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NEWS

**WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS
APRIL 2024-WEEK 2**

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NATIONAL AFFAIR

- 1. India will stop importing urea** by the end of **2025** due to an increase in local production capacity with the commissioning of new fertilizer plants. This has been announced by the Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Mansukh Mandaviya.

India is a big importer of Urea and meets around 30% of its 35 million tonnes of annual urea requirement from imports.

The urea production in the country has increased from 225.08 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to **284.95 lakh tonnes** in **2022-23**.

In 2022-23, the total import of Urea was **75.8 lakh tonnes**, which is around 30% of the domestic demand.

The main sources of urea imports are Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

- 2. The Indian Army** has integrated the '**Akashteer Command and Control System**' into its Air Defence Corps to bolster air defence security.

This advanced system, developed by the **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**, is part of India's self-reliance initiative.

The Akashteer project is a cutting-edge initiative designed to automate air defence control and reporting processes by digitising the entire process.

The Army's 'Year of Technological Absorption' in 2024 aims to expedite the integration of modern technologies, reinforcing India's air defence capabilities.

3. The President of India Droupadi Murmu has launched India's first indigenous anti-cancer CAR-T cell therapy, NexCAR19, at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay.

NexCAR19 is designed to target cancer cells carrying the **CD19 protein**, a marker on cancer cells, enhancing precision in treatment. The therapy is for people with **B-cell lymphomas** who did not respond to standard treatments like chemotherapy, leading to relapse or recurrence of the cancer.

It has been developed jointly by **IIT Bombay, Tata Memorial Centre, and ImmunoACT**, which is a company incubated at IIT Bombay.

India is one of the first developing countries to have its indigenous CAR-T and gene therapy platform.

CAR-T cell therapy:

- Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy is a type of cell-based gene therapy which involves altering the genes inside T-cells to help them attack cancer cells.
- T-cells are special cells (a type of white blood cells that find and fight illness and infection) whose primary function is cytotoxic, meaning it can kill other cells.
- In the therapy, T-cells are harvested from the patient's blood.
- Researchers modify these cells in the laboratory so that they express specific proteins on their surface known as chimeric antigen receptors (CAR).
- These cells are then grown and multiplied in the laboratory and then inserted back into the patient.
- This genetic modification allows CAR T-cells to effectively bind to the cancer cells and destroy them, especially in blood cancers like leukaemia and lymphomas.
- As CAR-T cells directly activate the patient's immune system against cancer, it makes the treatment more clinically effective than surgery, Radiotherapy and Chemotherapy.

4. A two-day Coastal Security Exercise 'Sagar Kavach 01/24' has been held in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. The assets of Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard, Marine Police, Fisheries, Customs and other security agencies have participated in the exercise.

The exercise witnessed enhanced preparedness, response mechanism, surveillance capabilities coordination between the coastal security stake holders.

5. Director General Rakesh Pal of the Indian Coast Guard has inaugurated the Indian Coast Guard Aquatic Centre in ICGS Mandapam near Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu.

Director General Rakesh Pal is on a 4-day visit to Indian Coast Guard bases in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry.

He reviewed the operational preparedness and development of conforming infrastructure in the region.

He also visited ICG Station Krishnapatnam and directly reviewed the infrastructure projects.

6. The Ministry of External Affairs has approved India Ports Global (IPGL) proposal to take over the entire operation of the Sittwe port, located on the Kaladan River in the Rakhine province of Myanmar.

With this, the Sittwe port of Myanmar became the **second international port** after the Shahid Beheshti Port, Chabahar of Iran to come under the control of India Ports Global Limited.

India controls only two terminals in Chabahar port, while India has full control over the Sittwe Port.

The recently approved deal included a long-term lease of the port to India, which will be renewed every three years.

India Ports Global Limited is a subsidiary of Sagarmala Development Company Limited, which is under the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

7. Secretary (Telecom), Dr Neeraj Mittal, has virtually launched the "Experimental Licence Module for 100 5G Labs" at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

This initiative aims to simplify the experimental licence requirements for these institutions, facilitating smoother operations and fostering innovation in the 5G domain.

These labs will be using 5G frequency bands for carrying out various experiments and testing use cases.

Thus, they need to obtain Experimental (Non-Radiating) category of license from the Department of Telecommunication to ensure interference-free operations to licensed TSPs.

8. The Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) has introduced its official brand-new logo with the tagline "Fuelling Sustainable Growth." This change is a part of the company's commitment to sustainable growth and eco-friendly practices.

The CCL is a Category-I Mini-Ratna Company. It was set up on 1st November 1975.

9. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has constructed 12,349 km of national highways in 2023-24, the second highest in its history.

- In FY21, MoRTH had constructed a record 13,327 kilometres of national highways.
- The national highways of 10,331 kilometres were constructed in 2022-23 against 10,457 kilometres in 2021-22.
- The national highways of 10,237 kilometres were built in 2019-20.
- The MoRTH has awarded 8,581 national highway projects in 2023-24.

The Government of India (GoI) launched a pilot project in March 2024 to provide cashless treatment to road accident victims. The accident victims will be entitled to cashless treatment of up to Rs 1.5 lakh.

10. French carmaker Citroën has become the first multinational car manufacturer in India to export domestically made electric vehicles to the international market.

Citroën commenced the export of 500 units of "Made in India" ë-C3 electric cars to Indonesia from Kamarajar Port near Chennai.

The move aligned with Citroën's global ambitions of democratising electric mobility to increase the adoption of sustainable and clean modes of transportation.

The ë-C3, crafted with modern design and innovation, offers a 320 km range certified by ARAI MIDC, along with 100 percent DC Fast Charge and 15 AMP Home Charging options for convenience.

It is available in 13 exterior colour combinations and 47 customisation options.

- 11. India's household debt** levels have reached a record high of **40 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** in **December 2023 (Q3FY24)**. This is according to a report issued by a financial services firm **Motilal Oswal**.

The report revealed that within household debt, unsecured personal loans have experienced the most rapid growth, followed by secured debt, agricultural loans, and business loans.

The report highlighted that throughout the first nine months of the previous year, households' gross financial savings saw a slight increase to 10.8 percent of GDP from 10.5 percent in the corresponding period of 2022-23.

The financial liabilities also escalated proportionally to 5.8 percent of GDP from 5.5 percent of GDP.

The annual borrowings of households surged to 5.8 percent of GDP in 2022-23, marking the second-highest figure in the post-independence era.

The report emphasised that India's Gross Domestic Savings (GDS) declined to 30.2 percent of GDP, lower than the 31-32 percent range observed between 2013-14 and 2018-19.

In September 2023, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) data showed that net financial savings of households was at the lowest in decades, reaching 5.1 percent of GDP in FY23 compared to 7.2 percent in FY22.

- 12. The General Insurance industry in India** has reported a growth of **12.78%** in the **Fiscal Year 2023-24 (FY24)**. The growth was primarily driven by the health and motor insurance segments, although there was a marginal decrease in liability, crop insurance, and marine cargo.

In FY23, the insurance industry had reported a growth rate exceeding 16%. However, there is a slowdown in FY24 largely due to the performance of crop insurance.

The specialised insurer AIC reported a decline of 32% in growth due to the slowdown in agriculture insurance.

Excluding specialised insurers like AIC, the industry saw a growth rate of 16.22%.

The total industry premium reached **Rs 2.89 lakh crore**, an increase from Rs 2.56 lakh crore in the previous period.

In **FY25**, the industry is expected to report **15-17% growth** led by the health and motor insurance sectors.

Public sector general insurers held **31.18%** of the overall market share in FY24, down from 32.27% in FY23, while private insurers' market share increased to 53.52%.

Among public insurers, **Oriental Insurance** led with 17% growth, while Bajaj Allianz topped among private insurers with 33.49% growth in FY24.

In standalone health insurance, Niva Bupa and Aditya Birla Health Insurance demonstrated significant growth rates of 37.68% and 36.23%, respectively.

Some of the smaller players like Zuno General Insurance Company grew by 56.29%. Kotak Mahindra General Insurance Company grew by 39.95%. Go Digit General Insurance Company grew at 28.91% during the year.

New India Assurance continued to be the largest insurer with **12.78%** market share, down from 13.42%.

Star Health & Allied Insurance which is the largest health insurance company in the country with **5.26%** market share grew at 17.75% during the year.

- 13. The 5th edition** of India-Uzbekistan Joint Military **Exercise Dustlik** has been conducted at Termez District in **Uzbekistan**. The exercise has been organized from **15th April to 28 April 2024**.

During the 14-day exercise, soldiers from the Indian Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan will undergo comprehensive joint training sessions.

The inaugural edition of this exercise was held in Uzbekistan in November 2019.

- 14. Larsen & Toubro Ltd** has completed the divestment of its entire equity stake in **L&T Infrastructure Development Projects Ltd (L&T IDPL)** to **Epic Concesiones Pvt Ltd.**, a joint venture between L&T and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPP Investments) holding 51 percent and 49 percent shares, respectively.

L&T IDPL and its subsidiaries have ceased to be the subsidiaries of the company.

- 15. Dr Reddy's Laboratories** has launched the drug-free non-invasive migraine management wearable device "**Nerivio**" in Germany through its step-down subsidiary betapharm. The launch marks the company's entry into digital therapeutics in Europe.

Nerivio is approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA), and is CE-mark certified in Europe.

Dr Reddy's launched Nerivio in India in 2023. In India, Nerivio is supported by Dr Reddy's unique patient support programme called 'M-Free'. The programme is a comprehensive support system that enhances and streamlines the journey of the patients.

- 16. India's** first private sector-built earth observation satellite "**TSAT-1A**", has been launched by **Tata Advanced System Limited**, a subsidiary company of Tata Son's.

The satellite has been launched from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, by SpaceX.

The satellite was assembled at TASL's facility in Karnataka.

TSAT-1A will provide high-resolution satellite images with low-latency delivery. The Indian armed forces are expected to be one of its major users.

This is the first sub-metre high-resolution earth observation satellite by the private sector in India. The satellite, weighing less than 50 kg, is in low-earth orbit.

- 17. The Indian Army** has received the first batch of **24 Russia-made Igla-S Man Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS)** and 100 missiles as part of a larger deal that includes domestic production in India.

This procurement aims to enhance the Army's Very Short-Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) capabilities, particularly in high mountainous terrain along the northern border.

In November 2022, India signed a contract with Russia for 120 launchers and 400 missiles. While the first batch has been delivered from Russia, the remaining systems will be manufactured in India through Transfer of Technology (ToT) from Russia by an Indian company.

- 18. The Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA)** is organizing the festival '**Shakti – A Festival of Music and Dance**' from 9 to 17 April 2024 in **seven different Shaktipeeths** of the country.

SNA, under the Kala Pravah series, is organizing this event to revive the temple traditions in the country.

Since Navratri symbolizes the power of nine goddesses. Thus, SNA is celebrating the temple traditions in seven Shaktipeeths. These are:

- **Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati (Assam)**
- **Mahalakshmi Temple of Kolhapur (Maharashtra)**
- **Jwalamukhi Temple of Kangada (Himachal Pradesh)**
- **Tripura Sundari Temple of Udaipur (Tripura)**
- **Ambaji Temple of Banaskantha (Gujarat)**
- **Jay Durga Shaktipeeth of Deoghar (Jharkhand)**
- **Shaktipeeth Maa Harsiddhi Temple of Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh)**

The festival has started from Kamakhya Temple and will conclude on April 17, 2024 at Shaktipeeth Maa Harsiddhi Temple in Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh).

19. The Tri-service Conference, '**Parivartan Chintan**', has been organized in **New Delhi**. The 'Chintan' is curated as a brainstorming and idea incubation discussion to generate new and fresh ideas, initiatives and reforms to further propel Jointness and Integration in the Armed Forces.

The conference has been chaired by Chief of Defence Staff, General **Anil Chauhan**.

It is the first-ever conference of the Heads of all Tri-Services Institutions, the Department of Military Affairs, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services.

Officers from varied service brackets, through their diverse understanding and experience recommended measures to achieve the desired "Joint and Integrated" end state with celerity.

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STATES AFFAIRS

20. In **Punjab**, the District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner of Malerkotla, Dr Pallavi, has launched a special website called '**Booth Raabta**' to provide election-related information to the people of the district.

The website, which means 'Booth Contact', is a unique initiative of the Malerkotla district authorities.

For the first time, young voters can download certificates through the website, and voters can also rate any polling station.

The website not only helps voters but also polling personnel in any circumstances.

21. The '**Sitars**' and '**Tanpuras**' of **Miraj**, a small town in Sangli district of **Maharashtra**, have been awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tags, recognizing their unique origin and quality.

These Miraj-made instruments are in high demand among prominent artists in the field of classical music and the film industry.

The GI tag has been issued to the Miraj Musical Instruments Cluster for its sitars and to the Soul tune Musical Instrument Producer firm for tanpuras.

22. **Ugadi**, the harvest festival, marks the beginning of the new year across several states in India. This festival is celebrated in the states of **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**.

The festival is celebrated on the first month of the Hindu calendar i.e., '**Chaitra**'.

The festival also marks the beginning of the new year in the Telugu calendar.

Ugadi Pachadi, a unique dish with six flavours (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent), is prepared and shared.

The term Ugadi is derived from the word 'Yugadi' which translates to 'yug' meaning an era, and 'adi' meaning something new. According to Hindu mythology, Lord Brahma created the world on this day and since then, the new year has been regionally celebrated on this day.

While **Maharashtra and Goa** mark the day's celebrations with **Gudi Padwa**. In **West Bengal**, **Poila Boishak** is celebrated on this day. **Sindhi** people celebrate the day as **Cheti Chand**, it is observed as the emergence of the day of Jhulelal.

Navreh is celebrated in **Jammu and Kashmir** and **Sajibu Cheiraoba** in **Manipur**.

In 2024, the day falls on 9th April.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

23. The **Japan** has officially launched its **e-Visa program** to tourists belonging to different countries including India. This single-entry visa grants a validity of up to **90 days** and is specifically designed for travellers planning to enter Japan by air and holding an ordinary passport.
- For individuals seeking short-term tourism in Japan, the process of obtaining a visa has been streamlined through the introduction of electronic visas (e-Visas) via the Japan e-Visa system.
- The following countries and regions are eligible: *Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, USA.*
- The eligibility also extends to Indian citizens and foreign nationals residing in India.
- The residents of these countries or regions, excluding those exempt from short-term visas, can apply for an e-Visa via the Japan e-Visa website.
24. **Peter Pellegrini** of the ruling nationalist has won the **Presidential Election** of **Slovakia** by defeating opposition independent Ivan Korcok. He has received 53 percent of the vote, while Ivan Korcok got 47 percent votes. He will succeed Zuzana Čaputová.
25. The **Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ)** has unveiled a new Gold-backed currency named "**Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)**". This new currency replaces its local currency **Zimbabwe Dollars (ZWS)**, also called Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) dollar.
- RBZ has notified that the banks should convert the current Zimbabwe dollar balances into the ZiB with effect from 5th April 2024.
- The ZiB notes and coins will start circulating in the economy on 30th April 2024.
- The initial exchange rate of ZiG is set at 13.56 ZiG per US dollar (USD).
- Note:** Zimbabwe adopted the USD in 2009 to counter hyperinflation. ZWS was introduced in 2019.
26. **SpaceX** has launched the '**Bandwagon-1**', the first rideshare mission to low-Earth orbit at inclinations of about 45 degrees with a Falcon 9 rocket from National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Kennedy Space Center, Florida, USA.

SpaceX has launched 11 satellites on the Bandwagon-1 rideshare mission.

A '**425 Project**' satellite for the military of South Korea is probably the largest of the 11 satellites carried by Bandwagon-1.

- 27.** The **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** has adopted a first-of-its-kind resolution for **intersex rights**. The resolution is adopted at the 55th Session of the UNHRC.

Resolution calls on states:

- to combat discrimination, violence and harmful practices against persons with innate variations in sex characteristics and
- address their root causes as well as help intersex people 'realize the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.'

Intersex people are born with sex characteristics (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

They may have any gender identity or sexual orientation.

Experts estimate that up to 1.7 % of the population are born with intersex traits.

Intersex people are different from transgenders. Transgenders are born with a body that has unambiguous sexual characteristics (either male or female) but they don't match the person's gender identity.

- 28.** Around **57 companies** are responsible for **80%** of the world's carbon emissions from fossil fuels and cement over the past seven years. This is according to a report released by thinktank '**InfluenceMap**'.

These 57 companies are involved in the production of oil, gas, coal and cement in the world.

The report concludes that the net zero target set under the Paris climate change agreement in 2015 has not been achieved. So far, fossil fuels have not been able to have a significant impact on production.

In the database of 122 of the world's biggest historical climate polluters, the researchers found that 65% of state entities and 55% of private-sector companies had scaled up production.

The biggest investor-owned contributor to emissions was ExxonMobil of the United States, which was linked to 3.6 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide over seven years, or 1.4% of the global total. Close behind were Shell, BP, Chevron and TotalEnergies, each of which was associated with at least 1% of global emissions.

- 29.** The **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)** will host the first **Clean Economy Investor Forum** in **Singapore** from 5 to 6 June 2024.

India will showcase selected investible sustainable infrastructure projects at the forum, with focus on energy transition, sustainable aviation fuel, battery storage hydrogen, green data centres, transport and electric vehicle, EV charging points, and waste management, among others.

The forum aims to bring together the region's largest investors, innovative startup entrepreneurs, and cutting-edge project proponents with IPEF ministers and government agencies to boost investment.

The forum aims to mobilise investments into sustainable infrastructure, climate technology, and renewable energy projects.

- 30.** **Simon Harris** has been elected as the **Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland**. At the age of 37, he is the youngest Prime Minister in Ireland. He secured 69 votes out of 88 in his favour.

He has replaced Leo Varadkar, who resigned in March 2024 citing personal and political reasons. Leo Varadkar became prime minister at the age of 38 in 2017.

Note: In Ireland, the Prime Minister is called Taoiseach. "Taoiseach" is a Gaelic word for "chieftain" or "leader" pronounced "tee-shock".

- 31. The Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has raised India's GDP growth forecast for **fiscal year 2024-25** to **7 percent** from 6.7 percent estimated earlier. India's robust growth will be driven by its investment in public and private sectors and an improvement in consumer demand.

For **FY26**, ADB has projected India's growth at **7.2 percent**.

The growth estimates for the current fiscal are lower than 7.6 percent estimated GDP expansion in 2022-23 fiscal.

In December 2023, ADB had projected the Indian economy to expand by 6.7 percent in the 2024-25 fiscal.

- 32. Moody's Analytics** has projected **India's GDP** to grow at **6.1% in calendar year 2024 (CY24)** from 6 percent in March 2023. India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to grow 6.1 percent in 2024 after 7.7 per cent in 2023.

The Moody's report also stated that while China and Japan are held back by weak domestic demand, the performance of India and ASEAN economies is flattered by a delayed post-pandemic rebound.

- 33. Russia** has successfully tested its **Angara-A5 space rocket** for the first time. The test launch has been conducted from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Far East of Russia.

The Angara-A5 rocket reached an altitude of more than 25,000 kilometers (15,500 miles) per hour within minutes of launch.

The Angara-A5 is a three-stage rocket that stands 54.5 meters (178.81 feet) tall and weighs about 773 tons, with a payload capacity of 24.5 tons.

The Angara-A5 is designed to replace Russia's Proton launcher, which has been in operation since the mid-1960s.

- 34. Bjarni Benediktsson**, chairman of Iceland's Independence Party, has been appointed as the new **Prime Minister of Iceland**. He has succeeded Katrin Jakobsdottir, who resigned as PM of Iceland to run for President of Iceland.

- 35. The United Arab Emirates (UAE)** will host the **World Future Energy Summit (WFES) 2024** at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) in Abu Dhabi from 16th to 18th April 2024.

WFES is the world's leading business event for future energy, clean technology and sustainability, with a packed programme of events, activations, discussions and forums.

The Masdar Pavilion at WFES will act as a hub for innovation, collaboration and knowledge sharing, with its theatre featuring an engaging programme of panels and presentations, including forums by Masdar's global strategic initiatives, Y4S (Youth 4 Sustainability) and WiSER (Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy).

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REPORTS & INDICES

36. The **Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)** has released its **Business Environment Rankings (BER) 2024**. The ranking is based on 91 indicators that measure the attractiveness of doing business in 82 countries and territories.

- **Singapore** topped the BER 2024 for the 16th consecutive year with a score of 8.56. It is followed by Denmark at 2nd position and the USA at 3rd position.
- **India** ranked **51st** in the list with a score of 1.08.
- Greece, Qatar, and India have made significant strides in providing favourable business environments globally.

These rankings are a reflection of the changing global business landscape and provide valuable insights for businesses looking to understand the business climate in different regions.

37. The **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)** has published a report titled ***"Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2024."***

The report highlights the challenges faced by developing countries in balancing debt servicing with investments in critical sectors like education and health.

Despite steady economic performance in Asia-Pacific, issues like weaker purchasing power, limited job opportunities, and income inequality persist.

The report highlights India's robust economic growth in 2023, driven by domestic consumption and infrastructure investments, amid limited external exposure.

The report, published annually since 1947, is flagship publication of UNESCAP.

38. The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has released a report titled as '**Space: The \$1.8 Trillion Opportunity for Global Economic Growth**' in collaboration with McKinsey & Company.

Key findings:

- Space economy is expected to reach USD 1.8 trillion by 2035, from USD 630 billion in 2023.
- Space's impact will increasingly go beyond space itself, e.g., benefits to non-traditional players such as ride-hailing apps etc.
- Five industries will generate more than 60% of increase in space economy by 2035. These are: supply chain and transportation; food and beverage; state sponsored defence; retail, consumer goods and lifestyle; and digital communications.
- Space's return on investment will be more than financial, e.g., mitigating world challenges, such as disaster warning & improved humanitarian response etc.

39. As per a report titled '**Synchronising Energy Transitions Towards Possible Net Zero for India: Affordable and Clean Energy for All**' released by the **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)**, India aims to increase its nuclear power production from the current level of over 8,000 MW to **1 lakh MW** by **2047**.

The report suggests that if India wants to phase out coal use over the next three decades, it should build infrastructure for alternative sources such as nuclear power, and flexible grid infrastructure to support renewable energy and storage should be constructed.

It also suggests that if India continues to rely on coal, it should explore carbon dioxide technologies (CDRs), such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) and CCUS, to understand their long-term potential.

Breeder reactors would contribute 3 GW of nuclear power, while 17.6 GW would come from light water reactors built with international cooperation, and another 40-45 GW would come from pressurized heavy water reactors.

40. Hurun Research Institute has released the 6th edition of **Global Unicorn Index 2024**. The index listed total 1453 unicorns in the world based in 53 countries.

Key highlights of the Global Unicorn Index 2024:

Top 3 countries:

- **USA** has topped the index with **703 unicorns**.
- **China** has secured the second position with 340 unicorns.
- **India** has secured the **third position** with **67 unicorns**, led by on-demand delivery start-up Swiggy and fantasy sports platform Dream11 worth \$8 billion each and fintech company Razorpay worth \$7.5 billion.

The index reported 68 unicorns in India in 2023 and 2022, 54 in 2021, and 21 in 2020 and 2019.

Indian founders co-founded 109 unicorns outside of India in comparison to just 67 in India.

Around 42 unicorns globally were demoted from unicorn status with valuation dipping below \$1 billion. This was led by 21 companies from the US and 11 from China. The largest decline was at Indian edtech startup Byju's valued last year at \$22 billion.

In terms of city, **Bengaluru** has been ranked **7th** with **32 unicorns** and **Mumbai** ranked **19th** with **14 unicorns**. San Francisco with 190 unicorns, New York with 133 unicorns and Beijing with 78 unicorns are the leading unicorn hubs in the world.

Globally, ByteDance remained the most valuable unicorn with a \$220 billion valuation, followed by SpaceX (\$180 billion), OpenAI (\$100 billion), Ant Group (\$80 billion), and Shein (\$65 billion).

Note: Unicorns are privately held venture-capital backed startups valued at \$1 billion.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

41. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched an extensive awareness and sensitization program targeting major markets in the national capital, in collaboration with the **Food Safety Department, Delhi**.

The campaign, initiated from the popular Khan Market and INA Market of Delhi, will focus particularly on the detection and mitigation of pesticide residue and contaminants in food products.

During the campaign, the food business operators are sensitized about the importance of organic farming, raw material testing, ill effects of pesticide residues, artificial ripening and wax coating using unapproved chemicals.

42. The **NTPC Limited** will launch a new edition of its flagship corporate social responsibility initiative, **Girl Child Empowerment Mission (GEM)**. This program is in line with the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative of the Government of India.

GEM aims to nurture the imaginations of girls and eliminates gender inequality by promoting their ability to explore opportunities.

GEM provides a platform for young girls for their all-round development through a month-long workshop during summer vacations.

This new edition of GEM, starting from April 2024, will connect around **3,000** meritorious children from deprived sections of the society across 42 identified locations of power sector PSUs.

With this the total number of children benefiting from the mission will exceed 10,000.

Note: GEM was started as a pilot project in 2018 with only three locations and 392 participants.

43. The **Gujarat Council on Science and Technology (GUJCOST)** has been designated as the Nodal Centre for the '**Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)**' programme by the Indian Space Research Organisation (**ISRO**).

The programme provides an introductory online platform covering various areas of space science research.

Under the START programme, GUJCOST will conduct live classes, acting as the central hub for knowledge dissemination. Four Regional Science Centres in Rajkot, Patan, Bhavnagar, and Bhuj will also contribute to facilitating the programme, expanding its reach across the region.

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BUSINESS & ECONOMY

44. The **Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** to develop an indigenous Train Control Management System (**i-TCMS**)

The aim is to drive innovation and foster self-reliance in the critical domain of train control management systems.

45. The **Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMP Kolkata)** including Kolkata Dock System (KDS) and Haldia Dock Complex (HDC), has achieved a milestone in the fiscal year **2023-24** by handling **66.4 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT)** of Cargo.

This is a **1.11% increase** from the previous record of 65.66 million tonnes moved in 2022-23.

The complex handled 49.54 MMT in FY 2023-24, marking its highest cargo volume ever since its inception and surpassing the previous record of 48.608 MMT in FY 2022-23, representing an increase of 1.91%.

The Kolkata Dock System (KDS) managed 16.856 MMT of cargo in 2023-24 compared to 17.052 MMT in 2022-23.

The port's financial performance in 2023-24 has achieved a net surplus of Rs. 501.73 crores, a significant 65% growth over the previous year's net surplus of Rs. 304.07 crores.

- 46. Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL)** has planned to invest about **Rs.1.5 trillion** by 2030 to develop the world's largest renewable energy plant with 30-gigawatt capacity at the **Khavda renewable energy park in Gujarat**.

The project is a part of the Adani Groups renewable energy flagship's plan to achieve 45 gigawatt (GW) installed renewable energy capacity in the country by 2030.

The project will see 26 GW of solar and 4 GW of wind generation capacity coming up.

Currently, AGEL has an operating renewable portfolio of 10.93 GW (7.39 GW solar, 1.4 GW wind, and 2.14 GW of hybrid) across 12 states.

- 47. The United States and United Kingdom** have signed an agreement to work together on testing advanced **artificial intelligence (AI) models**. This collaboration aims to collectively develop advanced AI model testing procedures, aligning with commitments made during the AI Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park in November 2023.

Under AI partnership, both the countries have agreed on many issues related to it, which are as follows:

- Sharing important information about the capabilities and risks associated with AI models and systems.
- Sharing fundamental technical research on AI safety and security fosters collaboration and innovation.
- Both will work on aligning their approach towards safely deploying AI systems and will work to align their scientific viewpoints.
- Both will work together to accelerate and rapidly iterate a robust suite of assessments for AI models, systems and agents.
- The US and UK AI security institutes will also create a common approach to AI security testing.

Note: John McCarthy is the father of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

- 48. The Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)** has inked a Master Shipyard Repair Agreement (MSRA) with the **United States Navy** to facilitate the repair of US Naval vessels under Military Sealift Command.

The MSRA is a non-financial agreement and is effective from 5th April 2024.

CSL has been qualified for entering into the MSRA after a detailed evaluation process and capability assessment by the US Navy – Military Sealift Command.

- 49. Air India** has inked a deal with **Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL)** to develop the Bengaluru airport as an aviation hub. This includes the construction of a dedicated domestic lounge, expansion of international services, and establishment of a maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility.

Air India, along with other Tata Group airlines – AIX and Vistara, and BIAL will collaborate to enhance international connectivity, operational efficiency, and passenger experience over the next five years.

The Bengaluru airport is operated by Fairfax-run BIAL.

- 50. The Technology Development Board (TDB)**, Department of Science & Technology, has collaborated with **Remine India Private Limited** to establish a commercial plant for recycling of Li Battery and E-Waste using indigenous technology at Eldeco, SIIDCUL Industrial Area in **Sitarganj (District Udham Singh Nagar), Uttarakhand**.

Through this collaboration, TDB has pledged a financial assistance of **Rs.7.5 crores** out of the total project cost of Rs.15 crores, marking a significant stride towards sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

The funded project is developed by the Centre for Materials for Electronics Technology (CMET), Hyderabad.

Note: The lithium-ion battery recycling market size is projected to reach USD 14.89 billion by 2030, with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 21.6%, up from USD 3.79 billion in 2021.

TDB Secretary is Rajesh Kumar Pathak.

51. The **European Union (EU)** has signed an Expression of Interest (EoI) with **India** for startups working in Battery Recycling Technologies for Electric Vehicles (EVs) for a matchmaking event.

This initiative takes place under the India-EU Trade & Technology Council (TTC), announced by India and the European Commission in New Delhi on 25th April 2022.

It is being co-chaired from the Indian side by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India and from the EU side by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission.

The aim is to enhance cooperation between EU and Indian SMEs and startups in clean and green technologies, focusing on battery recycling for EVs.

52. **REC Limited** has sanctioned **Rs 3.59 lakh crore** loan in **FY24**. This is a year-on-year rise of 33.66 percent. It had sanctioned Rs.2.68 lakh crore as loan during the 2022-23.

Of the total Rs.3.59 lakh crore, Rs.1.36 lakh crore are renewable energy sanctions, higher from Rs.21,371 crore sanctioned for green projects a year ago.

The disbursements are 66.72 percent higher as compared to Rs 96,846 crore worth of loans disbursed in FY23.

As of 31st March 2024, the company's loan book was at Rs 5.09 trillion, higher 17.13% as against Rs.4.35 trillion in FY23.

53. The **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (**CSIR-IMMT**) for technical & knowledge cooperation for critical minerals.

As per the MoU, KABIL will use the technical expertise and services provided by CSIR-IMMT to undertake various projects.

These initiatives include the design and analysis of metallurgical test work plans, the development and review of process flowsheets, and the selection of process technologies for mineral processing, beneficiation, and metal extraction.

54. **PhonePe**, a fintech firm, has teamed up with Nepal's digital wallet service **eSewa** and the **Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN)** Pokhara to promote digital payments through UPI on the Himalayan country's payment processor **Fonepay Network**.

The association is a part of the Fewa New Year Festival which has held from April 11-14 in Nepal.

55. **ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company** has teamed up with **Policybazaar** to offer products on the platform. The collaboration aims to provide insurance solutions to Indian consumers through Policybazaar's reach.

The collaboration grants access to nearly 10 million customers, offering insurance products including motor, health, travel, home and business insurance.

The collaboration covers business lines of the Policybazaar platform including 'Policybazaar.com' catering to retail audiences, 'PB for Business' for corporates, and 'PB Partners' for channel partners.

- 56. Piramal Alternatives**, the fund management division of the Piramal Group, has announced an investment of **Rs.110 crore** in **Biodeal Pharmaceuticals Limited**. The funding will be directed towards improving infrastructure and capacities, upgrading technology, and underlying a dedicated nutraceuticals manufacturing facility.

Biodeal is a contract development and manufacturing organisation.

- 57.** The Ministry of Defence has issued a tender worth over Rs 65,000 crore to **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited** for the purchase of **97 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mark 1A** fighter aircraft manufactured in India.

This is set to be the largest order for indigenous military hardware to be placed by the Indian government ever.

The programme will help the IAF (Indian Air Force) to replace its fleet of MiG- 21s, MiG-23s and MiG-27s which have been either phased out or are set to be phased out or are set to be phased out in near future.

The LCA Mark 1A is the advanced version of Tejas aircraft. The LCA Mark 1A plane has more advanced avionics and radars than the initial 40 LCAs being supplied to the Air Force.

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BANKING & FINANCE

- 58.** The **Power Finance Corporation (PFC)**, a leading non-banking financial corporation under the Ministry of Power, has paid a total dividend of **Rs.2,033 crore** to the government for the financial year 2023-24. The company has paid the dividend in three installments of Rs 554 crore, Rs 832 crore and Rs 647 crore.

PFC has so far paid an interim dividend amounting to Rs 3,630 crore to its shareholders for the financial year 2023-24, the highest-ever interim dividend paid by the company.

- 59. Canara Bank**, a Public Sector Bank, has introduced a series of new products and services aimed at enhancing customer experience and streamlining banking operations.

- **Canara Heal:** It is a healthcare focused loan product to meet the shortfall of hospitalization expenditure while settling through Third Party Administrator (TPA) healthcare insurance claims of self and/or dependents.
- **Canara Angel:** It is a customized savings account for women with features like Cancer Care policy, pre-approved personal loan Canara ReadyCash and online loan against term deposit product Canara MyMoney.
- **Canara UPI 123PAY ASI:** It is a user-friendly payment interface.
- **Canara HRMS Mobile App for Staff:** It is an HR management solution for the bank's employees.
- **Canara SHG e-MONEY:** It is a Digital SHG (Self-Help Group) initiative to offer seamless doorstep Digital services to SHGs in collaboration with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH).

- 60. Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Limited**, India's leading retail health insurance provider, has collaborated with **PhonePe** to provide '**Star Comprehensive Insurance Policy**'.

The policy will be available on the PhonePe app with a monthly and annual payment option, with coverage up to Rs.1 crore. This is an industry-first initiative.

The move allows customers to choose quality health insurance coverage with flexible payment choices, providing access to quality healthcare throughout the country.

- 61. Bandhan Mutual Fund** has launched the **Bandhan Innovation Fund**, an open-ended thematic fund dedicated to investing in companies at the forefront of innovative breakthroughs.

The new fund offers (NFO) of the scheme will open for subscription on **10th April** and will close on **24th April 2024**.

The scheme will be benchmarked against **Nifty 500 TRI**.

The scheme will be managed by Manish Gunwani (equity investments), Brijesh Shah (debt investments), and Ritika Behera (overseas investments).

The fund targets companies with substantial R&D investment, high skilled-employee costs, potentially higher margins or growth, unique products or services, non-linear business models, and a notable brand presence.

The Bandhan Innovation Fund will allocate its investments across a spectrum of innovators: 35-45% to leading innovators with substantial industry R&D investments; 35-45% to rising innovators utilizing innovation for a competitive edge; and 10-15% to emerging innovators, those filling market gaps with disruptive products or services and showing a strong growth trajectory.

- 62. The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** has joined hands with a fintech **Onion Life Private Limited** to use the latter's technology platform '**KarmaLife**' for a pilot to provide micro loans to gig workers.

This will support the gig workers' financial inclusion to formal institutional credit.

KarmaLife will help gig workers access micro loans through a mobile app and eliminates the hassle of extensive paperwork or physical documentation.

- 63. The Union Bank of India (UBI)** has raised **USD 500 million** (about Rs 4,200 crore) from **Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)** to fund overseas business growth.

A syndicated term loan of USD 500 million (USD 400 million and Green Shoe of USD 100 million) would be drawn in two tranches with tenure of 3 and 5 years.

The first tranche of USD 100 million was drawn on 3rd April 2024.

This is the first syndicated term loan raised by Union Bank of India at an overseas centre.

- 64. Jammu & Kashmir Bank** has joined hands with **Paymart India Pvt Ltd** to launch an innovative **Virtual ATM (VATM)** facility. The partnership aims to introduce cardless cash withdrawal for the Bank's customers through their neighbourhood merchants.

The aim is to enhance banking convenience for its customers across its areas of operations especially in J&K and Ladakh.

In this VATM facility, the customer's smartphone running the Bank's mobile application serves as the Virtual Card, while the merchant's smartphone serves as the Virtual ATM.

The VATM option would allow consumers to withdraw up to Rs 2000 cash per transaction, for a total of Rs 10,000 per month.

- 65. Canara Bank** has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE) & IIT Bombay** to provide financial support to startups.

Canara Bank, through its Canara Start-Up Scheme, will provide financial aid for the establishment, promotion, and modernization of industrial units across India.

- 66. The State Bank of India (SBI)** has carried out a Credit Default Swap (CDS) trade worth **Rs.25 crore** with **Standard Chartered Bank India**. The trade involved a 1-year rupee CDS featuring REC.

This marks the 1st CDS transaction since the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued revised CDS guidelines in 2022.

- 67. Tata Mutual Fund** has launched **6 thematic index funds** focused on infrastructure, health care, realty, financial services, automobile and manufacturing.

Three of these, **Nifty 500 Multicap India Manufacturing 50:30:20 Index Fund**, **Nifty 500 Multicap 50:30:20 Infrastructure Index Fund** and **Nifty MidSmall Healthcare Index Fund**, are the first in the industry.

The other funds are **Nifty Realty Index Fund**, **Nifty Financial Services Index Fund** and **Nifty Auto Index Fund**.

These funds offer a new investment opportunity with a minimum investment of Rs.5000 during the New Fund Offer (NFO) period, which runs from 8th April to 22nd April 2024.

- 68. American Express** has introduced a new **Metal Corporate Platinum Card** to cater the evolving needs of business owners and entrepreneurs in India.

The card offers best-in-class benefits such as Gold Elite Status at Marriott Bonvoy and Taj Epicure Plus Membership, among others. The card Members can earn up to 5X rewards on spends across selected categories including airlines, e-commerce, and IT/ITES spends among others.

- 69. The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group Inc (MUFG)**, the world's second-largest bank holding company, will acquire a **20% stake** in **HDB Financial Services**, a non-banking subsidiary of HDFC Bank, at a valuation of USD 9-10 billion.

HDFC Bank currently owns around 95 percent of HDB Financial Services, with the remaining 5 percent held by employees under an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP).

The acquisition will be executed at a valuation of around five times the book value of HDB Financial Services. HDB Financial Services is expected to fetch a valuation in the range of USD 9 billion to USD 12 billion (Rs.75,000 crore to Rs.1 lakh crore) during its upcoming initial public offering (IPO).

- 70. HDFC Bank** has opened a branch at **Kavaratti Island in Lakshadweep**. With this, the lender becomes the only private bank to have a presence in the remote Union Territory along the west coast of India.

This branch aims to upgrade the banking infrastructure in the Union Territory by offering a wide range of services with a focus on personal banking, and digital banking which also includes customised digital solutions including QR-based transactions to retailers.

- 71. RBL Bank** has appointed Murali Ramakrishnan as Non-Executive Independent Director with immediate effect for four years. Earlier, he served as the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of South Indian Bank from 1st October 2020, until September 2023. He has 37 years of experience in the Banking and Financial Service Industry (BFSI) sector.

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RBI IN NEWS

- 72.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of **Rs.1 crore** on **IDFC First Bank** for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Loans and Advances – Statutory and Other Restrictions.'

The Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation for FY22 revealed that the bank had sanctioned term loans to a public sector undertaking for financing infrastructure projects without undertaking due diligence on the viability and bankability of the projects to ensure that revenue streams from the projects were sufficient to take care of the debt servicing obligations.

RBI has also penalised **LIC Housing Finance Rs.49.7 lakh** for breach of norms.

- 73.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced its **1st bi-monthly monetary policy of Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25)**. The RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-led Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on 3-5 April 2024 and has decided to keep the rates unchanged.

This is the **seventh consecutive time** that the MPC has maintained the status quo.

MPC has also decided to remain focused on withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns to the target, while supporting growth.

The decisions made align with the goal of achieving a medium-term target for the consumer price index (CPI) or retail inflation rate, which is 4% with a band of +/- 2 percent.

RBI last increased the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) on February 8, 2023, to 6.5 percent.

The RBI has projected the Indian economy to maintain a **7 percent GDP** growth rate in **FY25** with Quarter 1 at 7.1 percent; Quarter 2 at 6.9 percent; Quarter 3 at 7.0 percent; and Quarter 4 at 7.0 percent.

The **CPI Inflation for FY25** is projected at **4.5%** with Q1FY25 at 4.9%, Q2FY25 at 3.8%, and Q3FY25 at 4.6%, and Q4FY25 at 4.5%.

The Core inflation (CPI inflation excluding food and fuel) dropped to **3.4%** in February 2024.

Policy rates as of April 2024	
Repo rate	6.50%
Reverse Repo Rate	3.35%
Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate	6.75%
Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) Rate	6.25%
Bank Rate	6.75%
Reserves Ratio as of April 2024	
Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	4.50%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	18%

Note: The next meeting of the RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to be held during June 5-7, 2024.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- 74. SJVN Limited** has won two prestigious awards at the **15th CIDC Vishwakarma Awards 2024**. The award has been instituted by **Construction Industry Development Council**.

SJVN has been conferred with '*Achievement Award for Creating Social Development & Impact*' and '*CIDC Partners in Progress Trophy*'.

These awards acknowledge SJVN's commitment to positive change through innovative and sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

The company has secured these prestigious awards for the **third consecutive year**.

The company has spent more than Rs. 450 crores on a spectrum of CSR activities spanning the verticals of Education & Skill development, Health & Hygiene, Infrastructural Development & Community Asset Creation, Sustainable Development, Assistance during Natural Disasters, Preservation & Promotion of Local Culture and Sports.

Engineers India Limited (EIL) has been conferred with the 15th CIDC Vishwakarma Award by the CIDC in the category of "Construction Health, Safety & Environment" for Rajasthan Refinery Project, Barmer.

GAIL (India) Limited has won the award in the 'Achievement Award for Best Construction Projects' category for its Barauni – Guwahati Natural Gas Pipeline project (BGPL).

- 75. Dr Raghu Ram Pillarisetti** has been awarded the **Fellowship of the American Surgical Association (ASA)**. This accreditation is provided by the prestigious surgical organization ASA of America.

This is the highest honour the ASA can bestow on a surgical colleague from a foreign country.

Dr Raghu Ram is the **third surgeon** from South Asia to receive this honour in the 144-year history of the oldest surgical organisation in the United States.

He is the founder director of the Centre for Breast Diseases, located in Pillarisetti Hyderabad. He has played a pioneering role in revolutionizing breast cancer care in India.

- 76. Admiral R Hari Kumar**, Chief of the Naval Staff, during his visit to Southern Naval Command, has awarded the '**On the Spot Unit Citation**' to **INS Sharda** for successful conduct of antipiracy operations off the Eastern coast of Somalia on 2 February 2024.

The ship was involved in the safe release of all 19 crew members (11 Iranian and 8 Pakistani) of Iranian fishing vessel "Omari" which was held hostage by pirates off the east coast of Somalia.

The ship was tasked to investigate the Iranian fishing vessel Omari that was likely hijacked by pirates.

INS Sharda is a Sukanya class patrol vessel of the Indian Navy.

- 77. Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital** has won the '**Best Scientific Poster Award**' at the 2024 Annual Meeting of the American Society for Cataract and Refractive Surgery (ASCRS).

The hospital has been recognized for their groundbreaking study on 'The efficacy of RevitalVision vision-training software in improving best-corrected vision in stable keratoconus patients post Crosslinking surgery.'

In the study by Dr Agarwal's Eye Hospital, stable keratoconus patients undergoing RevitalVision vision-training software post Crosslinking surgery experienced a significant improvement in their vision.

The statistical analysis revealed an average improvement of 2.5 lines on the visual acuity test chart, providing tangible evidence of the software's efficacy in enhancing patient outcomes.

- 78. Neeraj A Sharma**, the Honorary Consul General of The Republic of Palau in India, has been honoured with the **"Medal of Honour"** by the Honorary Consular Corps Diplomatique-India (HCCD-India) during the annual Consular Day 2024 event held at the ITC Grand Chola in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

The award has been presented by Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi during the ceremony.

The "Medal of Honour" is bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and service as Honorary Consuls.

- 79. Mamta G. Sagar**, a Bengaluru-based Kannada poet, writer, academic and activist, has won the **World Literary Prize** from the World Organization of Writers (WOW) for her contributions to the world of literature.

The award includes a gold medal, a cash prize, and a book publishing agreement.

She is a facilitator at Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design, and Technology. She is known for her involvement in diverse forms of transdisciplinary creative writing and cultural industries.

She has received the award during the VII World Literary Festival "WOW-LIFT 2024" held in Nigeria, Abuja.

- 80. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Chandrayaan-3 mission team** has been honoured with the **2024 John L. "Jack" Swigert, Jr. Award for Space Exploration** by the US-based Space Foundation.

This award recognized the remarkable achievements of a space agency, company, or consortium in the realm of space exploration and discovery.

The Indian Consul General of India in Houston, **D C Manjunath**, has received the award on behalf of the ISRO's Chandrayaan -3 team.

- 81. Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni** has become the **first Indian monk** to be honoured with the **American President's Gold Volunteer Service award** in recognition of his contribution to the public good and humanity.

Acharya Lokesh Muni is the founder of a non-governmental organisation, Ahimsa Vishwa Bharat (Gurugram, Haryana) and the World Peace Center in India.

He received the Presidential award, a Certificate of Honour, a Golden Shield, and a citation.

- 82. The Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW)** has presented the "Sagar Samman Awards" to acknowledge exemplary contributions within the maritime sector.

The award has been presented on the occasion of the 61st National Maritime Day (5th April 2024).

Winners of Sagar Samman Awards:

Category	Winner	Contribution
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Sagar Samman Varun Awards	Dhirendra Kumar Sanyal	Highest honour for outstanding and sustained contributions to the Indian maritime sector.
Sagar Samman Award for Excellence	Captain Kamal Kant Choudhary	Recognizes consistently excellent contributions to the maritime sector.
Sagar Samman Award for Gallantry	Captain Subir Saha and Captain Om Dutta	Honours acts of gallantry by Indian Seafarers, encouraging emulation of their exemplary conduct.

- 83. Dr Gagandeep Kang**, an Indian researcher, has been awarded the **2024 John Dirks Canada Gairdner Global Health Award** for her achievements in global health research.

She has been awarded for extensive cohort-based epidemiological, environmental and clinical trial research on enteric diseases in children and their effects on life course, with significant impact on vaccine development and health policy in India and internationally.

- 84.** The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) has named Israeli mathematician and computer scientist **Avi Wigderson** as the recipient of the **2023 ACM A.M. Turing Award**, which is often called the “Nobel Prize of Computing.”

He has been recognized for foundational contributions to the theory of computation, including reshaping our understanding of the role of randomness in computation, and for his decades of intellectual leadership in theoretical computer science.

He is the Herbert H. Maass Professor in the School of Mathematics at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

The award carries a USD 1 million prize with financial support provided by Google, Inc.

The award is named for Alan M. Turing, the British mathematician who articulated the mathematical foundations of computing.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

- 85. Sam Pitroda**, an internationally recognized telecom inventor, entrepreneur, development thinker and policymaker, has penned a book titled **‘The Idea of Democracy.’** The book explains concern over democracy’s state in the US and India, highlighting 2024’s global elections.

The book is published by Penguin Business.

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PERSON IN NEWS

- 86. Meenesh Shah** has been appointed as the **Chairman of National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Ltd. (NCDFI)**, the apex body of dairy cooperatives.

Prior to the Board elections, the NCDFI General Body elected 8 directors to the Board in an unopposed process on April 04, 2024.

The newly elected directors include:

- Dr Meenesh Shah, Jharkhand Milk Federation
- Dr Mangal Jit Rai, Sikkim Milk Union
- Shamalbhai B. Patel, Gujarat Milk Federation
- Randhir Singh, Haryana Milk Federation
- K. S. Mani, Kerala Milk Federation
- Balachandra L. Jarakiholi, Karnataka Milk Federation
- Narinder Singh Shergill, Punjab Milk Federation
- Sameer Kumar Parida, West Assam Milk Union

87. Bilquis Mir from **Jammu and Kashmir** has become the **first woman from India** to serve as a **jury member** at the **Summer Olympics in Paris**, scheduled from July 26 to August 11, 2024.

She is a water sports promoter, developer, athlete, jury member of the Indian Kayaking and Canoeing Association.

She is the first person from India to be appointed as a jury.

88. Wipro has appointed **Srinivas Pallia** as the chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director (MD) of the company with effect from 7 April 2024.

The board of directors noted the resignation of Thierry Delaporte. He will be relieved from the employment of the company with effect from the close of business hours on 31 May, 2024.

89. Manoj Panda, renowned economist and former director of the Institute of Economic Growth, has been appointed as a full-time **member** of the **Sixteenth Finance Commission** by the Centre.

With this appointment, the commission is now at full strength, comprising four full-time members and a chairperson.

Chairperson: Arvind Panagariya, former Niti Aayog vice chairman and Columbia University professor.

Other members of the Commission: Ajay Narayan Jha, Annie George Mathew, and Soumya Kanti 35.

90. The Delhi High Court has appointed its former judge, **Justice Najmi Waziri** as the head of the internal departmental committee tasked with protection of forests in the national capital.

This decision follows concerns about various government departments not fully cooperating with efforts to protect these vital natural resources.

The committee, as outlined in the December 21, 2023 High Court order, consists of key officials from the forest department responsible for the preservation and monitoring of forests. Its primary objective is to take concrete steps to protect, preserve, reclaim, and enhance both protected and deemed forests in Delhi.

91. The World Bank Group has appointed former Reserve Bank of India deputy governor **Rakesh Mohan** as a member of the **Economic Advisory Panel**.

Currently, he is serving as president emeritus and distinguished fellow at Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) and is also part-time member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council.

The World Bank panel will be chaired by **Lord Nicholas Stern**, the IG Patel Professor of Economics and Government at the London School of Economics and World Bank Group Chief Economist **Indermit Gill** will co-chair the panel.

The panel will focus on strategic issues for the World Bank Group in relation to their objectives, research agenda and actions.

The panel will also provide advice on key issues that may arise with respect to the World Bank's research and policy outputs.

Each panel member will serve for two years.

- 92. Arnab Goswamy**, a qualified Chartered Accountant and Cost Accountant, has been appointed as the **Chief Financial Officer (CFO)** of the **Punjab & Sindh Bank**. He has been appointed for a period of 3 years with effect from 3 April 2024.

He has succeeded Mahima Agarwal.

He has worked at Indusind Bank, and ICICI Bank. Prior to joining Punjab & Sind Bank, he was associated with Bandhan Bank as vice president.

- 93. Future Generali India Insurance Co (FGII)** has appointed **Ramit Goyal** as its **Chief Distribution Officer**. He has replaced Raghavendra Rao, who retired on March 31 after 14 years of service.

He has held significant positions at reputed organizations such as ABN AMRO Bank, TATA AIG, Godrej & Boyce, and Daewoo Anchor Electronics.

- 94. The Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB)** panel has recommended **Sushil Sharma** for the position of Chairman & Managing Director (**CMD**) of **SJVN Limited**.

He is currently serving as Director (Projects) within the organization.

He emerged as the frontrunner from a pool of nine candidates interviewed by the PESB selection panel.

Once confirmed, he will succeed Geeta Kapur.

- 95. The US-India Strategic and Partnership Forum (USISPF)** has appointed **Tarun Bajaj**, a former Revenue Secretary and ex-Secretary of Economic Affairs, as the Head of the **US-India Tax Forum**.

He joined the USISPF as an advisor to the Board of Directors in January 2024.

He is a 1988-batch Haryana Cadre IAS officer.

During his tenure with the Indian government, he played a pivotal role in shaping fiscal policies and promoting economic growth. He managed both the direct and indirect tax revenues for the Government of India and was instrumental in stabilising the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- 96. Sachidananda Mohanty** has been appointed as Member of University Grants Commission (UGC) for three years in April 2024. The appointment has been made by the Ministry of Higher Education, Government of India, as per a gazette notification.

He is a former Professor and Head of the Department of English, University of Hyderabad.

Other members appointed are: Ashish Kumar Chauhan, MD & CEO of National Stock Exchange; Sridhar Vembu, CEO of Zoho Corporation, Shashikala Gulabrao Wanjari, Vice Chancellor of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).

With these appointments, total members in UGC increased from 4 to 8.

- 97. Jagjit Pavadia** of India has been re-elected to the **International Narcotics Board (INCB)** for a **third term**. She has secured the highest number of votes amongst the contestants.

She has been re-elected for a third five-year term starting from March 2025- 2030.

She was first elected to the International Narcotics Control Board in 2015.

- 98.** Olympic bronze medallist and six times World champion boxer **M.C. Mary Kom** has stepped down as the Chef-de-Mission for the Indian contingent at the Paris Olympics Games 2024 citing "personal reasons".

In March 2024, Mary Kom was chosen as the chef de mission, and winter Olympian Shiva Keshavan was named her deputy.

- 99.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of **Anurag Kumar** as the **Joint Director (JD) in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** for a tenure up to **February 24, 2027**.

He is a 2004 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Assam-Meghalaya cadre.

He is currently working in the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

OBITUARIES

- 100. Gangu Ramsay**, a prominent cinematographer and filmmaker, has passed away at the age of 83 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He contributed to over 50 iconic **horror films** under the Ramsay Brothers banner.

His work on classic hits like *Veerana*, *Purana Mandir*, *Bandh Darwaza*, *Do Gaz Zameen Ke Niche* and *Samri*, among others, showcased his mastery of the craft.

Notably, he collaborated with the late Rishi Kapoor on the unforgettable film *Khoj*.

He also worked in television, with shows such as "The Zee Horror Show", "Saturday Suspense", "X Zone", and "Nagin" to his credit.

- 101.** British physicist **Peter Higgs**, whose work led to the discovery of the **Higgs boson** (also called **God Particle**), has passed away at the age of 94 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was born on 29th May 1929 in Newcastle upon Tyne, England.

He was jointly awarded the **Nobel Prize in Physics in 2013** with Francois Englert for their theory that predicted the particle's existence.

- 102.** Former **New Zealand** leg spinner **Jack Alabaster** has passed away at the age of 93 in Cromwell, United Kingdom. He played 21 Tests from 1955-1972 (including the first four wins NZ achieved), taking 49 wickets at 38.02.

From 1955 to 1972, he featured in 21 Tests and claimed 49 wickets. He represented Otago in domestic cricket and made 143 first-class appearances during which he claimed 500 scalps.

He was also a part of New Zealand's first four Test wins and also toured India and Pakistan in 1955-56, England in 1958, South Africa in 1961-62 and the West Indies in 1971-72.

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SPORTS

103. The **IWF World Cup 2024** has been held in Phuket, Thailand from March 31 to April 11, 2024. The event has been organized by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), the world governing body for men's and women's weightlifting.

During the event, a 25-year-old Indian weightlifter **Bindyarani Devi** competed in the women's 55 kg category and won a bronze medal. North Korea's Kang Hyon Gyong won the gold medal with a lift of 234 kg, while Romania's Mihaela Cambei took the silver.

She is a **first Indian** to win Bronze Medal in Weightlifting World Cup 55 kg event.

She recorded a total lift of 196 kg (83 kg snatch + 113 kg clean and jerk) to finish third in the standings.

Indian weightlifter **Mirabai Chanu** has finished 12th in the women's 49 kg category. However, she has been qualified for the Paris Olympics 2024. She is the only Indian weightlifter to have secured a spot for the upcoming Olympics.

104. **Max Verstappen** of Red Bull has won the **Formula One Japanese Grand Prix 2024** held at the Suzuka circuit, Japan.

He has defeated his fellow teammate, Sergio Perez. The Australian Grand Prix winner, Carlos Sainz, has secured the third place.

This is the third win for Max Verstappen out of the four races of the 2024 season.

The 2024 Formula One championship consists of 24 Grand Prix. The driver who wins the maximum point is conferred the World Driver Championship.

105. **New Zealand** has won both the **Men's and Women's titles** in the **World Rugby Sevens Series 2023-24** held in Hong Kong.

The women's team has defeated the United States 36-7 in the final. This is the third consecutive win of the team.

The men's team has defeated France 10-7 in the final. This is the 68th tournament title in the world series.

The Sevens Series has been run by World Rugby since 1999.

106. **Mohammedan Sporting** has won its maiden **I-League** title at the SSA Stadium in Shillong, Meghalaya. The club has defeated Shillong Lajong FC 2-1 in the away match.

They have scored 52 points from 23 matches.

Mohammedan Sporting Club is an Indian football club based in Kolkata, West Bengal.

Currently, the club competes in I-League and Calcutta Football League.

107. Former Indian Hockey player and Dronacharya awardee **Harendra Singh** has been appointed by Hockey India as the coach of the senior national women's hockey team

He will be appointed coach until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

He has replaced Janneke Schopman of Holland (Netherlands), who resigned in March 2024 as the coach of the national women's team after the Indian team failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics 2024.

108. **Novak Djokovic** of Serbia has broken the Swiss tennis legend **Roger Federer's** record of being the oldest man to be **ranked No. 1** in the ATP Tour's computerised rankings.

At the age of **36 years and 321 days**, Novak Djokovic surpassed Roger Federer's record as the oldest No. 1 ranked men's tennis player.

He was ranked world no.1 for the first time on 4 July 2011, at the age of 24.

Rohan Bopanna of India became the oldest-ranked men's double player at 43 years of age in 2023. He again reclaimed the No. 1 rank in doubles at 44 this year.

Iga Swiatek of Poland remains the WTA (Women Tennis Association) no.1 ranked women's single tennis player.

Note: Ilie Nastase of Romania was the first player to be ranked No.1 in the ATP men's single.

109. Three-time World Champion **Rashmi Kumari**, employed as the Chief Manager at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has won the **51st National Women's Carrom Championship 2024 title** after defeating K Nagajothi 25-8, 14-20, 25-20 in the women's final.

The championship has been organised by the Madhya Pradesh Carrom Association.

It is a record **12th** national women's singles title for Rashmi Kumari.

The **men's title** has won by **K Srinivas** after defeating S Aditya 25-0, 19-6 in the final. It is the fourth national men's singles title for him who was brilliant in the tournament, executing seven white slams.

The championship, sponsored by the Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) and SYNCO carrom company, had 237 men and 174 women participants from 12 institutions and 27 States.

110. Indian tennis player **Sumit Nagal** has become the **first Indian** to win main draw match in Monte Carlo Masters. He has defeated 35th ranked Matteo Arnaldi. He is only the third Indian to feature in the main draw in Monte Carlo after Vijay Amritraj in 1977 and Ramesh Krishnan in 1982. He became the first-ever male Indian singles player to win a Masters 1000 match on clay.

IMPORTANT DAYS

111. International Romani Day is observed annually on **8th April** to celebrate the Romani culture and create awareness about the difficulties faced by the Romani community across the globe.

The day was officially declared in honour of the 1st major international meeting of Romani representatives, 7th to 12th April 1971 in Chelsfield near London, the United Kingdom (UK).

112. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has celebrated its **75th anniversary** on **4th April 2024**. On this day in 1949, western nations gathered in Washington, DC, to commit their nations to one another's defence. With the scars of the Second World War still raw and new threats looming, they pledged to safeguard the freedom of their peoples.

NATO was established in 1949, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C. by 12 founding member countries from Europe and North America.

The original 12 founding members of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The alliance currently consists of 32 member countries.

113. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Valour Day (Shaurya Diwas) is observed annually on **9th April**, as a tribute to the brave men of the force. The year 2024 marks the observance of the **59th CRPF Valour Day**.

114. World Homeopathy Day is observed annually on **10th April** to highlight the importance of homoeopathy and its contribution to the world of medicine. The day also commemorate the birth anniversary of the founder of homoeopathy, **Dr. Christian Fredrich Samuel Hahnemann**. The year 2024 marks his **269th** birth anniversary.

Theme 2024: "Homeoparivar: One Health, One Family"

115. National Safe Motherhood Day is observed annually across India on **11th April** to raise awareness of proper health care and maternity facilities for pregnant and lactating women. The day also marks the birth anniversary of **Kasturba Gandhi**, an Indian political activist and wife of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

The year 2024 marks the **155th** birth anniversary of Kasturba Gandhi.

116. International Day of Human Space Flight is observed annually on **12th April** to mark the anniversary of the first human space flight by Russian cosmonaut **Yuri Gagarin** on 12th April 1961. The year 2024 marks the 63rd anniversary of the first human spaceflight. The day was first observed in 2011.

117. International Turban Day is observed annually on **13th April** to spread awareness about the distinct appearance of Sikhs who love and respect principles of faith which obligate keeping hair uncut and covered with a turban. The turban, also known as "dastar" or "pagri" or "pag" refers to the garment worn by both men and some women to cover their heads.

- The year 2024 marks the **555th birth anniversary** of Guru Nanak Dev and the festival of Baisakhi.
- The day was first observed in 2004.

118. World Chagas Disease Day is observed annually on **14th April** to spread public awareness and visibility among people about Chagas Disease (also called American trypanosomiasis).

- **Theme 2024:** 'Tackling Chagas disease: Detect early and care for life'
- The day was first observed in 2020.

119. World Art Day is observed annually on **15th April** to promote awareness about fine arts worldwide. The day also commemorate the birth anniversary of Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci. The day is organized

by the International Association of Art (IAA), an NGO working in official partnership with UNESCO. The day was first observed in **2012**.

120. World Parkinson's Disease Day is observed annually on **11th April** to spread awareness of Parkinson's disease, which is a progressive nervous system disorder. The day also marks the birth anniversary of **Dr James Parkinson** from London, who was the first person to systematically describe the six individuals with the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.

121. The **105th Anniversary** of the **Jallianwala Bagh Massacre** has been observed on 13th April 2024 to pay homage to the martyrs who lost their lives in the massacre during the British rule on 13th April 1919.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre is also known as Massacre of Amritsar. During this massacre, British troops commanded by Brig. Gen. **Reginald Edward Harry Dyer** fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in Punjab.

122. Ambedkar Jayanti is observed annually on **14th April** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Babasaheb Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar**. The year 2024 marks the **133rd birth anniversary** of him. The day was first observed in 2015.

123. International Day of Street Children is observed annually on **12th April** to recognise the humanity, dignity and defiance of street children in the face of unimaginable hardships. The day was first observed in 2012.

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Important Days

Important Day/Week	Date/Month	Theme for 2024	Remark
International Romani Day	8 th April		
World Homeopathy Day	10 th April	Homeoparivar: One Health, One Family	
National Safe Motherhood Day	11 th April		
World Parkinson's Disease Day	11 th April		
International Day of Street Children	12 th April	Belonging	
International Day of Human Space Flight	12 th April		

Siachen Day	13 th April		
International Turban Day	13 th April		The year 2024 marks the 555th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev and the festival of Baisakhi.
Ambedkar Jayanti	14 th April		The year 2024 marks the 133rd birth anniversary of him.
World Chagas Disease Day	14 th April	Tackling Chagas disease: Detect early and care for life	
National Fire Service Day	14 th April		
Fire Service Week	14 th to 20 th April 2024		
World Art Day	15 th April		

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PRACTICE