriating net profits instead of recognizing them as expenses.
- As of March 31, 2025, an appropriation will be made directly from the P&L Account or General Reserves to provisions for NPAs. These provisions can be netted off from Gross NPAs to determine Net NPAs. Any excess BDDR not required by statute can be transferred to General Reserves or the Balance in the P&L Account.
- Following these adjustments, BDDR balances can be considered as Tier 1 capital, but they should not be deducted from Gross NPAs to calculate Net NPAs.
- Banks must adhere to the provisions of the State Co-operative Societies Acts or the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002, as applicable.

These revisions aim to enhance consistency and transparency in the treatment of BDDR, aligning cooperative banks with standard accounting practices and regulatory requirements.

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**291.** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced the continuation of the Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) for short-term loans availed through the **Kisan Credit Card (KCC)** for agriculture and allied activities during the financial year **2024-25**.

The scheme aims to support farmers by offering concessional interest rates on loans up to Rs.3 lakh.

Farmers can access short-term crop loans and loans for allied activities, including animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, and beekeeping, at a concessional interest rate of **7% per annum**.

An additional interest subvention of **3 percent** should be provided to farmers who repay loans in time.

The rate of interest subvention to lending institutions is **1.5 percent** for 2024-25.

The interest subvention and prompt repayment incentive are available for an overall limit of **Rs.3 lakh per annum**.

For farmers engaged solely in allied activities, the maximum sub-limit is **Rs.2 lakh**.

In cases of natural calamities, the applicable interest subvention will be available for the first year on restructured loan amounts, with normal interest rates applying from the second year.

For severe natural calamities, the subvention will extend to three years, with a maximum period of five years, and a prompt repayment incentive of 3% will also be provided.

In order to discourage distress sales by farmers and to encourage them to store their produce in warehouses, the benefit of interest subvention under the Kisan Credit Card scheme will be available to small and marginal farmers for a further period of up to six months post the harvest of the crop.

Aadhaar linkage will continue to be mandatory for availing of the scheme's benefits in 2024-25 to ensure hassle-free access for farmers.

**Note:** The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was introduced in 1998 to issue Kisan Credit Cards to farmers on the basis of their holdings for uniform adoption by the banks so that farmers may use them to readily purchase agriculture inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. and draw cash for their production needs.

**292.** The **RBI** issued a **Master Direction** on the Treatment of Wilful Defaulters and Large Defaulters, establishing clear thresholds.

A **Wilful Defaulter** is a borrower or guarantor who has committed wilful default with an **outstanding amount of Rs 25 lakh and above**.

A **Large Defaulter** is defined as a defaulter with an **outstanding amount of Rs 1 crore and above**, and where a suit has been filed, or whose account has been classified as doubtful or loss.

Banks and NBFCs must examine the 'wilful default' aspect in all **non-performing asset (NPA)** accounts with outstanding amounts of **Rs 25 lakh and above**.

The provisions regarding **reporting and dissemination** of credit information about large defaulters apply to all entities regulated by the **Reserve Bank**.

These entities must submit information to all **credit information companies (CICs)** monthly, listing suit-filed accounts and non-suit-filed accounts classified as doubtful or loss.



For calculating the threshold of **Rs 1 crore** in suit-filed accounts, the unapplied interest, if any, must also be included.

**293.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has **increased** the upper limit for tax payments via Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to **Rs 5 lakh** per transaction, up from the previous limit of **Rs 1 lakh**.

This move aims to **boost digital payments** and make **high-value transactions** more convenient for taxpayers.

The enhanced limit is expected to **encourage taxpayers** to use digital payment methods more frequently, reducing the **need for multiple transactions** for high-value payments.

The RBI has periodically **reviewed and adjusted** transaction limits for various categories such as **capital markets, IPO subscriptions, loan collections**, and more.

The RBI is also **exploring "Delegated Payments"**, which would enable individuals to set transaction limits for others using their UPI account, potentially broadening the use of digital payments.

**294.** The RBI has lowered the permissible ceiling for public deposits that HFCs can hold from three times to **1.5 times** their Net Owned Fund (NoF).

The increase will be phased in, with a requirement of **14%** by January 1, 2025, and **15%** by July 1, 2025.

This measure aims to **curb excessive risk-taking** by HFCs and align their deposit acceptance limits with those of Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

HFCs exceeding the new limit cannot accept new deposits or renew existing ones until they comply. Excess deposits can continue until maturity.

Aligning HFC norms with NBFCs is part of the RBI's effort to ensure a **robust and stable financial system**.

The RBI has also increased the liquid assets requirement, enhancing the liquidity buffers of HFCs.

**295.** RBI's extension includes a **1.50% interest subvention** for lending institutions (Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks, Small Finance Banks, and PACS) on short-term loans up to Rs 3 lakh.

Farmers who repay on time will receive an additional **3% per annum** subvention, reducing the interest rate to 4% for prompt repayments within one year.

The subvention is applicable for loans up to **Rs 3 lakh per annum**, with a sub-limit of **Rs 2 lakh** for those engaged exclusively in allied activities.

Small and marginal farmers can get interest subvention for produce stored in **WDRA-accredited warehouses** for up to six months. In natural calamities, subvention is available for up to five years, with the prompt repayment incentive applicable.

Aadhar linkage remains compulsory for loan benefits. Banks must report detailed data via the **Kisan Rin Portal (KRP)** by **30th June 2025**.

**296.** In the 2024 SWFI ranking, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) holds the 12th position globally with a total asset value of **USD 839 billion**.

The RBI has experienced a **balance sheet growth of 11.08% Year-on-Year (Y-o-Y)**, reaching a total of **Rs 70.47 trillion** as of March 2024.

Central banks' assets include gold, foreign currencies, government bonds, and are crucial indicators of economic health.

Central banks are essential for managing money supply, interest rates, and ensuring financial stability.

- Top 10 Largest Central Bank Rankings by Total Assets:
  - Federal Reserve System (FRS) - USD 7.84 Trillion (USA)
  - People's Bank of China (PBC) - USD 6 Trillion (China)
  - Bank of Japan (BOJ) - USD 5.54 Trillion (Japan)
  - Deutsche Bundesbank (DBB) - USD 2.77 Trillion (Germany)
  - Bank of France - USD 2.01 Trillion (France)
  - Norges Bank - USD 1.63 Trillion (Norway)
  - Bank of Italy (BOI) - USD 1.38 Trillion (Italy)
  - Bank of England (BoE) - USD 1.28 Trillion (UK)
  - Bank of Spain (BOS) - USD 1.04 Trillion (Spain)
  - Swiss National Bank (SNB) - USD 944 Billion (Switzerland)
  - Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - USD 839 Billion (India)

**297.** Private capital expenditure is projected to grow by **54%** in FY24. The increase will elevate the expenditure from **Rs 1.59 lakh crore** to **Rs 2.45 lakh crore**.

This forecast is derived from a study conducted by RBI staffers Kamal Gupta and Rajesh Kavediya.

The projection is based on the analysis of investment intentions and projects sanctioned by banks.

Factors contributing to this rise include rising domestic demand, increased capacity utilization, and government-backed infrastructure initiatives.

The substantial growth signals a bullish investment cycle, reflecting confidence in the economic outlook.

**298.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up an expert committee to benchmark its regularly disseminated statistics against global standards and best practices, assess the quality of other routine data in sectors where such benchmarks are absent, and provide guidance on potential areas for further data refinement.

The expert committee, chaired by the **RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra**, will consist of 10 members.

The panel will submit its report by the end of **November 2024**.

RBI's Executive Director, **O P Mall**, has been appointed as the convenor of the committee.

The panel will include R B Barman, former chairman of the National Statistical Commission; Sonalde Desai from NCAER; Partha Ray, director of the National Institute of Bank Management; Bimal Roy, former director of the Indian Statistical Institute; and Paul Schreyer, former statistician at the OECD.

Additionally, Sudarshan Sen, former executive director of the RBI; Bruno Tissot, head of statistics and research support at BIS; and Muneesh Kapur, executive director at the RBI, will be part of the panel.

**299.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has tightened norms related to public deposit acceptance by housing finance companies (HFCs), which were so far subject to relaxed prudential norms compared to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

- The **RBI** has revised the requirements for **liquid assets** held by **deposit-taking HFCs**. Previously, HFCs had to maintain **13%** of their public deposits as liquid assets.
- Under the new guidelines, this requirement will gradually increase to **15%**.
- By **January 1, 2025**, HFCs are required to maintain **14%** of public deposits as liquid assets.
- By **July 1, 2025**, this requirement increases to **15%**.
- The liquid assets include unencumbered approved securities.
- The phased increase aims to strengthen the financial stability and liquidity management of HFCs.

**300.** The Reserve Bank of India Governor **Shaktikanta Das** has been rated "**A+**" for the second consecutive year in the **Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2024**.

The Central Bankers earning an A+ grade in the Global Finance Central Banker Report Cards 2024, along with Shaktikanta Das, are Denmark's Christian Kettel Thomsen and Switzerland's Thomas Jordan.

The Central Banker Report Cards, published annually by New York-based Global Finance since 1994, grade the central bank governors of nearly 100 key countries, territories, and districts, as well as the European Union, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Bank of Central African States and the Central Bank of West African States.

Grades are based on an "A+" to "F" scale for success in areas such as inflation control, economic growth goals, currency stability, and interest rate management.

"A" represents an excellent performance, down through "F" for outright failure.

- 301.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed monetary penalties on three financial institutions namely **Bank of Maharashtra (BoM), Hinduja Leyland Finance Limited (HLF), and Poonawalla Fincorp Limited (PFL)** for non-compliance with its regulatory directives.

RBI has imposed a monetary penalty of **Rs 1.27 crore** on the **Bank of Maharashtra** for non-compliance with certain directions issued by RBI on '**Loan System for Delivery of Bank Credit**', '**Cyber Security Framework in Banks**', and '**Know Your Customer**'.

RBI has imposed a monetary penalty of **Rs 4.90 lakh** on **Hinduja Leyland Finance Ltd** for non-compliance with certain provisions of the Know Your Customer (KYC) Directions, 2016.

RBI has also imposed a monetary penalty of **Rs 10 lakh** on **Poonawalla Fincorp Ltd** for non-compliance with certain provisions of the 'Non-Banking Financial Company - Systemically Important Non-Deposit taking Company and Deposit taking Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016'.

- 302.** The Reserve Bank of India has recently tightened norms for **Non-Banking Financial Company - Peer to Peer Lending Platforms (NBFC-P2P Lending Platforms)** to improve transparency and compliance.

As per the revised master direction issued by the RBI, a P2P platform **should not promote peer-to-peer lending** as an investment product with features like tenure-linked assured minimum returns, liquidity options, etc.

NBFC-P2P Lending Platform **should not cross-sell any insurance product** also, which is in the nature of credit enhancement or credit guarantee.

No loan should be disbursed unless the lenders and the borrowers have been matched/mapped as per the board-approved policy framed

The total exposure of a lender to all borrowers across all P2P lending platforms is capped at **Rs 50 lakh**.

The RBI issued guidelines for P2P lending in 2017. Such a platform acts as an intermediary providing an online marketplace/platform to the participants involved in peer-to-peer lending.

**303.** According to a study by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) economists, **Gujarat** replaced Uttar Pradesh (UP) in attracting the **highest bank funds** for projects in the state during the **Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24)**.

Gujarat received funds for **154 projects**, which accounted for **14.7%** of the total projects financed by banks and Financial Institutions (FIs) in FY24, up from 14% in FY23.

The total cost of projects sanctioned by banks and FIs during FY24 reached a record high of **Rs 3,90,978 crore** (approximately Rs 4 trillion).

The study also noted that **Odisha** dropped from 3rd place in FY23 (11.8% of total project cost) to **6th place** in FY24, accounting for just about **7.6%** of the total project cost.

**304.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of **Rs. 1.25 lakh** on **Gujarat-based Valsad Mahila Nagrik Sahakari Bank Limited** for non-compliance with several RBI directions.

These include guidelines related to income recognition, asset classification, provisioning, and other areas like membership of Credit Information Companies (CICs), Know Your Customer (KYC) norms, and maintenance of deposit accounts for Primary Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs).

The penalty was imposed under sections 47A (1) (c), 46 (4) (i), and 56 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, as well as section 25 of the Credit Information Companies (Regulation) Act, 2005.

This penalty is based on regulatory deficiencies and does not affect the validity of any transactions or agreements entered into by the bank with its customers.

**305.** According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data released on August 19, 2024, **overseas Indians deposited nearly USD 4 billion into Non-Resident India (NRI) deposit schemes** during the **1st Quarter (Q1) of the Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25)**.

This represents a significant 79% increase compared to USD 2.21 billion during the same period in FY24.

In April – June FY25, inflows into the NRI schemes stood at \$3.95 billion, compared to \$2.21 billion during the same period a year ago. With this, the total outstanding NRI deposits as of June stood at \$155.71 billion.

However, the surge in NRI deposits contrasts with a 24.39% drop in outward remittances under the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), totaling USD 6.9 billion in Q1 of FY25.

The NRI deposit schemes include foreign currency non-resident (FCNR) deposits, non-resident external (NRE) deposits, and non-resident ordinary (NRO) deposits.

During the April – June FY25 period, maximum flows came into FCNR (B) deposits. According to RBI data, about \$1.68 billion flowed into these accounts during this period, compared to \$1.12

billion in the corresponding period a year ago, taking the total outstanding amount in such accounts to \$27.41 billion.

NRE deposits witnessed an inflow of \$1.53 billion during this period, compared to an inflow of \$489 million in the corresponding period a year ago. The total outstanding NRE deposits now stand at close to \$100 billion.

NRO deposits also saw substantial inflows of \$743 million in April – June FY25, compared to \$598 million during the same period a year ago, taking the total outstanding NRO deposits to \$28.24 billion.

**306.** The Reserve Bank of India has introduced a **scheme for trading and settlement of sovereign green bonds (SGrBs)** in the **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** in India.

The scheme will apply to investments in SGrBs issued by the Government of India to eligible investors in the IFSC in India.

Investors can participate in the primary auctions of securities conducted by the Reserve Bank and transact in the secondary market for securities in the IFSC.

Under the scheme, investors are not permitted to repackage or write any derivative instrument on underlying securities held by them under the scheme. They also are not permitted to undertake repo transactions in such securities.

Investors who are also eligible to participate in the domestic market are not permitted to shift their securities to/from their onshore gilt/Demat account to/from their demat/securities account in the IFSC.

Eligible IBUs (IFSC Banking Units: banking units set up in the IFSC) are not permitted to participate in the primary auctions under the scheme. However, they can undertake transactions in the secondary market.

Investors can trade in the secondary market in the IFSC with other investors and eligible IBUs. However, transactions between two eligible IBUs cannot be undertaken.

Eligible IBUs can trade with investors such that the transactions will be undertaken on a 'back-to-back' arrangement. The transaction between an eligible IBU and its parent bank/branch or subsidiary in India of the parent bank will be for due consideration (for a value transfer).

**307.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) fined two **NBFC peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms, LiquiLoans and LenDen Club**, for failing to comply with RBI's guidelines.

The fines included Rs. 1.92 crore on LiquiLoans' parent company, NDX P2P Private Limited, and nearly Rs. 2 crore on LenDen Club's parent company, Innofin Solutions Private Limited.



The non-compliance issues involved a lack of disclosure of personal details, improper loan disbursement procedures, and routing of funds through unauthorized accounts.

According to the RBI's NBFC–Peer to Peer Lending Platform Directions, 2017, the maximum total amount that a single lender can lend to all borrowers collectively at any given time is Rs. 50 lakhs across all P2P platforms.

**308.** Analysis of RBI data on **deposits of scheduled commercial banks** from **FY19 to FY24** showed that deposits grew by **13.4% in FY24** compared to the previous year.

This growth rate is notably higher than the previous fiscal years, which recorded 10.2% in FY23, 10.1% in FY22, 12.3% in FY21, and 8.8% in FY20.

The total deposits as of March 2024 reached ₹212.5 lakh crore, up from ₹187.4 lakh crore in March 2023.

Despite the general growth being 13.4%, private sector and small finance banks specifically achieved over 20% growth.

**309.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officially recognized the **Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) as the first Self-Regulating Organization (SRO-FT) in the fintech sector.**

This recognition establishes a new benchmark for self-regulation in India's rapidly evolving fintech industry.

The SRO-FTs must represent the fintech sector, including entities regulated by RBI such as Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC)-Account Aggregators (AA), and NBFC-Peer-to-Peer (P2P) lending platforms, but excluding banks.

The SRO-FT will play a crucial role in aligning its members with regulatory priorities while operating with objectivity, credibility, and responsibility.

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

**310.** President Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere of Fiji conferred the **Companion of the Order of Fiji** upon the President of India **Droupadi Murmu**. This is the highest civilian award in Fiji.

President Droupadi Murmu was on a 2-day visit to Fiji in August 2024. This was the first visit by an Indian head of state to the archipelago nation.

During her visit, she addressed the Fijian Parliament where she recalled the 75-year diplomatic association between the countries.

She thanked the Fijian Government for their support for the Aditya L1 Mission and recalled India's support to Fiji during Covid-19 crisis through the Vaccine Maitri initiative.

**311.** The **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** attended the Sugar Industry Symposium and National Efficiency Awards 2022-23 in New Delhi.

- He highlighted the **cooperative movement** in India, specifically mentioning **Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka** for their leadership roles.
- **Gujarat** was noted as one of the leading states in the cooperative movement, contributing significantly to the sector.

### Achievements in Sugar Industry

- **Sugarcane Production:** Increased by 18% from 5 million hectares in 2013-14 to 6 million hectares.
- **Sugarcane Yield:** Increased by 19%.
- **Sugar Production:** Increased by 58% from 352 million tonnes in 2013-14 to 491 million tonnes.
- **Ethanol Production:** The diversion of sugar for ethanol production rose from zero to 4.5 million tonnes. Ethanol production increased from 38 crore litres to 370 crore litres.

### Policy Decisions and Benefits

- **Ethanol Blending Policy:** Improved environment, reduced petrol import bill, benefited farmers, and increased sugar mill profits. A target of **20% ethanol blending** by 2030 has been set, with an anticipated achievement by 2025-26.
- **Support to Farmers:** NAFED will procure **100% maize and pulses** at Minimum Support Price (MSP). The highest rate for ethanol made from maize and bamboo is **71.86 rupees per litre**.

### Support to Cooperative Sugar Mills

- Cooperative sugar mills contributed about **8%** of ethanol supply in 2022-23, with a target to increase this to **25%**.

The government has provided relief to sugar mills from a **Rs. 15,000 crore tax liability**, and approved a grant of **Rs 1,000 crore** for the National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) loan scheme.

**312.** In the first edition of the **Best Tourism Villages Competition** held in 2023, **a total of 35 villages** were honored for their excellence in various tourism categories.

The **Gold category** winners are recognized for outstanding performance in showcasing heritage, culture, and sustainability. Notable Gold award winners include:

- **Dawar** in Jammu & Kashmir
- **Kanthalloor** in Kerala
- **Madla** in Madhya Pradesh
- **Reiek** in Mizoram
- **Sarmoli** in Uttarakhand

**Notes:**

- **Gold Category** recognizes the highest achievement in tourism preservation and sustainability.
- Other award categories included **Silver** and **Bronze**, highlighting varying levels of excellence.
- The **competition** was processed online through the portal with evaluations conducted at the district, state, and national levels.

**313.** The **Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar** was introduced to honor exceptional contributions in science, technology, and innovation, replacing over 300 awards previously given by various science departments.

**Govindarajan Padmanabhan** is selected for the first **Vigyan Ratna Puraskar** for his lifetime achievements in the field of biochemistry.

The awards recognize achievements in 13 domains, including Physics, Biological Sciences, and Space Science and Technology.

India became the fourth country to land on the moon and the first to reach its southern polar region on August 23, 2023. To honour this landmark achievement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced August 23 as "National Space Day".

India is celebrating its maiden National Space Day with the theme "**Touching Lives while Touching the Moon: India's Space Saga.**"

**314.** President Murmu, in her address at the New Zealand International Education Conference where India was the 'Country of Honour,' highlighted the rich tradition of knowledge in India and the recent advancements through the National Education Policy.

The policy seeks to enhance the Indian education system by promoting diverse learning approaches and fostering global competitiveness.

**Education Conference:** President Murmu highlighted India's National Education Policy and encouraged educational exchanges, particularly in AI, machine learning, and vocational training.

**315.** The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu reached Timor-Leste and this is the first-ever visit by an Indian Head of State to this country.

During the meeting with President José Ramos-Horta, both leaders discussed opportunities for enhancing the bilateral cooperation in the areas like IT, fintech, healthcare, agriculture, and capacity building.

President Horta conferred the Grand-Collar of the Order of Timor-Leste, the country's highest civilian award.

The award is in recognition of her achievements in public service and dedication to education, social welfare and empowerment of women.

President Murmu and Prime Minister Gusmão also witnessed the signing of three MoUs on :

- (i) Cultural Exchanges,
- (ii) collaboration between Prasar Bharati and 'Timor-Leste Radio & Television' (RTTL),
- (iii) exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic, official and service passports.

**316.** The **National Institute for MSME (NI-MSME)**, an organization under the Ministry of MSME, was awarded an **Accreditation Certificate** with a **3 Star Rating (UTKRISHT)**.

The assessment was conducted by the **Capacity Building Commission (CBC)** and **ICARE**, focusing on Standard Operating Procedures and Methodologies followed by NI-MSME.

The certificate was presented to the Director General, NI-MSME, by **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, Minister of State for Science and Technology, during the Civil Services Training Institutions (CSTI) Convention on 12 August 2024 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.

**NI-MSME's Role:** Established in **1962**, NI-MSME plays a significant role in **Entrepreneurship & Skill Development**, offering programs through its **four Schools of Excellence**.

NI-MSME is associated with international bodies like **UNIDO, UNDP**, and others, contributing beyond Indian shores.

NI-MSME has trained over **5.71 lakh participants** and conducted **16,902 programs** for various government officials, along with skill training for **1.85 lakh unemployed youth**. It also trained **11,019 international executives** from **145 developing countries**.

**317.** The 70th National Film Awards for the year 2022 have been announced.

**Key awardees:**

The Best Feature Film award has been given to **Aattam (The Play)** directed by **Anand Ekarshi** and the award for Best Non-Feature Film has been bagged by **Ayena (Mirror)** directed by Siddhant Sarin.

The award for Best Book on Cinema has been given to **Kishore Kumar: The Ultimate Biography** authored by Anirudha Bhattacharjee & Parthiv Dhar.

**Kantara** won the Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

**Rishab Shetty** has been awarded the Best Actor in Leading Role for his performance in the movie Kantara whereas **Nithya Menen** bagged the award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for Thiruchitrambalam.

**Pavan Raj Malhotra** won the award for Best Supporting Actor while **Neena Gupta** won the Best Supporting Actress Award in the Feature Films category.

Directed by **Ayan Mukerji** with its **VFX Supervisors** Jaykar Arudra, Viral Thakkar, and Neelesh Gore, **BRAHMASTRA-PART 1: SHIVA** bagged the award for Best Film in AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects Gaming & Comic).

### National Film Awards:

- The awards were established in **1954** and were initially called '**State Awards**' and 2 President's Gold Medals, 2 certificates of merit, and 12 silver medals for regional films were presented in the earlier years.
- The awards have been administered by the **Directorate of Film Festivals** since 1973.
- The awards are given in **3 categories**: Feature Films, Non-Feature Films, and Best Writing in Cinema.
- The **Most Film Friendly State** award is also given, along with the National Film Awards, to a State of India that has been helpful in furthering the growth of the film industry.

**318.** The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, **Dr. Jitendra Singh**, was awarded the "**Distinguished Mentor of the Year**" by the American College of Physicians (ACP) at their 9th Annual Conference held in Lucknow.

The award highlights India's growing capability and global leadership in health research and medical education.

**319.** The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, has conferred the prestigious **National Geoscience Awards - 2023** at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi

A total of **12 awards (09 individual awards and 03 team awards)** were presented to **21 Geoscientists**.

### NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT 2023

**Prof. Dhiraj Mohan Banerjee,**

Emeritus Scientist, INSA

### NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE AWARD 2023

**SECTION- I – Mineral Discovery & Exploration**

**Field (i): Mineral Discovery & Exploration** (excluding fossil fuels) of economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques. Out of two awards in this field, at least one award shall be given for critical minerals.

Geological Survey of India (GSI) team comprising of:

- **Shri Abhishek Kumar Shukla**, Senior Geologist
- **Smt. Danira Stephen Dsilva**, Senior Geologist
- **Shri Parsuram Behera**, Director
- **Dr. M.N. Praveen**, Deputy Director General

**Team Award**

Geological Survey of India (GSI) team comprising of:

- **Shri Sanjay Singh**, Director
- **Shri Shailendra Kumar Prajapati**, Senior Geologist
- **Shri Shashank Shekhar Singh**, Geologist
- **Shri Kevinguzo Chasie**, Geologist

**Team Award**

**Field (ii): Coal, Lignite and Coal Bed Methane Discovery & Exploration** of economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques and **Oil, Natural Gas, Shale Gas and Gas Hydrates Discovery & Exploration** (including project development and planning leading to exploitation of resources and reservoir management)

**Dr. Pawan Dewangan,**

Senior Principal Scientist

CSIR- National Institute of Oceanography, Goa

**Individual Award**

**SECTION- II - Mining, Mineral Beneficiation and Sustainable Mineral Development**



|  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <p><b>Field: (iii) Mining Technology</b> including development and application of new methods and technologies, research &amp; development. Conservation of mineral resources, systematic mine planning, mine safety, mine fires, mine hazards, mine reclamation &amp; rehabilitation.</p> <p><b>Dr. Harsh Kumar Verma,</b><br/>Senior Principal Scientist,<br/>CSIR-Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research, Bilaspur</p>                           | <p><b>Individual Award</b></p> |
| <p><b>Field (iv): Mineral Beneficiation</b> (including mineral processing, project development for utilization of low-grade ores &amp; production of value-added mineral products and mineral economics) <b>and Sustainable Mineral Development</b> (including mine closure, project development, institutional development and capacity building)</p> <p><b>Prof. Narasimha Mangadoddy,</b><br/>Department of Chemical Engineering,<br/>IIT Hyderabad</p> | <p><b>Individual Award</b></p> |
| <p><b>SECTION- III – Basic Geosciences</b></p>   |                                |

**Field (v): Basic Geosciences** including Stratigraphy, Structural Geology, Paleontology, Geodynamics, Geochemistry, Geochronology and Isotope Geology, Ocean Development (Oceanography and Marine Geology), Glaciology and Arctic & Antarctic Research including Geo-Scientific Expeditions; and science surveys/baseline geoscience data collection including Geological and Geochemical mapping & survey, and Systematic Thematic mapping.

**Dr. Rahul Mohan,**

Scientist F,

National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa

Geological Survey of India (GSI) team comprising of:

- **Shri Krishna Kumar**, Director
- **Dr. Pragya Pandey**, Geologist
- **Ms. Triparna Ghosh**, Geologist
- **Shri Debasish Bhattacharya**, Deputy Director General

**Individual Award**

**Team Award**

#### **SECTION- IV – Applied Geosciences**

**Field (vi): Applied Geology:** Engineering Geology, Geothermal Energy, Seismotectonics, Geostatistics, Remote Sensing and Geo-Information System (including spatial data management applications and data integration); Groundwater Exploration (including project development, hydrogeological studies and management of groundwater resources; Geo-Environmental Studies relating to mining, urban, industrial, coastal and desert management, paleoclimate, paleoenvironment, medical geology, climate change and studies related to their impact on ecosystem.

**Prof. Vikram Vishal,**

Department of Earth Sciences

IIT Bombay

**Individual Award**

**Field: (vii) Geophysics / Applied Geophysics:** New technologies in geophysical exploration, application of geophysical methods, geo-magnetism, geophysical survey techniques and instrumentation.

**Dr. Bantu Prasanta Kumar Patro,**

Chief Scientist,

CSIR, National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad

**Individual Award**

**Field (viii): Natural Hazard Investigations** including scientific studies related to natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and tsunamis.

**Prof. Srimath Tirumala Gudemella Raghukanth,**

Department of Civil Engineering,

IIT Madras, Chennai

**Individual Award**

### NATIONAL YOUNG GEOSCIENTIST AWARD– 2023

**Dr. Ashutosh Pandey,**

Assistant Professor

School of Earth, Environmental and Sustainability Sciences,

Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Thiruvananthapuram

**320.** Indian actor **Konidela Ram Charan Teja**, who works predominantly in Telugu cinema, has been awarded the title of '**Ambassador for Indian Art and Culture**' during the **15<sup>th</sup> edition** of the **Indian Film Festival of Melbourne (IFFM 2024)** held at the Palais Theatre in St Kilda, Melbourne (Australia).

- He has received this honour in recognition of his outstanding work in the Indian film industry.
- Ram Charan has worked in numerous Telugu movies such as 'Dhruva', 'Chirutha' and 'RRR'.
- With this, he has become the **first Indian** to be bestowed with the title of 'Ambassador for Indian Art and Culture.'

The IFFM is an annual festival hosted by the state government of Victoria, Australia, that reflects and celebrates the diversity of the Indian film industry.

**321.** The **Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)** has been awarded the **Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Award** in the category of **Sustainable Tourism for its Livelihood Recovery Project (STLRP)**.

This marks the third time NTB has received a PATA award in community-based tourism.

The award acknowledges the efforts made by STLRP in creating tourism employment opportunities and enhancing sustainable tourism development across all seven provinces of Nepal.

The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is a non-profit organization that serves as a catalyst for the responsible development of travel and tourism in the Asia-Pacific region.

## BOOKS & AUTHORS

**322.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi received **"Call of the Gir"** a coffee table book on Gir and Asiatic lions by Rajya Sabha Member, **Parimal Nathwani**.

This book combines vivid photography and narratives to highlight the urgency of conservation efforts.

This book is Parimal Nathwani's second such coffee-table book, published by the internationally known publisher QUIGNOG.

**323.** A memoir titled **"Breaking Rocks and Barriers: Memoirs of a Geologist and Mountaineer"** is penned by **Sudipta Sengupta**, a geologist and trained mountaineer.

The book is published by **HarperCollins India**.

In *Breaking Rocks and Barriers*, she narrates her many adventures as a geologist studying and doing fieldwork in remote areas around the world--from unexpected encounters with snakes in the Jaduguda mines of Bihar and trekking across a 'black glacier' in Norway to being engulfed by a thundercloud in Sweden and being greeted by a flock of penguins in Antarctica.

**324.** Harivansh Narayan Singh, the deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, released a book titled 'Bharat ke 75 mahan krantikari'. The book was written by Bhim Singh, MP, Rajya Sabha.

The book chronicles the lives of many revolutionary freedom fighters like Tantia Bhil, Surya Sen, Pritilata Waddedar and Permanand Jhansi, who have not been remembered much.

**325.** Bihar Governor **Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar** has recently launched a book titled '**Gandhian Statesman of Bihar: Nitish Kumar**' in Patna, Bihar.

- The book is published by **Prabhat Prakashan, New Delhi**.
- It is co-authored by Ashok Choudary, Minister of Rural Works Department, Government of Bihar, and his daughter Shambhavi Choudhary, Member of Parliament (MP Lok Sabha), Samastipur, Bihar.
- The book focuses on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's contributions to Bihar's development.

- It aims to inspire and educate younger generations about Nitish Kumar's work and legacy.

**326.** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has released a book titled "**Modi's Governance Triumph: Reshaping India's Path to Prosperity**" written by BJP leader **Tarun Chugh**.

The book captures the transformative changes brought by the Modi government in various sectors and regions, including Jammu and Kashmir.

The book is inspired by Narendra Modi's decades-long public life and his dedication to the country.

**327.** Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) of the Indian Air Force (IAF), has launched the inaugural comic book in the "**Heroes of the Indian Air Force**" series.

The 32-page book, developed by the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC) and managed by Anubhav Khanduri, features two stories: "Find Your Calling," which highlights the life of Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh, and "The Boyra Boys," depicting a significant air battle during the 1971 Indo-Pak War.

The comic aims to educate and inspire young readers about the IAF's heroic history and foster a sense of duty and aspiration.

## PERSON IN NEWS

**328.** President of India Droupadi Murmu has approved the appointment of Preeti Sudan as the **Chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**. Her appointment is effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

With this, she became the **second woman** to hold the position of chairperson of UPSC. Before her, the position had been held by R M Bathew in 1996.

She is an IAS officer from the 1983 batch.

She was the former Union Health Secretary.

She has succeeded Manoj Soni, who resigned earlier this month due to personal reasons, despite his tenure originally set to expire in May 2029.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is a constitutional body whose role is to recruit, select, and train civil servants for the Government of India. The body was established in 1926. It is headquartered in New Delhi.

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**329.** Lt Gen **Sadhna Saxena Nair** has assumed the office of **Director General Medical Services (Army)**. With this, she has become the **first woman** to be appointed to this prestigious position.



- Prior to this, she was the **first woman** to hold the post of **DG Hospital Services (Armed Forces)** on promotion to the rank of Air Marshal.
- She graduated from the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune with a distinguished academic record and was commissioned into the Army Medical Corps in December 1985.
- She is also the **first woman** Principal Medical Officer of Western Air Command, and Training Command, Indian Air Force (IAF).
- She was nominated as an expert member of Dr Kasturirangan Committee for drafting part of the medical education component of the National Education Policy.
- She has been awarded the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Air Command and Chief of the Air Staff Commendations as well as Vishisht Seva Medal by the President of India.

**330. Dr. Sundergopal Sridhar**, a Chemical Engineer and Chief Scientist at CSIR Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad, has been admitted as a **Fellow** of the prestigious **Royal Society of Chemistry (FRSC), London, UK** with a Member ID: 771115.

He has been recognized for his research in the area of membrane technology.

He has commissioned several membrane pilot plants based on Electrodialysis, Nanofiltration, Gas Permeation, and Reverse osmosis of capacities varying from 500–5000 L/h for solvent recovery, effluent treatment and gas purification in pharmaceutical, steel, textile, aroma chemicals, and petrochemical industries.

He has designed and installed more than 75 water purification plants based on Nanofiltration, Ultrafiltration, and Reverse osmosis of 600-4000 L/h capacity for purification of groundwater, surface water, and flood water for 5 Million population affected by fluorosis, typhoid, and other water-borne diseases in 10 States of India.

He has published 181 research papers in reputed international journals with an h-index of 53.

He is ranked among the Top 2% of Scientists worldwide by Stanford University, USA, and Elsevier Science Publishers in 2021, 2022 & 2023. He has 15 patents, 4 Books, and 50 Book Chapters to his credit.

**331. Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) Daljit Singh Chawdhary** has taken over the additional charge of **Director General, Border Security Force (BSF)**.

He is a 1990 batch officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS) Uttar Pradesh cadre.

He assumed the charge of DG SSB in January 2024.

He has succeeded Nitin Agarwal.

**332. Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak**, a Certified Management Accountant (CMA), has been elected as the **67<sup>th</sup> President** of the **Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI)** for the 2024-25 period.

He has succeeded Ashwin Dalwadi, who was the president for the 2023-24 period.

**TCA Srinivasa Prasad** has been elected as the **Vice President** of the Institute of Cost Accountants of India for 2024-25.

**333. Dr. Grinson George** has been appointed to the post of **Director** at the **ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)**.

Earlier, he led the Marine Biodiversity and Environment Management Division at CMFRI and served as Senior Programme Specialist at SAARC in Dhaka.

His expertise spans fishery resource management, marine biodiversity, environment management, fisheries oceanography, remote sensing, and climate change.

**334. Harish Dudani** has been appointed as a **Member of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)**. He held the post of Principal Judge, Family Court, in the High Court of Delhi.

Before this, he held the charge of District Judge (Commercial Court), Additional Session Judge, Special Judge (PC Act) CBI in the High Court of Delhi.

**335. Lt General Vikas Lakhera** has been appointed as the new **Director General of the Assam Rifles**, an organization fondly known as the "Sentinels of the Northeast".

He has become the **22<sup>nd</sup> DG of the Assam Rifles**.

He succeeded Lt General Pradeep Chandran Nair, who retired from the service on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.

Earlier, he served as the Additional Director General of Military Operations, handling information warfare.

**336. Surgeon Vice Admiral Anupam Kapur**, a distinguished medical professional and leader in the Indian Navy, took charge as the Director General Hospital Services (Armed Forces).

His career began with his commission into the Indian Navy on June 27, 1987.

Prior to this role, he served as the Command Medical Officer of the Western Naval Command and commanded notable Indian Navy hospitals, INHS Asvini and INHS Sanjivani.

He is an alumnus of the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, with specialization in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and further super-specialized in Gynecological Endoscopy.

His service has been recognized with the Nao Sena Medal, and he has been commended by the Chief of the Naval Staff and the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (West).

**337.** The central government has constituted a committee headed by ADG of Border Security Force (BSF), Eastern Command to monitor the situation along the India-Bangladesh border.

The committee also comprises IG of BSF Frontier Headquarters South Bengal, IG of BSF Frontier Headquarters Tripura, Member of Planning & Development from Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) and Secretary of LPAI.

**338. T.V. Somanathan** has been appointed as the Cabinet Secretary.

His tenure starts from **August 30, 2024**, and will last for **two years**.

He is an officer from the **1987 batch of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS)** of the **Tamil Nadu cadre**.

He will also serve as **Officer on Special Duty** in the Cabinet Secretariat until he officially takes over as Cabinet Secretary.

**339.** Piyush Gupta, the current CEO of DBS Group, will retire at the Annual General Meeting on March 28, 2025.

Tan Su Shan, appointed as Deputy CEO and Group Head of Institutional Banking, will succeed Gupta. She is set to be DBS's first female CEO.

Tan, 56, is a Singaporean with a distinguished career spanning 35 years in consumer banking, wealth management, and institutional banking.

She has previously worked at Morgan Stanley and Citigroup before joining DBS in 2010.

Tan emphasized continuity in DBS's core values—**culture, customers, collaboration, and continuity**—during the transition period from August 2024 to March 2025.

Tan's appointment is notable as she is the first "homegrown" successor in DBS's history, highlighting a significant milestone for the bank.

**340. Sandeep Poundrik** assumed charge as the **Secretary** of the **Ministry of Steel** at **Udyog Bhawan** on his appointment.

He is a **1993-batch IAS officer** from the **Bihar cadre**.

Before this role, he served as the **Additional Chief Secretary in the Industries Department** of Bihar.

He also held multiple other key positions in the Government of Bihar.

Previously, he served as an **Advisor in the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

He also held the position of Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

**341. Vinay Mohan Kwatra** officially took charge as the **Indian Ambassador to the United States** on August 13, 2024.

Kwatra succeeds **Taranjit Singh Sandhu**, who previously held the position.

Kwatra previously served as the **Minister of Commerce** at the Indian Embassy in the U.S. before this new role.

In his new capacity, he expressed his commitment to **strengthening the crucial partnership** between India and the United States.

Kwatra is the former **Foreign Secretary**, bringing extensive experience to this role.

**342. Rahul Navin** has been appointed as the **Director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED)**. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approved his appointment.

Rahul Navin is currently serving as the **Special Director** in the ED.

His appointment is for a term of **two years**.

The role of the ED Director involves overseeing and implementing laws related to financial crimes, including money laundering and economic offenses.

**343.** The Ministry of External Affairs has appointed **Parvathaneni Harish**, a 1990-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, as the next Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations at New York, USA.

He will succeed **Ruchira Kamboj** who retired from the post in June 2024.

He is currently serving as Ambassador of India to Germany.

**344.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking approval of the competent authority to enable **Sanjiv Ranjan** to take up the foreign assignment as **Secretary General, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in Mauritius**.

He will serve the post for three years, with effect from **January 1, 2025**, including the period up to his superannuation, i.e., 31 January 2026, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

He will succeed Salman Al Farisi (Indonesia).

**Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):**

- The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an inter-governmental organization formed in 1997 to foster regional economic cooperation. The IORA Secretariat is based in Mauritius and is headed by a fixed-term Secretary-General.
- IORA has 23 member states: India, Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, the Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.
- It comprises 12 dialogue partners: China, Egypt, the European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, South Korea, the UK and the US.
- IORA became an observer to the UN General Assembly and the African Union in 2015.

**345.** Vivek Joshi, currently Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, has been appointed as Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training.

Nagaraju Maddirala, previously Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Coal, will now serve as Secretary, Department of Financial Services.

Manoj Govil, the Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, will be the new Secretary, Department of Expenditure.

Deepti Gaur Mukherjee, CEO of National Health Authority, has been appointed as Secretary, Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Rajesh Kumar Singh, currently DPIIT Secretary, will serve as Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Defence and will succeed Aramane Giridhar as Secretary, Department of Defence.

Rajesh Kumar Singh will also have an extended tenure until October 31, 2026.

Amardeep Singh Bhatia will now be Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.

Punya Salila Srivastava, Special Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office, is appointed as Officer on Special Duty, Department of Health and Family Welfare, and will become Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare after Apurva Chandra.

Katikithala Srinivas will move to Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Chandra Sekhar Kumar will replace Katikithala Srinivas as Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs.

Vandana Gurnani has been appointed as Secretary (Coordination), Cabinet Secretariat.

Deepti Umashankar is appointed as Officer on Special Duty to the President of India and will succeed Rajesh Verma as Secretary to the President.

- 346.** HCL Technologies has announced the appointment of **Shiv Walia** as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the company effective from the close of business on **September 6, 2024**.

This decision follows the recommendations of the Nomination & Remuneration Committee and the Audit Committee.

Shiv Walia is taking over from **Prateek Aggarwal**, who has decided to step down from the position to pursue other opportunities. Prateek Aggarwal will remain with HCL Tech until September 6, 2024.

He is currently the Corporate Vice President & Global Head of FP&A and Business Finance Operations.

- 347.** **Paetongtarn Shinawatra** has become the youngest and second female **Prime Minister of Thailand**.

She has succeeded Phumtham Wechayachai, who served as Acting PM of Thailand for two days from 14<sup>th</sup> August 2024 following the removal of PM Srettha Thavisin.

She secured the position with 319 votes in favor, 145 against, and 27 abstentions.

- 348.** **Ashok Kumar Singh** has been appointed as the **Director General of Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)** headquartered in New Delhi.

He is a 1999 batch IAS officer from the **Kerala cadre**. His previous roles include Principal Secretary of the Water Resources Department in the Government of Kerala.

His extensive experience includes serving as the **Executive Director** in the **National Mission for Clean Ganga**, **Joint Secretary** in the Ministry of Defence, and **Director** in the Ministry of Finance at the central level.

His appointment is expected to bring valuable governance and management experience to the ESIC.

- 349.** **Amardeep Singh Bhatia**, a 1993-batch IAS officer from the Nagaland cadre, has officially taken on the role of **Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.

He succeeds Rajesh Kumar Singh, who has been appointed Officer on Special Duty in the Department of Defence. Bhatia brings a wealth of experience to his new position, having served in both central and state government roles, including significant positions in the Ministries of Corporate Affairs and Health & Family Welfare.



**350. M Suresh** has been appointed as the interim Chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI). This new role signifies an important shift in the leadership of one of India's key aviation organizations.

He has succeeded Sanjeev Kumar.

**351. Rajesh Nambiar** has been named the **President-designate of the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM)**, taking over from Debjani Ghosh, whose term ends in November 2024.

Following this new appointment, Rajesh Nambiar has stepped down from his position as Chairman and Managing Director of Cognizant India.

**352.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has sanctioned the appointment of **Salee Sukumaran Nair** as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank (TMB) for a three-year period.

Earlier, he served as Deputy Managing Director and Chief Credit Officer of State Bank of India, until May 2024, where he was responsible for managing the credit portfolio.

**353. Satish Kumar**, an Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS) officer, was appointed as the **Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Indian Railway Board (IRB)** under the Ministry of Railways (MoR).

His appointment marks a historic milestone as he becomes the **first** individual from the Scheduled Castes (SC) or Dalit community to hold this prestigious position in the IRB's history.

He assumed office on September 1, 2024, and will serve until his superannuation, with a possibility of re-employment on a contract basis from January 1 to August 31, 2025, or until further orders.

Satish Kumar succeeds **Jaya Varma Sinha**, who retired on August 31, 2024, and is expected to join the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) as an administrative member post-retirement.

**354.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of **Rajwinder Singh Bhatti**, a 1990-batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre, as the Director General (DG) of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

He succeeded Anish Dayal Singh, the DG of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), who has been holding additional charge as DG of CISF since August 2024.

Rajwinder Singh Bhatti will serve as DG until his superannuation on September 30, 2025, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

**355. Jay Shah**, who has served as the Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) since 2019 and as the President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) since 2021, has been elected as the **Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC)** starting 1st December 2024.

At 35 years old, he became the youngest-ever Chairman in the history of the ICC and is the 3rd Indian to hold this prestigious role.

He is set to leave his current position as BCCI Secretary during the Board's Annual General Meeting (AGM) scheduled for late September or October 2024.

**356.** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has given its nod for the re-appointment of **Nehal Vora** as the MD & CEO of Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL).

He has been serving as MD & CEO since September 2019, with his first term set to conclude on September 17, 2024.

**357.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed **B Srinivasan**, a 1992 batch IPS officer of the Bihar cadre, as the **Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG)**.

He succeeds Anish Dayal Singh, who was serving as the DG of NSG on an additional charge basis from 15th August 2024.

His tenure as DG will last until his superannuation on 31 August 2027.

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**358.** The National Association of Software and Service Companies (Nasscom) has appointed **Sindhu Gangadharan**, Managing Director of SAP Labs India, as its new chairperson, succeeding Rajesh Nambiar, who has been named Nasscom president-designate.

The leadership's key priorities include focusing on disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), positioning India as a global hub for digital talent, catalyzing innovation, developing a favorable policy ecosystem, and strengthening engineering R&D capabilities.

Sindhu Gangadharan, who is the first woman to lead SAP Labs India, also holds the global role of Head of Customer Innovation Services at SAP.

Previously, she served as the chair of the Nasscom GCC Council and is involved in various boards and committees, including Siemens India, Titan Company, and the Steering Committee of the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce.

## OBITUARIES

**359.** Former India cricketer and head coach **Anshuman Gaekwad** has passed away at the age of 71 in Vadodara, Gujarat. He was born on 23 September 1952 in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

He played in 40 Test matches and 15 One Day Internationals.

He was the coach of the squad which finished as runners-up at the **2000 ICC Champions Trophy**.

He scored his highest Test score of 201 against Pakistan at Jalandhar in 1982–83.

He was awarded **the C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award**, the highest honour conferred by BCCI on a former player, in **June 2018**.

**360.** Noted Indian classical dancer **Dr. Yamini Krishnamurthy** has passed away at the age of 83 in New Delhi. She was born on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1940 in Madanapalli, in the present-day Chittoor district, of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

She was recognized for her contributions to **Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi**.

She was a recipient of the **Padma Shri (1968), Padma Bhushan (2001), Padma Vibhushan (2016) and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1977)**.

She also received the Natya Shastra Award from the Shambhavi School of Dance in 2014.

She also published her autobiography, "**A Passion For Dance**" in 1995.

**361.** Indian social worker and Gandhian activist **Shobhana Ranade** has passed away at the age of 99 in Pune, Maharashtra. She was born on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1924 in Pune, Maharashtra.

She co-founded the Maitreyee Ashram and Shishu Niketan, the first child welfare center in the region.

She started the campaign, Adim Jaati Seva Sangh, a program for imparting training to Naga women on charkha weaving.

In 1998, she established the Kasturba Mahila Khadi Gramodyog Vidyalaya, an institute for destitute women, to train them in 20 village trades and skills.

The Government of India honoured her in **2001**, with the **Padma Bhushan**, the third highest civilian award, for her services to society.

**362.** Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, a prominent figure in West Bengal politics and former Chief Minister, has died at the age of **80**. His health had been declining due to multiple ailments.

Bhattacharya, known for his significant contributions to the state's governance, served as the **Chief Minister from 2000 to 2011**.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya was a member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), Bhattacharya was a key figure in West Bengal's politics, especially during the Left Front government's rule.

**363. K Natwar Singh**, a veteran Congress leader and former **External Affairs Minister** of India, passed away at the age of 93.

Born in **1931** in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, he was a graduate of **St. Stephen's College** and later studied at **Cambridge University** and **Peking University**.

He joined the **Indian Foreign Service (IFS)** in 1953 and served as India's **Ambassador to Pakistan** (1980-82).

Singh entered politics in the 1980s, becoming a Member of Parliament in **1984** and served as Union Minister under **Rajiv Gandhi**.

He was awarded the **Padma Bhushan** in 1984 and the **Padma Vibhushan** in 1983.

Natwar Singh resigned as External Affairs Minister in 2006 amid the **oil-for-food scam** allegations.

He authored his autobiography, **One Life Is Not Enough**, published in 2014.

**364.** Former Chief Minister of Meghalaya **Salseng Chada Marak** has passed away at the age of 83 in Tura, Meghalaya. He was born in 1941 in Baghmara, Assam Province, British India.

- He became the **first Chief Minister of Meghalaya** to complete a **five-year term** in 1993.
- He also held the office of the CM for the shortest time – 12 days – in 1998 when the Congress-led coalition collapsed.
- He also served as the state Congress chief in 2003.

**365. Director-General of Indian Coast Guard Rakesh Pal** has passed away in Chennai, Tamil Nadu at the age of 59. He was born in 1965 in Uttar Pradesh.

- He joined the Indian Coast Guard in January 1989.
- He was the 25th Director General of the Indian Coast Guard.
- He commanded all classes of Indian Coast Guard ships namely; ICGS Samarth, ICGS Vijit, ICGS Sucheta Kriplani, ICGS Ahalyabai, and ICGS C-03.
- The Officer has also Commanded two Coast Guard bases of the forward area in Gujarat - Okha & Vadinar.
- He was conferred with Tatrakshak Medal in 2013 and the President Tatrakshak Medal in 2018 for his illustrious service.

**366.** Dr. Ram Narain Agarwal, a distinguished Indian scientist and a key figure in the development of India's missile program, passed away in Hyderabad at the age of 84. Revered as the 'Father of Agni Missiles,' Dr. Agarwal played a pivotal role in advancing India's defense capabilities.

He served as the Agni program director and also as the director of the Advanced Systems Laboratory in Hyderabad.

He led the first successful launch of the Agni on May 22, 1989. He piloted the development of various versions of the InterContinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM).

He was awarded the **Padma Shri in 1990** and the **Padma Bhushan in 2000**.

**367. Utpalendu Chakrabarty** was a celebrated filmmaker and writer known for his significant contributions to Bengali cinema.

He was known for his award-winning Bengali film '**Chokh**', which received the National Film Award for Best Feature Film and Best Direction in 1983.

He directed films such as Moynatadanto, Chandaneer, Phaansi, and Debshishu.

He also made documentaries on Satyajit Ray and Debabrata Biswas.

He received several prestigious awards, including the Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director and the National Film Development Corporation Limited (NFDC) award.

**368. Nari Hira** has passed away in August 2024. He was born in 1938 in modern-day Karachi, Pakistan.

He began his career as a journalist in the 1960s before shifting to publishing, where he earned the nickname 'King of Indian Magazines.'

He was known for his pioneering work in publishing popular magazines such as Stardust, Savvy, Showtime, Society, and Health.

Nari Hira also ventured into film production through Magna Films. He received the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' from the Indian Magazine Congress for his contributions to Indian publications.

## SPORTS

**369.** The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) has announced that **India** will host the next edition of the **Men's Asia Cup cricket tournament** in the **T-20 (Twenty20) format** in **2025** and **Bangladesh** will host the Men's Asia Cup cricket tournament in **ODI (One Day International) format** in **2027**.

Both the 2025 and 2027 editions will feature **13 games** each, totalling 26 matches.

The Asia Cup is set to return to India after 34 years in 2025, with the country hosting the T20 edition of the tournament as a precursor to the T20 World Cup scheduled for 2026.

The first Asia Cup tournament in T20 was held in 2016.

The 2023 edition, hosted by Pakistan, was conducted in a 'hybrid model' due to India's refusal to travel to Pakistan. As a result, India's matches were played in Sri Lanka.

**Note:** India, the most successful team in Asia Cup history with **eight titles**, is the defending champion. India previously hosted the tournament in 1990, defeating Sri Lanka in the final.

**370.** Pakistan Cricket Board's incumbent chairman **Mohsin Naqvi** will become the next **President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC)**. His two-year term will commence in **January 2025**.

BCCI secretary **Jay Shah** is the incumbent ACC president, having got a one-year extension in January 2024 for a third consecutive term.

He is expected to take on the responsibilities for the Asia Cup in 2025 (T20I) in India and the 2027 edition in Bangladesh (ODI).

**371.** Indian shooter **Manu Bhaker** has been named **India's flag bearer at the Paris 2024 Olympics Closing Ceremony**, which will be held on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

For the Opening Ceremony in Paris 2024, **PV Sindhu and Sharath Kamal** carried India's flag during the Parade of Nations, held on the Seine River.

Manu Bhaker made her second appearance at the Summer Games in Paris 2024 and won India's first medal in shooting since London 2012.

She also became the first Indian woman in India to win a medal in shooting and is the third Indian post-independence – after Sushil Kumar and PV Sindhu – to win two Olympic medals.

She opened India's medal tally with a bronze in women's 10m air pistol and followed it up with another bronze alongside Sarabjot Singh in the 10m air pistol mixed event.

**Note:** Wrestler Bajrang Punia was India's flag-bearer for the Closing Ceremony at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

**372.** Former Indian wicketkeeper & batter **Dinesh Karthik** has been named the league ambassador for the **third edition of the SA20 League**. He will be working very closely with fellow SA20



ambassador AB de Villiers and the management team to help strengthen the league's global fan base and reinforce brand awareness across key strategic markets in India and the United Kingdom.

The SA20 comprises six franchises -- MI Cape Town, Joburg Super Kings, Durban Super Giants, Paarl Royals, Pretoria Capitals, and Sunrisers Eastern Cape, all of which are owned by the owners of IPL teams.

SA20, known as the Betway SA20 for sponsorship reasons, is a Twenty20 franchise cricket tournament in South Africa, organized by Cricket South Africa (CSA) and first contested during the 2023 season.

- 373.** In a historic achievement at the Paris Olympics 2024, the Indian Hockey team secured the **Bronze Medal**, demonstrating a strong performance in the sport.

This accomplishment is noteworthy as it represents the first instance of India winning back-to-back Olympic medals in Hockey in over fifty years.

The Indian team's remarkable achievement underscores the resurgence of Hockey in India and highlights the team's dedication and excellence on the global stage.

- 374.** India won the **CAVA Women's Volleyball Nations League** final by defeating Nepal 3-2. This victory marks India's second title in this competition.

The final was held at the Dashrath Stadium in Kathmandu.

This win not only secured the championship for India but also redeemed them from a previous loss to Nepal during the league stage.

**India clinched the Gold medal**, while Nepal took the Silver, and Iran secured the Bronze.

**India, Iran, Maldives, Sri Lanka and host Nepal** participated in the single round-robin tournament from August 1 to 7, vying for top honour in the CAVA Women's Nations League.

- 375.** Aman Sehrawat won the bronze medal in the men's freestyle **57kg wrestling event at the Paris 2024 Olympics**.

At 21 years and 24 days, **he broke PV Sindhu's record to become India's youngest Olympic medalist**.

Aman Sehrawat defeated **Puerto Rico's Darian Cruz with a 13-5 scoreline**.

This was India's first wrestling medal at Paris 2024 and the sixth overall at the Games.

Aman Sehrawat also marked India's eighth Olympic wrestling medal in history.

- 376.** India won **six medals** in total including **one silver and five bronze**, three of which come from shooting.

This was India's joint second highest total medal haul after the previous Games.

Manu Bhaker won the first medal for India in the women's 10 m air pistol event.

India ranks 71st in the medal tally.

USA topped the medal tally with 127 medals (40 gold, 44 silver and 43 bronze), China comes at second place with 91 medals (40 gold, 27 silver and 24 bronze) and Japan is at third place with 45 medals (20 gold, 12 silver and 13 bronze)

India's Performance at Paris Olympics 2024

| Indian Medal Winners at Paris Olympics 2024 |        |                                      |
|---|--------|--------------------------------------|
| Indian athletes                             | Medal  | Event                                |
| <b>Manu Bhaker</b>                          | Bronze | Women's 10m air pistol event         |
| <b>Manu Bhaker and Sarabjot Singh</b>       | Bronze | 10m air pistol mixed team event      |
| <b>Swapnil Kusale</b>                       | Bronze | Men's 50m rifle 3 positions          |
| <b>Indian hockey team</b>                   | Bronze | Men's hockey                         |
| <b>Neeraj Chopra</b>                        | Silver | Men's Javelin Throw                  |
| <b>Aman Sehrawat</b>                        | Bronze | Wrestling Men's 57kg freestyle event |

**377.** Real Lona FC won the Kargil District Football League-2024, defeating Shaheen Saliskote FC in the final held in Kargil, Ladakh

Kargil Football Association with support from Ladakh Football Association organized the football league.

The Chief Executive Councillor (CEC) of LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoon, and Member of Parliament (MP) Ladakh, Mohmad Haneefa, were the Chief Guest and Guest of Honour, respectively, at the event.

The closing ceremony concluded with a renewed commitment from both the CEC and MP Ladakh to continue fostering sports in the region, ensuring that the youth of Ladakh have the resources and opportunities to excel on national and international stages.

**378.** The **Global Pravasi Women's Kabaddi League (GPKL)** is the first of its kind, marking a major milestone in the promotion of women's kabaddi on a global scale.

Haryana has been chosen to host this significant event, showcasing India's dedication to the sport.

The league will see participation from female athletes representing over 15 countries, including teams from **England, Poland, Argentina, Canada, and Italy.**

The event is being organized by the Holistic International Pravasi Sports Association (HIPSA) in collaboration with **World Kabaddi.**

An MoU was signed between HIPSA and the **Government of Haryana** to ensure the successful execution of the event.

The event is also part of a broader effort to include Kabaddi in the Olympic Games, as part of India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics.

**379.** The 17th International Earth Sciences Olympiad (IESO) took place in Beijing, China, from August 08-16, 2024.

**Indian Team Achievement:** The four-member Indian team won 3 gold, 2 silver, and 3 bronze medals.

**Team Composition:** The students were from Gujarat, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan.

**Competition Categories:** The medals were awarded across three categories:

- Theory and Practical
- Earth System Project
- International Team Field Investigation

The IESO is a key initiative under the Ministry of Earth Sciences' REACHOUT (Research, Education, Training, and Outreach) scheme, designed to promote earth sciences education and research in India.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences supports IESO as part of the REACHOUT scheme, which falls under the PRITHVI (PRITHvi Vigyan) initiative, approved by the Union Cabinet in January 2024.

**380.** **Sumit Antil**, a gold medalist in the men's **Javelin Throw F64** category at the Tokyo Paralympics, is set to lead the Indian contingent.

**Bhagyashri Jadhav**, a **shot-put star**, won a silver medal in the **shot put F34** category at the 2022 Asian Para Games. She finished seventh at the Tokyo Paralympics and recently secured a silver in the Women's Shot Put F34 at the Para-Athletics World Championships held in May 2024.

The **Paris Paralympics 2024** will occur from **28th August to 8th September**, with **84 Indian athletes** participating, the largest contingent ever for India at the Paralympics.

In comparison, **54 athletes** represented India at the Tokyo Paralympics.

**381. Alexander Zverev** achieved his 50th tour-level win of the season by defeating **Karen Khachanov** 6-3, 6-2 at the **Cincinnati Open**.

This victory marks Zverev as the first player this year to reach the milestone of 50 wins, leading the ATP tour in this category for the 2024 season.

Zverev has now reached the 50-win mark in a season five times in his career, with previous milestones in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2023.

Zverev, who won the Cincinnati Open in 2021, is currently set to face either Max Purcell or Pablo Carreno Busta in the third round.

In the overall rankings for this season, Jannik Sinner is second with 45 wins, followed by Casper Ruud with 44 wins and Carlos Alcaraz with 38 wins.

**382.** The Pro-Govinda League's prize distribution ceremony saw **16 teams** demonstrating their skills, reflecting the competitive spirit of the league.

A total of **32 teams** participated in the league this year, with the top 16 teams showcased at the ceremony.

The government has taken responsibility for the insurance coverage of these Govindas, with 75,000 Govindas insured this year.

This sport has been practiced since the pre-independence era and has been included in the category of adventurous sports.

The event underscored the growing popularity and global recognition of the traditional sport of Govinda.

This year, the sport gained **international exposure** with 60 Govindas being sent to Spain, marking a significant milestone.

**383.** Left-handed opener **Shikhar Dhawan** has announced his retirement from international cricket and will be participating in the Legends League Cricket in September 2024. His final competitive match was in April 2024, where he led the Punjab Kings in IPL 2024.

He retires with 24 centuries—17 in ODIs and seven in Tests—across 269 international matches.

In the IPL, he played for Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians, Deccan Chargers, Sunrisers Hyderabad, and Punjab Kings.

He is the **second-highest run-scorer** in the league, trailing only behind Virat Kohli.

He holds the record for the fastest Test hundred on debut. He reached his hundred in **85 balls** against **Australia** at Mohali in March 2013. He also became the oldest Indian to do so at 27 years and 99 days.

He also holds the record for the highest score by an Indian on Test debut with 187 against Australia in Mohali in 2013.

**384.** The Indian surfing team, comprising **Kamali Prakash, Ajeesh Ali, Srikanth D, and Sanjay Selvamani**, won the silver medal at the Team Challenge Maruhabaa Cup at the Asian Surfing Championships (ASC) 2024 held in **Thulusdhoo, Maldives**.

The team achieved a score of 24.13, placing them second behind Japan, who won the gold with a score of 58.40. Chinese Taipei secured the bronze with a score of 23.93, while China finished in fourth place with a score of 22.10.

**385.** **Bangladesh team** has won the **2024 SAFF U-20 Championship**. This win marked Bangladesh's first-ever title in the SAFF Under-20 Championship.

The tournament, organized by the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF), began on August 18, 2024, and featured Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, and Bhutan.

India had previously won the championship in 2019, 2022, and 2023.

The biennial championship, for male footballers under the age of 20, was first held in Nepal in August 2015.

## IMPORTANT DAYS

**386.** **Muslim Women's Rights Day** is observed annually across India on **1<sup>st</sup> August** to celebrate the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act 2019 which prohibits the practice of Triple Talaq in India.

The year 2024 marks the observance of the 5th Muslim Women's Rights Day. The day was first observed in 2020.

**387.** **World Breastfeeding Week** is held in the first week (1-7) of August every year, supported by WHO, UNICEF and many Ministries of Health and civil society partners.

The theme for 2024 is **"Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all."**

Breastfeeding is one of the most effective ways to ensure child health and survival and yet currently, fewer than half of infants under 6 months old are exclusively breastfed.

**388. World FinTech Day** is observed annually on **1<sup>st</sup> August** to recognize financial technology and its transformative impact on the global financial industry. The day marks the death anniversary of Cosima de' Medici in 1464. He was a 15th-century Italian politician and banker who established the Medici Bank and influenced the present-day banking system.

**389. Indian Organ Donation Day (IODD)** is observed annually on **3<sup>rd</sup> August** to commemorate the first successful deceased heart transplant in India in 1994 after the promulgation of The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994.

The day was first observed in **2010** to spread awareness about brain stem death and organ donation, dispel myths and misconceptions associated with organ donation.

The year 2024 marks the observance of the **14<sup>th</sup> Indian Organ Donation Day**.

To mark the day, the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organized an Organ Donation awareness program in New Delhi.

In India, the organ donation rate has increased four times to 18,378 in the last ten years.

**390. Earth Overshoot Day** marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year.

In 2024, the day falls on **1<sup>st</sup> August**.

**391. Aadi Perukku**, also known as Pathinettam Perukku, is an auspicious festival observed on the **18th day** of the **Tamil month** of Aadi. This festival is observed to show gratitude to Mother Nature and the monsoon god for providing an uninterrupted supply of water.

All the lakes are worshipped in the state of Tamil Nadu.

During the festival, **Goddess Parvathi** is venerated on the banks of the **River Cauvery** and has been offered distinct rice foods and cuisines.

This day is also celebrated as Pathinettam Perukku, Padinattam or Pathinettam means eighteen and Perukku means rising.

In 2024, the festival falls on **3rd August**.



**392. National Bone & Joint Day** is observed annually on **4<sup>th</sup> August** across India to increase awareness about the importance of bone & joint health and to educate people about preventive measures and early detection of various musculoskeletal disorders and conditions.

The day was first observed in 2012.

**393. National Handloom Day** is observed annually on **7<sup>th</sup> August** to honour the handloom weaving community and highlight the contribution of this sector in the socio-economic development of the country.

The year 2024 marks the **10th anniversary** of National Handloom Day.

The **Swadeshi Movement** was also launched on the same date in the year 1905. The first National Handloom Day was inaugurated on **7 August 2015** by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Chennai.

**394.** Organ Donation Day is observed on August 13 each year, and this year, in 2024, it falls on a Tuesday.

Theme : "Be the Reason for Someone's Smile Today!"

This theme aims to highlight the critical role that organ donation plays in saving lives and to promote awareness about the urgent need for more donors.

**395. The Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS) Day 2024, celebrated in New Delhi, highlighted the theme 'ICoAS @ Viksit Bharat.'**

This theme underscores the critical role of ICoAS officers in contributing to India's vision of being a developed nation by 2047.

Dr. T. V. Somanathan, Finance Secretary, appreciated the officers' dedication and released an e-Book detailing their achievements.

The event included screenings, presentations on cost audit, and technical sessions, including discussions on digital currency and cost control.

**396. World Elephant Day** is observed on August 12 to **raise awareness** about the challenges faced in **elephant conservation**.

It was established in 2012 by **Patricia Sims of Canada** and the **Elephant Reintroduction Foundation of Thailand**.

The day emphasizes addressing issues like **habitat loss** and the importance of **elephants in ecosystem balance**.

**Elephants** play a critical role in dispersing seeds and promoting **forest regeneration**.

The initiative involves partnerships with over **100 organizations** and engages millions globally to support **elephant protection efforts**.

**397. World Humanitarian Day** is observed annually on **19<sup>th</sup> August** to honour individuals who indulge in humanitarian work. The day is also marked in memory of the Canal Hotel bomb attack (19<sup>th</sup> August 2003) in Baghdad, Iraq, killing 22 people, including Sergio Vieira Mello, Chief Humanitarian in Iraq.

The day is a campaign by the *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)*. The day was first observed in 2009.

The tagline of the campaign 2024 is **#ActForHumanity**.

**398. International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism** is observed annually on **21<sup>st</sup> August** to support and pay tribute to the victims and survivors of terrorism. It also aims to promote and protect fundamental freedoms and human rights of victims. The year 2024 marks the observance of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.

The day was first observed in 2018.

**Theme 2024:** *"Voices for Peace: Victims of Terrorism as Peace Advocates and Educators"*

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**399. Sadbhavna Diwas** is observed annually on **20th August** to commemorate the birth anniversary of late Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India. This day is observed to encourage national integration, peace, affection and communal harmony among Indian people of all religions.

The year 2024 marks the observance of the **80th birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi**.

The day was instituted in 1992 by Congress.

#### **Rajiv Gandhi:**

He was born on 20th August 1944 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was an Indian politician representative of the Indian National Congress. He served as the **6th Prime Minister of India** from 1984 to 1989. He was the youngest Prime Minister of India. He was assassinated on 21 May 1991 in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu. He was awarded Bharat Ratna (posthumously) in 1991.

**400. Renewable Energy Day**, also known as Akshay Urja Diwas, is observed annually across India on **20<sup>th</sup> August** to raise awareness about the development and adoption of renewable energy in India. The day was initiated in 2004 by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. The day also commemorates the birthday of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

| Important Day                                       | Date/Month                                | Theme for 2024  | Remark  |
|---|---|---|---|
| World Lung Cancer Day                               | 1 <sup>st</sup> August                    |   | <b>Pearl or white</b> is the colour of the Lung Cancer Awareness ribbon.<br><b>November</b> is observed as Lung Cancer Awareness Month. |
| Muslim Women's Rights Day                           | 1 <sup>st</sup> August                    |   |   |
| World Wide Web Day                                  | 1 <sup>st</sup> August                    |   | World Wide Web (WWW) was introduced by Tim Berners Lee on 1 <sup>st</sup> August 1991.  |
| World FinTech Day                                   | 1 <sup>st</sup> August                    |   |   |
| World Breastfeeding Week                            | 1 <sup>st</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> August | Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all.   |   |
| Earth Overshoot Day                                 | 1st August (2024)                         |   |   |
| Indian Organ Donation Day                           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> August                    |   | The day was first observed in 2010.   |
| National Bone & Joint Day                           | 4 <sup>th</sup> August                    |   |   |
| Hiroshima Day                                       | 6 <sup>th</sup> August                    |   | The year 2024 marks the 79th anniversary of Hiroshima Day.  |
| National Handloom Day                               | 7 <sup>th</sup> August                    |   | The day was first observed in 2015.   |
| National Javelin Day                                | 7 <sup>th</sup> August                    |   |   |
| ASEAN Day   | 8th August                                |   |   |
| Nagasaki Day  | 9th August                                |   |   |
| International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples | 9th August                                | Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact. |   |
| World Lion Day                                      | 10th August                               |   | The day was first observed in 2013.   |

|  |             |   |   |
|--|-------------|---|---|
| World Biofuel Day  | 10th August |   | The day was first observed in 2015.   |
| World Steelpan Day   | 11th August |   |   |
| World Elephant Day   | 12th August | Safeguarding Elephants Habitat : Our Shared Responsibility                  |   |
| International Youth Day  | 12th August | From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development |   |
| International Lefthanders Day  | 13th August |   | The day was first observed in 1976.   |
| World Organ Donation Day   | 13th August | Be the Reason for Someone's Smile Today                                     |   |
| Partition Horrors Remembrance Day  | 14th August |   |   |
| Independence Day of India  | 15th August | Viksit Bharat   |   |
| World Photography Day  | 19th August | AN ENTIRE DAY   | The day was first observed in 2010.   |
| World Humanitarian Day   | 19th August |   |   |
| World Mosquito Day   | 20th August | Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world           |   |
| Sadbhavna Diwas  | 20th August |   | The year 2024 marks the observance of the 80th birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi. |
| Renewable Energy Day   | 20th August |   | The day was first observed in 2004.   |
| World Senior Citizen's Day   | 21st August |   |   |
| International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism | 21st August | Voices for Peace: Victims of Terrorism as Peace Advocates and Educators     |   |
| International Day Commemorating the                                      | 22nd August |   |   |

|  |                          |   |  |
|--|--------------------------|---|--|
| Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief                    |                          |   |  |
| Internaut Day  | 23rd August              |   | The day marks the invention of the World Wide Web (WWW). Tim Berners Lee invented the WWW in 1989. |
| National Space Day   | 23rd August              | Touching Lives while Touching the Moon                        | The day was first observed in 2024.  |
| International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition | 23rd August              |   |  |
| World Water Week   | 23 August to 1 September | Bridging Borders: Water for a Peaceful and Sustainable Future | The week was celebrated since 1991.  |
| World Gujarati Language Day  | 24th August              |   | The day commemorates the birth anniversary of the great writer of Gujarat 'Veer Narmad'            |
| International Dog Day  | 26th August              |   | The day was first observed in 2004.  |
| Women's Equality Day   | 26th August              |   | The day is observed annually across the USA.   |
| International Day Against Nuclear Tests                                    | 29th August              |   | The day was first observed in 2010.  |
| National Sports Day  | 29th August              |   | The day commemorates the birth anniversary of Hockey Wizard Major Dhyan Chand.                     |
| National Small Industry Day  | 30th August              |   | The day was first observed in 2001.  |
| International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances                | 30th August              |   | The day was first observed in 2011.  |
| International Whale Shark Day  | 30th August              |   | The day was first observed in 2012   |
| International Day for People of African Descent                            | 31st August              |   | The day was first observed in 2021.  |