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

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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. Prime Minister of the Republic of India **Narendra Modi** paid an official visit to the Russian Federation on July 8-9, 2024, at the invitation of President of the Russian Federation H.E. **Vladimir Putin** for the **22nd India – Russia Annual Summit**.

Key highlights of the summit:

- Both sides have strived to forge a contemporary, balanced, mutually beneficial, sustainable, and long-term partnership.
- Both sides welcomed the **Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations for the period 2024-28** signed in December 2023 between the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation which lays down the foundation for exchanges and dialogue on most pressing bilateral, global and regional issues.
- Both sides noted the close inter-parliamentary interaction and underlined the importance of regular meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Commission and Parliamentary Friendship Groups of both Houses as a valuable component of India-Russia relations.

- Both sides highlighted the importance of the security dialogue at the level of National Security Advisors and the National Security Councils on bilateral and regional issues.
- Both sides agreed to increase bilateral trade to **\$100 billion dollars** by **2030**, including the use of national currencies to circumvent Western sanctions,
- Both sides agreed to continue cooperation on the sustainable supply of fertilizers to India on the basis of company-to-company long-term contracts within the framework of the **Joint India-Russia Committee on Fertilizers**.
- Both sides expressed readiness to actively work to expand logistics links with an emphasis on increasing the capacity of infrastructure, including for implementation of the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), as well as using the potential of the Northern Sea Route.
- Both sides welcomed the signing of **the Program of India-Russia cooperation in trade, economic, and investment spheres in the Russian Far East** for the period from **2024 - 2029**, as well as of cooperation principles in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.
- Both Sides welcomed the enhanced partnership between the Indian Space Research Organization and the Russian State Space Corporation "Roscosmos" in the use of outer space for peaceful purposes, including in human spaceflight programs, satellite navigation, and planetary exploration.
- Both sides agreed to hold the **Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC)** in Moscow in the second half of 2024.
- Both sides agreed to continue their joint efforts in promoting the **Russian language** in India and **Indian languages** in Russia comprehensively, including by developing contacts between relevant educational institutions.
- Both Sides expressed their commitment to working together for the success of the **XVI BRICS Summit** in October 2024 in Kazan.

The 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit in 2025 will be held in India.

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2. The **Sixth East Asia Summit (EAS) Conference on Maritime Security Cooperation** was held in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

The Conference was organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs**, Government of India, in partnership with the Governments of **Australia and Indonesia**.

Knowledge Partners: ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) at Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and the National Maritime Foundation (NMF).

The participants discussed a variety of topics, including the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Regional Maritime Domain Awareness, Combating illicit maritime activity, anti-piracy and IUU fishing, Maritime Connectivity, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Search and Rescue (SAR).

East Asia Summit (EAS):

The East Asia Summit (EAS) is the Indo-Pacific's premier forum for strategic dialogue. It is the only leader-led forum at which all key (18) Indo-Pacific partners meet to discuss political, security, and economic challenges facing the region, and has an important role to play in advancing closer regional cooperation.

3. The **Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)**, a regional security grouping, officially welcomed **Bangladesh** as its fifth member country during the **8th Deputy National Security Adviser (DNSA)** level meeting, hosted virtually by Mauritius.
- The existing members, **India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Maldives** welcomed Bangladesh as its new member.
 - Seychelles participated as an observer state.
 - During the meeting, member states reviewed the progress of activities outlined in the CSC's Roadmap for 2023-2024. They also discussed decisions taken at previous high-level meetings, including the 7th DNSA level meeting hosted by the Maldives in July 2023 and the 6th NSA level meeting in Mauritius in December 2023.
 - India was represented by **Pankaj Kumar Singh**, Deputy National Security Adviser (Internal Affairs), while Bangladesh's delegation was led by Lt. Gen. Mizanur Rahman Shameem, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division in the Prime Minister's Office.
 - Member states agreed that the **7th NSA-level meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave** will be held in **India** later this year.

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4. The **7th India-Japan Medical Product Regulatory Symposium**, organized by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, was held at the FICCI Convention Hall in **New Delhi**.

The event was conducted in accordance with the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between India and Japan, aimed at fostering collaboration in medical product regulations.

The symposium brought together approximately 200 delegates from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, India, and the Ministry of Health, Law and Welfare, Japan.

The regulatory authorities from CDSCO, India, and PMDA, Japan, along with industry representatives from the Pharmaceutical Sector, Medical Devices Sector, and Biologicals-Biosimilar sector, actively participated in constructive discussions.

The symposium featured insightful presentations by Indian and Japanese Drug Regulatory Authorities, followed by in-depth discussions on emerging topics in Pharma, Medical Devices, and Regenerative Medicines.

The MoC, originally signed in December 2015 between CDSCO and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and the Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Agency (PMDA) of Japan, underscores mutual cooperation in medical products regulations until **December 2025**.

5. The **National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)** successfully completed the **5th Capacity Building Program** on Public Policy and Governance for Civil Servants of Cambodia in **New Delhi**.

A 5-member Indian delegation from the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) led by Secretary DARPG and Director General, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), **V. Srinivas**, visited Colombo from 7-9 July 2024 for bilateral discussions on collaboration between the NCGG and Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) for capacity building programs of Sri Lankan Civil Servants in India.

The 2-week program was organized in collaboration with the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)**.

The program offered a platform for policy dialogue and sharing best practices, helping participants gain valuable insights into institutional transformation and citizen engagement. The program also gives exposure to the history and culture of the country during visits to the PM Sangrahalaya, Buddha Temple, and the Taj Mahal.

Notably, the NCGG has imparted training to civil servants of 17 countries viz. Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Seychelles, Gambia, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Laos, Vietnam, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Cambodia.

6. The President of India Droupadi Murmu participated in the annual **Rath Yatra festival** in the holy city of Puri, Odisha. This year, due to specific celestial arrangements, the religious event began on 7th July and concluded on 8th July, spanning two days, which is a rare occurrence that was last seen in 1971.

The Ratha Jatra or the Chariot Festival is the only festival in India, where the deities are taken out of the temple premises. It is considered the oldest and largest Hindu chariot festival celebrated annually, on the bright half of the lunar month of **Ashadh** (June–July). The presiding deities of the main temple, Sri Mandira, Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra, with the celestial wheel Sudarshana are taken out from the temple precincts in an elaborate ritual procession to their respective chariots.

- **Lord Jagannatha's** Chariot is called **Nandighosa**. It is forty-five feet high and forty-five feet square at wheel level. It has sixteen wheels, each seven feet in diameter, and is decked with a cover made of red and yellow cloth.
- The Chariot of **Lord Balabhadra**, called the **Taladhwaja**, the one with the Palm Tree on its flag, has fourteen wheels, each of seven feet in diameter, and is covered with red and blue cloth. Its height is forty-four feet.
- The Chariot of **Subhadra**, known as **Darpadalana**, literally trampler of pride, is forty-three feet high with twelve wheels, each seven feet in diameter. This Chariot is decked with a covering of red and black cloth, black being traditionally associated with Shakti and the mother goddess.

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The huge, colourfully decorated chariots are drawn by hundreds and thousands of devotees on the **bada danda**, the grand avenue to the **Gundicha temple**, some two miles away to the North.

After a stay for seven days, the deities return to their abode in **Srimandira**.

The festival is also known as Gundicha Jatra, Ghosa Jatra, Navadina Jatra, Dasavatara Jatra and by a variety of other names.

7. Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh has launched the **Indo-French Liver and Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN)** to prevent and cure metabolic liver diseases at the **Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences in New Delhi**.

This network aims to address key issues related to a common metabolic liver disorder and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Every third Indian has a fatty liver, which predates Type – 2 Diabetes and other metabolic disorders.

The network will involve 11 French and 17 Indian doctors, with support from the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (CEFIPERA).

This initiative seeks to understand and manage liver diseases through a comprehensive 'Omics Approach' for biomarker discovery.

8. **S. Somanath**, Chairman of ISRO, has launched the '**Bhartiya Antariksh Hackathon**' as part of the National Space Day 2024 (NSpD) celebrations.

The first "**National Space Day**" will be celebrated on **23rd August 2024** to mark the safe & precise soft landing of the "Vikram" Lander near the southern polar region of the moon and the successful deployment of Pragyaan Rover on the surface of the moon on August 23, 2023.

The hackathon features a **12-problem statement** in the areas of Geospatial Domain, Space Science, and Image Processing, sourced from renowned ISRO centers such as NRSC, PRL, NESAC, SPL, and SAC.

It invites teams of 3-4 Indian students from undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programs to showcase their innovative solutions.

The hackathon features a comprehensive two-level screening process. Initially, 100 teams will be shortlisted based on the creativity and relevance of their ideation to the problem statements.

An expert committee will then evaluate these proposals, selecting 30 teams to advance to the grand finale.

This climactic event, a 30-hour marathon, will take place at the NRSC Outreach Facility in **Jeedimetla, Hyderabad**.

9. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved India to sign the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement** or the '**High Seas Treaty**.'

This marks a significant step towards the conservation and sustainable utilization of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

The **Ministry of Earth Sciences** will spearhead India's implementation of the BBNJ Agreement.

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The BBNJ Agreement is an international treaty under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**. It aims to address the growing concerns over the long-term protection of marine biodiversity in the high seas.

The BBNJ Agreement will be the **third implementation agreement** under UNCLOS if and when it enters into force, alongside its sister implementation agreements: the 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement (which addresses the exploration and extraction of mineral

resources in the international seabed area) and the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (which addresses the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks). The BBNJ Agreement was agreed upon in March 2023 and is open for signature for two years starting September 2023.

It will be an international legally binding treaty after it enters force 120 days after the 60th ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

As of June 2024, 91 countries have signed the BBNJ Agreement, and eight Parties have ratified it.

10. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted successful trials of the indigenous **Light Battle Tank 'Zorawar'** in **Hazira, Gujarat**. It is expected to be inducted into the Indian Army by the year **2027** after all trials.

Zorawar Tank:

- It was jointly developed by **DRDO and Larsen & Toubro (L&T)** with contributions from various Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises.
- It was named after a military general, Zorawar Singh Kahluria, who had served under Jammu's Raja Gulab Singh in the 19th Century.
- It weighs a maximum of **25 tonnes**, which is a key requirement of the light tank which ensures it can be transported by air.
- The tank will be able to fire at high angles of elevation and perform the role of limited artillery and is an agile weapon platform.
- It is designed to operate in varying terrains, from high-altitude areas and marginal terrains to island territories.
- It will be equipped with all the modern technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, Drone Integration, a high degree of situational awareness, and amphibious operation capability.

11. The **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**, **Ministry of Rural Development**, has organized a webinar to boost **Jute Craft**-based livelihoods.

The webinar aims to bring together key stakeholders from various areas of the Jute craft industry to discuss its status, challenges, and opportunities.

Note: Jute fibre is extracted from the stem of the plant grown as a cash crop in Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Tripura.

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- 12.** The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** contingent participated in **Exercise Pitch Black 2024** conducted at the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base **Darwin in Australia** from 12th July to 2nd August 2024.

The exercise witnessed 20 countries, featuring over 140 aircraft and 4,400 military personnel. The name 'Pitch Black' reflects the exercise's emphasis on nighttime flying over vast, unpopulated areas.

The IAF contingent comprises more than 150 skilled personnel, including pilots, engineers, technicians, and controllers.

IAF operated the **Su-30 MKI** multirole fighters, supported by C-17 Globemaster and IL-78 air-to-air refuelling aircraft in combat-enabling roles.

Exercise Pitch Black 2024 focuses on Large Force Employment warfare, providing a unique opportunity for the IAF's Su-30 MKIs to operate alongside a diverse array of international fighter aircraft, including F-35s, F-22s, F-18s, F-15s, Gripens, and Typhoons.

The exercise provides an excellent opportunity for strengthening the ability of the participating nations to deploy over large distances, support integrated operations in the Indo-Pacific region, and build strong aviation associations in a highly challenging environment.

The exercise strengthens international cooperation and builds robust aviation associations in a challenging environment.

For the IAF, this marks their **third participation** in Exercise Pitch Black, following appearances in 2018 and 2022.

- 13.** The **National Commission for Minorities (NCM)** advised the State Governments/UTs to hold **"SARV DHARMA MEETING"** with all Communities at the Sub-divisional level of the **States**, at least once in a **month** and, also at the **district level, half-yearly**, to curb incidents of attacks/ hate crimes on minority communities.

Educationists all communities i.e. Minority and Majority, representing Opinion Makers, NGOs, Religious Persons, and Educationists may be identified and involved in the 'SARV DHARMA SAMVAD' meetings.

Note: Article 25 of the Indian constitution guarantees the freedom of conscience, the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion to all citizens.

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National Commission for Minorities (NCM):

The National Commission for Minorities was set up as a statutory body with the enactment of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 by the Parliament. The Commission now consists of a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson, and five Members, out of which 5 Members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the notified religious minority communities. Six notified minority communities based on religion are **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs,**

Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains.

Chairman: Iqbal Singh Lalpura

- 14.** Union Minister **Dr Jitendra Singh** has launched the **69th edition of the e-book Civil List 2024 of IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officers** in New Delhi. It is the 4th Edition of the civil list in e-book version.

The publishing of the civil list of IAS officers started in the 1960's.

The civil list is a comprehensive platform for the government to select the best officers from different parts of the country and level playing for officers to seek opportunities.

It will widen the horizon for the government to choose the most suitable officers from a wider pool of talent with more objective feedback.

The civil list contains names of nearly 6000 plus IAS officers. With details such as Batch, Cadre, Present posting as on 01.01.2024, Pay level as on 01.01.2024, Education, Superannuation, etc.

- 15.** The **Sixteenth Finance Commission**, headed by Arvind Panagariya, has constituted an **Advisory Council** with the following members:

- Dr. D.K. Srivastava
- Mr. Neelkanth Mishra
- Dr. Poonam Gupta
- Ms. Pranjul Bhandari
- Mr. Rahul Bajoria

Dr. Poonam Gupta, Director General of the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), shall be the **Convenor** of the Advisory Council.

The roles and functions of the Advisory Council will be:

- To advise the Commission on any of the Terms of Reference (ToR) or related subjects that may be of relevance.
- To assist in the preparation of papers or research studies and to monitor or assess studies commissioned by the Finance Commission, thereby enhancing the Commission's understanding of the issues in its ToR.

- To help broaden the Commission's ambit and understanding by seeking the best national and international practices on matters pertaining to fiscal devolution and improving the quality, reach, and enforcement of its recommendations.

Note: The Sixteenth Finance Commission was constituted on 31st December 2023 with **Arvind Panagariya**, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog as its Chairman. The Commission has been requested to make its recommendations available by 31 October, 2025, covering an award period of 5 years commencing 1st April, 2026.

- 16.** The Secretary (School Education & Literacy), **Sanjay Kumar** reviewed the guidelines developed by **PSSCIVE**, a unit of NCERT under the Ministry of Education (MoE), for **Bagless Days** in schools.

These guidelines are designed to make learning in schools more joyful, experiential, and stress-free for students.

Bagless Days will be encouraged throughout the year, encompassing a variety of activities such as arts, quizzes, sports, and skill-based learning.

Students will gain periodic exposure to activities outside the classroom, including visits to historical, cultural, and tourist sites, interactions with local artists and craftsmen, and visits to various educational institutions within their village, tehsil, district, or state, as mapped by local skilling needs.

As per paragraph 4.26 of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, it is recommended that all students in **grades 6-8** participate in a 10-day bagless period.

During this time, students will intern with local skill experts and engage in activities outside of traditional school settings. This initiative aims to help students develop an appreciation for the larger ecosystem in which their school is embedded.

- 17.** The **12th edition of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting** between **India and UAE** was held in **Abu Dhabi**. The Indian delegation, led by Joint Secretary, **Amitabh Prasad**, included senior officials from the Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces, and the Embassy of India in Abu Dhabi.

The meeting was co-chaired by **Brig. General Staff Jamal Ebrahim Mohamed Almazrooqi** from the UAE side.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a wide range of opportunities for collaboration to further strengthen defence and security cooperation between the two countries.

Both sides deliberated on the regional security situation, including maritime security, and underscored the need to enhance collaboration to tackle the security challenges.

Note: The India-UAE JDCC was established in 2006.

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Note: The India-UAE JDCC was established in 2006.

19. The Supreme Court in its decision in **Pravasi Legal Cell vs Union of India (2020)** had directed that: *"If the tickets have been booked during the lockdown period through a travel agent for a travel within the lockdown period, in all such cases full refund shall be given by the airlines immediately. On such refund, the amount shall be passed on immediately by the agent to the passengers"*.

In light of the above, the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** initiated suo-moto action against **Yatra**, an online travelling platform, regarding the non-refund of airline tickets cancelled due to the **Covid-19 lockdown**.

From July 8, 2021, to June 25, 2024, the CCPA conducted several hearings to address these issues. As a result of these efforts, Yatra Online Limited has made significant progress in reducing the total number of pending refund bookings.

In 2021, there were 36,276 pending bookings amounting to ₹26,25,82,484. As of June 21, 2024, this number has been significantly reduced to 4,837 bookings, amounting to **₹2,52,87,098**.

Yatra has refunded approximately **87%** amount to consumers and further endeavours to refund approximately 13% amount to consumers in order to ensure that all pending refunds are processed promptly and efficiently by airlines.

In 2021, there were a total of 5,771 bookings pertaining to airlines pending for refunds amounting to ₹9,60,14,463. By 2024, Yatra has reduced the pendency of airlines to **98 bookings** with an outstanding amount of ₹31,79,069.

CCPA vide order dated 27 June 2024 directed **22 remaining airlines of Yatra** to expeditiously refund **Rs.31,79,069** to consumers.

CCPA has also directed Yatra to set up dedicated arrangements at the National Consumer Helpline (NCH). Specifically, Yatra is required to allocate five exclusive seats at NCH for making calls to the remaining **4,837 passengers** informing them that their pending refunds due to COVID-19 lockdown-related flight cancellations will be processed.

The costs incurred for engaging these five dedicated personnel will be fully covered by Yatra with payments made directly to the agency managed by NCH.

Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

CCPA was established with effect from 24th July 2020 under Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 2019. It deals in matters affecting the rights of consumers by individuals or entities following improper trade practices or by displaying inappropriate or wrong advertisements affecting the public interest and helps promote consumer trust by enforcing the rights of consumers through effective guidelines.

Chief Commissioner: Nidhi Khare

- 20.** The Union Minister of Communications & Development of North Eastern Region, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, has reviewed the **100-day action plan** of the **Department of Posts**.

Dak Chaupal:

- The Department of Posts will be organizing **5,000 Dak Chaupals** across the country in 100 days.
- This initiative aims to bring essential government and citizen-centric services directly to rural areas, improving accessibility and convenience.
- Dak Chaupals will serve as vital links between rural residents and government functions, reducing barriers such as distance and accessibility.

Dak Ghar Niryat Kendra (DNK):

- The Department aims to onboard **3000 new exporters** onto the Dak Ghar Niryat Kendra Portal in 100 days.
- This scheme will promote local products, contributing to economic growth and rural development.

Standardized Geo-Coded Addressing System:

- The Department of Posts is advancing an initiative to establish a standardized, geo-coded addressing system in India, ensuring simplified addressing solutions for citizen-centric delivery of public and private services.
- This grid-based system will serve as a robust pillar of Geospatial Governance, leading to enhancements in public service delivery, faster emergency response, and a significant boost to logistics efficiency.

As part of the 100-day action plan, the Department has initiated Proof of Concept (PoC) trials across India, covering 10 villages and a city.

An MoU was signed with the **National Institute of Urban Affairs** (an autonomous body under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India) to establish a knowledge support partnership.

Another MoU is in progress with the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)** of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) to establish a technical support partnership.

- 21.** A high-level Indian delegation, led by **T.K. Ramachandaran**, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, has participated in the **132nd session** of the Council of the **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** in London, UK.

India, an elected member of the IMO Council in the category of countries with the largest interest in international seaborne trade, emphasized the urgent issue of seafarer abandonment.

The delegation pointed out that despite efforts, there are currently 44 active cases involving 292 Indian seafarers.

The Indian delegation also addressed concerns over disruptions in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and adjoining areas, which have been impacting shipping and trade logistics.

The delegation cited two significant incidents where the Indian Navy successfully intervened. These included the rescue of a Marshall Island-flagged crude oil carrier, **MV Marlyn Luanda**, and the interception of the vessel **MV Ruen** off the coast of Somalia, ensuring the safety of crew members and handling piracy threats effectively.

India reiterated its proposal for the **South Asian Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Maritime Transport (SACE-SMaT)**.

- This regional hub aims to transform the maritime sector in India and South Asia into a technologically advanced, environmentally sustainable, and digitally proficient industry.
- The centre will focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering technical cooperation, capacity-building, and digital transition.

22. The **'2nd Edition of Toy CEO Meet'** has been organized by the Toy Association of India in association with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Invest India in **New Delhi**.

The event provided a platform for collaboration between the Indian and Global Toy industry, with the aim of working towards the mission of positioning India as a Global Toy Hub.

The event was attended by prominent global players including Walmart, Amazon, Spin Master, IMC Toys, etc., and members from the domestic Toy industry including Sunlord Apparels Manufacturing Company Pvt. Ltd., Playgro Toys India Pvt. Ltd, etc.

This event was a part of the **15th edition of the India Toy Biz International B2B Expo**, one of the largest toy fairs in the country, which has brought together prominent global and domestic toy manufacturers, artisans, retailers, and Government officials to harness the burgeoning opportunities in the domestic toy sector.

23. The **team of Institute of Technology, Nirma University** won the **Robot Competition DD-Robocon India 2024**. This event was organized by Prasar Bharati and IIT Delhi at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi.

The theme of the event was 'Harvest Day.'

Pimpri-Chinchwad College of Engineering, Pune secured the first runner-up position, while MIT World Peace University Pune claimed the second runner-up spot.

More than 750 students from over 45 colleges, institutions, and universities participated in the event.

The winning team will now represent India at the **International Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union Robocon 2024 in QuangNinh, Vietnam.**

DD-Robocon India aims to foster technical skill development, innovation, and teamwork among engineering students, providing them with visibility and recognition in the field of robotics. The competition serves as a prestigious platform for showcasing and enhancing students' engineering and robotics capabilities.

- 24.** The Government of India (GoI) has declared **June 25** as '**Samvidhan Hatya Diwas**' (**Murder of Constitution**) to pay tribute to all those who suffered and fought against the gross abuse of power during the period of the 1975 Emergency.

The Indira Gandhi-led Congress government imposed a national emergency in the country under Article 352 of the constitution on June 25, 1975, leading to the suspension of most of the civil rights for over two years.

The Emergency remained in effect for a period of **21 months** from **June 25, 1975 to March 21, 1977.**

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi without consulting her Council of Ministers advised the then **President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed** to impose an emergency. During the emergency, the Indira government suspended all the fundamental rights of the people, put opposition leaders in jails, and censorship was imposed on the press.

Note: The President of India can impose an emergency in the country under Article 352 (national emergency), Article 356 (breakdown of constitutional machinery in a state), and Article 360 (financial emergency).

- 25.** **NITI Aayog** has launched the '**NITI GearShift Challenge**' as part of the **e-FAST India initiative**. This hackathon aims to foster innovative business models for the **adoption of zero-emission trucks in India**, addressing the nation's pressing economic and environmental challenges.

The '**NITI GearShift Challenge**' is being organized in collaboration with IIM Bangalore, Smart Freight Centre India, WRI India and other institutions.

The hackathon will be conducted in two rounds:

Round 1: Teams will submit initial business models that address a specific barrier—technical, operational, or financial. These submissions should be supported by high-level strategies and research. The deadline for this round is July 20, 2024.

Round 2: Shortlisted teams will advance to this round, where they will present detailed business models with an implementation roadmap. These proposals will be supported by both primary and secondary research and will receive mentorship from industry leaders to ensure the solutions are practical and impactful. The final presentations are due by August 15, 2024.

The NITI GearShift Challenge seeks to engage a diverse group of participants, including students, transport service practitioners, academics, and researchers.

The goal is to create business models that effectively tackle the financial, technical, and operational barriers to the adoption of electric trucks.

26. The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** organized a workshop on “**Transforming Rural Landscape: Designing 5 G Intelligent Villages**” to integrate technology and rural development to enhance quality of life. The integration of cutting-edge innovations, like 5G, with traditional rural practices was highlighted as a pathway to foster sustainable growth and improve living standards in rural areas.

The workshop showcased initiatives aimed at improving connectivity, digital literacy, and sustainable practices to significantly enhance the quality of life for rural communities.

27. The **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** and the **Border Security Forces (BSF)** have allocated **10%** of their constable positions for **Agniveers**.

Under the new policy, CISF will reserve 10% of all future constable vacancies for ex-Agniveers, providing exemptions from certain physical tests and age relaxations. The first batch will enjoy a five-year age relaxation, with subsequent batches receiving a three-year relaxation period.

Agniveer scheme:

The Agniveer scheme, introduced in 2022, allows selected candidates to enroll in the Indian Armed Forces for a four-year period. Up to 25% of these Agniveers may be offered permanent positions based on organizational requirements and performance.

28. The **3rd Meeting** of the **National Traders' Welfare Board (NTWB)** was held in **New Delhi** under the chairmanship of Sunil J. Singhi.

During the meeting, an Open VC link on the website of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) was launched to enable weekly interactions with traders across the country.

The meeting was attended by the non-official members nominated by the Central Government representing Trade Associations and States/UTs as well as the ex-officio members representing Nine Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India.

29. A **Joint Working Group (JWG) 2024 meeting** between **India and Qatar** was held in **Doha** on 10th July 2024. The JWG meeting was co-chaired by the Economic Advisor, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, **Priya P. Nair**, and Director of International Cooperation and Trade Agreements at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of the State of Qatar, **Saleh Al-Mana**.

Key highlights:

- Both sides reviewed the progress of ongoing discussions for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) on Food Safety and Cooperation in exchange for pre-arrival information for the facilitation of trade and customs control on goods and agreed to conclude them expeditiously.
- Both sides agreed to expeditiously address all issues impeding bilateral trade and facilitate trade promotion between the two countries.
- Both sides discussed the possible mechanism to activate the Joint Business Council to carry out its assigned role in following up and implementing the private sector's visions and proposals for trade and investment cooperation.
- Both sides undertook a detailed review of recent developments in bilateral trade and economic cooperation and noted that the relationship has a huge potential to be scaled up even further.
- Both sides agreed to hold the next meeting of the JWG in 2025, in New Delhi.

Bilateral trade between India and Qatar stood at USD 14.08 billion in 2023-24. India is the second largest trading partner to Qatar.

[Attempt RBI Grade B Mock Test 2024](#)

- 30.** A delegation from the Royal Government of **Bhutan**, headed by Gem Tshering, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Government of Bhutan met Kirti Vardhan Singh, Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and discussed issues related to air quality, climate change, forests, natural resources, wildlife and renewable energy.

Both sides agreed to work together in the areas of climate change, air quality, forest, wildlife management, and capacity building in the field of environment and climate change. India suggested to hold the Joint Working Group Meeting.

- 31.** Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone and dedicated to the nation multiple projects related to the road, railways, and ports sector worth more than **Rs.29,400 crores** in **Mumbai, Maharashtra**.

He laid the foundation stone for the **Thane Borivali Tunnel Project** worth Rs 16,600 crores. The total length of the project is 11.8 km. It will reduce the journey from Thane to Borivali by 12 Km with a saving of about 1 hour in travel time.

He also laid the foundation stone for Tunnel work at **Goregaon Mulund Link Road (GMLR) Project** worth over Rs 6300 crores. The GMLR envisages road connectivity from the Western

Express Highway at Goregaon to the Eastern Express Highway at Mulund. The total length of the GMLR is approximately 6.65 kilometers.

He also laid the foundation stone for **Kalyan Yard Remodelling and Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminal** at Turbhe in Navi Mumbai.

He dedicated the **New Platforms at Lokmanya Tilak Terminus** and the extension of Platforms No. 10 & 11 at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Station to the nation.

He launched the **Mukhyamantri Yuva Karya Prashikshan Yojana** with an outlay of around **Rs 5600 crores**. It is a transformative internship program that addresses youth unemployment by providing opportunities for skill enhancement and industry exposure for youth aged **18 to 30 years**.

He also inaugurated the **Indian Newspaper Society (INS) Towers in Mumbai, Maharashtra**. The new building will fulfill the evolving needs of Members of INS for a modern and efficient office space in Mumbai and would serve as the nerve center for the newspaper industry in Mumbai.

- 32.** The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW)** has approved a research proposal on **"Valorization of Dredged Sediments"** to create value from dredged sediments by converting them into aggregates suitable for various construction fields.

The project, sanctioned at an estimated cost of **Rs. 46,47,380/-**, will be implemented over a duration of three years by the **Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay)**.

The project aims to transform dredged sediment, typically seen as waste, into a valuable resource, thus contributing to sustainable development and environmental conservation.

STATES AFFAIRS

- 33.** The Ministry of Rural Development has sanctioned **42 roads** measuring **118.756 km** under the Connectivity component of Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (**PM-JANMAN**), with an estimated investment of **Rs. 114.32 crore**, to the State of **Tripura**.

This landmark initiative will:

- Provide all-weather road connectivity to 47 PVTG habitations in the State.
- Improve the socio-economic condition of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) living in the State.
- Enhance connectivity in rural areas, bridging the gap between remote villages and urban centres.
- Foster economic development, trade, and commerce in the region
- Improve access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets
- Create employment opportunities and stimulate local economies
- Align with the government's vision of a prosperous Northeast and a developed India (Viksit Bharat)

- 34. Tata Power Solar Systems Limited**, a leader in sustainable energy solutions, has launched a transformative rooftop solar initiative aimed at powering every home in **Uttar Pradesh (UP)** with clean energy.

The initiative, '**Ghar Ghar Solar Tata Power ke Sangh**', starts from **Varanasi** and promises substantial financial savings and environmental benefits for residents through state-of-the-art Rooftop Solar Solutions (RTS).

Consumers in the state can avail of a maximum subsidy of up to Rs.1,08,000 on rooftop solar installation. It will comprise a Central Govt. subsidy of Rs 78000 for up to 3 kW and a maximum of Rs 30,000 (Rs 15,000 per kW) for up to 3kW by the State Govt., which will be over and above the Central Govt. subsidy.

Tata Power Solar guarantees a quick turnaround of just 7 days, from inquiry to installation, minimizing any downtime for customers as against other players operating in the market.

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- 35.** The Ministry of Rural Development has sanctioned **78 roads** measuring **563.67 km** and 14 bridges under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (**PMGSY**) - III, with an estimated investment of **Rs. 378.68 crore** to the State of **Assam**.

The aim is to strengthen rural connectivity and accelerate economic growth in the North-Eastern region.

This landmark initiative will:

- Improve access to essential services like healthcare, education, and markets
- Enhance connectivity in rural areas, bridging the gap between remote villages and urban centres.
- Foster economic development, trade, and commerce in the region
- Create employment opportunities and stimulate local economies
- Align with the government's vision of a prosperous Northeast and a developed India (Viksit Bharat)

- 36.** The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal received the first Mother Ship '**MV San Fernando**' marking the beginning of operation at **India's First deep water container transshipment port** in **Vizhinjam, Kerala**.

The ship, with a capacity of up to 9000 TEUs, docks at India's first automated port which is equipped with state of the art that offers large-scale automation for quick turnaround of vessels including the capacity to handle megamax containerships.

Vizhinjam Port:

It is a strategic maritime project near Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. This is the first Greenfield port project in India, initiated by a state Government with an investment exceeding Rs.18,000 crores. Developed under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode, it stands as one of the largest initiatives in the country's port sector.

37. The **Maharashtra** government has launched the '**Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana**' 2024 to promote economic independence among the women in Maharashtra.

Under this scheme, the state government will provide financial assistance of **Rs.1500 per month** to all women beneficiaries.

The application for this programme is open until 31st August 2024.

The applicant should be a woman between the ages of 21 and 65.

38. The Government of **Karnataka** has launched the '**Digital Nagarik and Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality (AR-VR) Skills Programme**' to address cybersecurity awareness among people.

The programme aims to train over **1 lakh teachers** and **10 lakh students** with digital safety knowledge and AR-VR skills by **2025**.

The programme is launched in collaboration with **Meta Platforms**.

Karnataka is the **first state in India** to collaborate with Meta on this initiative. Under this online safety initiative, 10 lakh students between the ages of 18 and 24 from different schools and PU (Pre-University) colleges across the state will receive digital awareness training.

This initiative will cover 100 colleges and universities across Karnataka, where students will become master trainers and promote peer learning. The training will focus on digital safety and awareness.

In the first phase, Bengaluru, Mysuru, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, and Dakshina Kannada will be covered, with the remaining districts to follow in the next phase.

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39. **Rajasthan** will become the **first state in India** to adopt an action plan for **road safety** for the next **10 years**. The proposed action plan aims to reduce road accidents in the state by **50 percent till 2030**.

The plan is being executed by the road safety cell in the Transport Department.

The **World Bank** will assist in developing the plan, which will be implemented in three stages, focusing on speed limits, safe distances, traffic signals, and pedestrian safety.

Phase 1 will be implemented between 2025 till 2027, the second from 2027 to 2030, and the third from 2030 to 2033.

40. **Kharchi Puja**, a week-long festival, is observed in the **Ashadha month** and is deeply associated with the religious heritage and culture of **Tripura** state. The festival is observed at the Chaturdasha Devata (Fourteen Gods) Temple in Khayerpur, Old Agartala.

The festival takes place on the **eighth day** of the new moon in either July or August.

The festival is dedicated to the worship of the fourteen deities of Tripura, collectively known as '**Chaturdasha Devata**'.

The 14 Gods are **Shiva, Durga, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Vani or Saraswati, Kumar or Kartikeya, Ganapa or Ganesha, Brahma, Prithivi, Abdhi or Samudra, Ganga, Sikhi or Agni, Kamadeva and Himadri.**

Throughout the festival, the deities are worshipped by devotees with offerings of flowers, fruits, and sweets, accompanied by the chanting of hymns and traditional music.

During the celebration, the temple is decorated with flowers, and various cultural programs are organized.

In 2024, the festival was observed from 14th July to 20th July.

- 41. Ashadhi Bij** is observed annually on the **second day** of the month of **Ashadha** as the Hindu New Year by the Kutch community in the **Kutch region of Gujarat**. It is also known as Kutchi New Year.

Kutchi New Year is a traditional festival and is celebrated in homes. During this festival, the moisture in the atmosphere is checked to predict which crop would do best in the coming monsoon.

In 2024, it was celebrated on 7th July, marking the beginning of Vikram Samvat 2081 in the Kutch region.

- 42.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, **Amit Shah** inaugurated the **Pradhan Mantri Colleges of Excellence** built at a cost of **Rs 486 crore** in all 55 districts of the state from **Indore, Madhya Pradesh**.

These colleges will provide an opportunity for students to study as per their interest in many subjects like Biotechnology, Computer Science, Culture, Arts, etc.

Courses like B. Ed and B. Sc Agriculture have also been introduced. A course like BSc Agriculture will connect the youth with agriculture and create many new opportunities for self-employment.

- 43.** Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation **Amit Shah** inaugurated the **Amin PJKP Vidhyarthi Bhavan** in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**. He also inaugurated the modern multispecialty **SLiMS Hospital** in Ahmedabad.

About 1000 students will study in this Vidhyarthi Bhavan for higher education.

This hostel has educated thousands of children and produced many prominent personalities who have contributed to the development of Gujarat and the country.

- 44.** The **Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL)**, a joint venture between Russia and India, has completed the delivery of **35,000 7.62 mm Kalashnikov AK-203 assault rifles** to the Indian Army. This move supports 100 percent localization of the AK-203 production.

Delivery of the rifles represents the initial tranche of a larger Indian military requirement for 600,000 AK-203s.

The AK-203 assault rifle is a modern version of the AK-200 series, chambered for the 7.62×39mm cartridge.

IRRPL, headquartered in Korwa, Uttar Pradesh, was set up in 2019 to produce the rifles in India.

- 45.** Eastern Naval Command **Vice Admiral Rajesh P** has inaugurated the **Artificial Intelligence Experience Hub** at the Maritime Reference Library in **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.

The Indian Navy launched the AI Hub as part of its efforts to adopt cutting-edge technologies. The AI Hub is equipped with state-of-the-art AI tools and applications to enthuse personnel to take advantage of the transformational advances in artificial intelligence.

The AI initiative aims to foster exposure, learning, and encourage germination and follow-up of use cases across multiple domains.

- 46.** Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways **Nitin Gadkari** dedicated to the nation a **6-lane** access-controlled road with elevated viaducts from **Manohar International Airport to Dhargal on NH-166S in Goa**.

The 7 km project, costing **Rs.1183 crore**, promises to significantly improve connectivity to Manohar International Airport, facilitating faster and hassle-free travel.

He also announced the construction of a **45 km long** bypass from **Wadgaon to the Karnataka border** at a cost of **Rs.3500 crore** in Goa.

He also announced the 4-laning of the **Panaji-Belgaum section** of NH-748. This project spans 52 km and will cost Rs.4000 crore.

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- 47.** The Department of Fisheries (DoF), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, organized the **Fisheries Summer Meet 2024** at **Madurai, Tamil Nadu**.

During the event, Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, inaugurated **312 Fisheries Projects** covering 19 States/UTs across the country with an investment of **Rs. 114 crores**, supported under the DoF (GoI) flagship scheme Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

The event brings together fish farmers, researchers, industry experts, entrepreneurs, and policymakers to share experiences, and explore prospects for the sustainable development of fisheries.

It also highlights the achievements of various program schemes with a special focus on PMMSY (Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samridhi Sah Yojana) and deliberations with leadership from States/UTs.

The key highlights were a fisheries exhibition, State / UT wise discussions by Ministers, the virtual inauguration of Fisheries Projects and interaction with fishermen/fisherwomen, distribution of KCC to beneficiaries and PMMSY achievement award letters to beneficiaries, felicitation of Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) on-boarded Fish Farmer Producer Organization (FFPOs) among others.

Note:

- India is the 2nd largest fish-producing country with around 8% share in global fish production.
- Globally, India stands 2nd in aquaculture production, is one of the top shrimp-producing and exporting nations, and 3rd largest capture fisheries producer.

48. Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India and host state Assam has conducted a ***“Regional Training of 21st Livestock Census on Software (Mobile & Web Application/ Dashboard) and Breeds to State and District Nodal Officers (SNO/DNO) of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Meghalaya”*** in **Guwahati, Assam**.

The workshop was inaugurated by Atul Bora, Cabinet Minister of Agriculture, Horticulture and Food Processing, Government of Assam.

The aim is to train the DNO/SNO of these states for detailed training on newly launched applications for conducting the 21st Livestock Census which is scheduled for September-December 2024.

49. Thazhakara has become the **first Gram Panchayat** in Alappuzha and one of the first in **Kerala** to update and publish a comprehensive **People’s Biodiversity Register (PBR)** with the involvement of local communities.

The PBR serves as a comprehensive record of biodiversity, including habitats, domesticated animals, micro-organisms, and local biological knowledge, as mandated by the Biological Diversity Act (2002).

Kerala was the **first State** in the country to publish the first volume of the PBR across all local bodies. This document is dynamic, requiring periodic updates on ecosystem details, landscapes, species, and traditional knowledge.

50. The government of **Madhya Pradesh** has approved buying a new plane, a **Challenger 3500 Jet Plane**, for VVIP transport. This change was made because the state’s last plane, a B-200GT VT MPQ, was damaged in a crash landing at Gwalior airport in May 2021. The new jet is supposed to make transporting VVIPs within the state safer and more efficient.

Bombardier introduced the Challenger 3500 in Montreal in September 2021. The aircraft is an updated version of the Challenger 350, which started life as the Bombardier Continental. The state cabinet has also agreed to spend an estimated **Rs 23.87 crore** to set up the **National E-Vidhan Application (NEVA)**. This is in addition to buying the new jet.

The goal of this project, which is part of the Centre’s Digital India program, is to make the state assembly online. Under the NEVA funding plan, the Central government will pay 60% of the project cost and the state governments will pay the other 40%.

51. The government of **Gujarat** has decided to set up **four new centres of excellence** in the state to provide advanced training and guidance to farmers in **horticulture**.

The four new centres will be set up in **Amreli, Dahod, Banaskantha, and Gandhinagar districts** a total of **Rs 40 crores**.

This will promote modern methods in planting horticultural crops to meet the demand for horticultural products.

With the decision, a total of 17 Centers of Excellence will be operationalized by the Horticulture Department in the state.

The modern facilities such as technology-based demonstration of vegetable, fruit, and spice crops, modern nurseries, crop nurseries, conservation farming demonstrations, training centres, micro-irrigation systems, water harvest structures, integrated pack houses, and storage systems will be made available at these centres.

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

52. China has developed the '**HH70**', the world's first fully high-temperature superconducting **Tokamak device**, in its eastern Municipality of Shanghai.

It is developed and constructed by **Energy Singularity**.

HH70 has conducted discharge experiments based on two types of pre-ionization methods: localized helical magnetic flux injection (electron gun) and ion cyclotron heating (ICRF) and has successfully obtained the first plasma.

With this development, China made its foray into the fusion-based clean energy market. This device is an "artificial sun" because it works on the principle of the nuclear fusion of hydrogen atoms that occurs in the sun.

Tokamak:

A tokamak is a machine that controls the nuclear fusion of hydrogen atoms in superheated plasma via magnets. The reaction creates helium and releases enormous energy, with no nuclear waste, unlike nuclear fission.

53. The 24th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State (SCO Summit) has been held in **Astana**, under the presidency of Kazakhstan.

External Affairs Minister, **Dr. S. Jaishankar** led the Indian delegation to Astana for the Summit.

Note: India, under its first-ever presidency of SCO, hosted the 23rd Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State on 04 July 2023 in virtual format.

Key outcomes of the summit:

- **Belarus** has become the **10th member state** of the SCO.
- The Summit adopted the **Astana Declaration** and approved 25 strategic agreements on energy, security, trade, finance, and information security.

- The members adopted the **SCO Development Strategy until 2035**, including resolutions on combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism, anti-drug strategy, energy cooperation, economic development, and cooperation in protected areas and eco-tourism.
- The members approved **Economic Development Strategy's Action Plan** until 2030 and strategies for energy cooperation till 2030.
- SCO member states endorsed the initiative '**On World Unity for a Just Peace, Harmony and Development**' (proposed by Kazakhstan), which aims to create a multipolar world order with a central coordinating role of the UN.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a permanent intergovernmental international organization established on 15th June 2001, in Shanghai (PRC) by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Members: the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan, and Belarus.

- 54.** The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has launched an online platform called **MeDevIS (Medical Devices Information System)**, the first global open access clearing house for information on medical devices.

The MeDevIS is designed to support governments, regulators, and users in their decision-making on the selection, procurement, and use of medical devices for diagnostics, testing, and treatment of diseases and health conditions.

The MeDevIS platform includes **2301** types of medical devices used for broad-ranging health issues, including reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health, noncommunicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes as well as infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

MeDevIS replaces paper-based literature searches across multiple publications with non-standard device names which can add to the complexity.

MeDevIS also aims to help make the naming of medical devices simpler.

MeDevIS references two international naming systems for medical devices - the **European Medical Device Nomenclature (EMDN)**, mostly used in European countries for registration in the European database, and the **Global Medical Device Nomenclature (GMDN)** used in regulatory agencies in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the USA and other Member States.

The MeDevIS platform became operational in March 2024 for the purpose of consultation with WHO Member States. It was made available to the public on 8th July 2024.

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REPORTS & INDICES

- 55.** The **SBI Research**, in a report prepared by a team led by Group Chief Economic Adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh, has recommended the Government of India (GoI) a **fiscal deficit** target of **4.9%** for the **2024-25 financial year**.

The report anticipates that robust growth in GST revenues, coupled with higher dividends from PSUs and the Reserve Bank of India, could enable the government to set a fiscal deficit below 5%.

As the fiscal deficit declines, the gross market borrowing of the government will also reduce to around Rs 13.5 lakh crore in FY25 compared to Rs 14.1 lakh crore in the interim budget 2024.

Net market borrowing could decrease to Rs 11.1 lakh crore from Rs 11.8 lakh crore.

The government has previously said it intends to bring the fiscal deficit below 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26.

Note: The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is known as fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings that may be needed by the government.

- 56.** The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has launched an online platform called **MeDevIS (Medical Devices Information System)**, the first global open access clearing house for information on medical devices.

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- 57.** The recent research report by **Citigroup** on **Employment in India** forecasted that India will struggle to create sufficient employment opportunities even with a **7% growth rate**, but fails to account for the comprehensive and positive employment data available from official sources such as the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** and the **Reserve Bank of India's KLEMS data**.

It estimated that India needs to generate about 12 million jobs annually over the next decade to absorb new entrants into the labor market, but predicted the country could only create 8-9 million jobs per year at a 7% growth rate.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment criticized the report for failing to consider all official data sources available in the public domain.

According to PLFS and RBI's KLEMS data, India has generated more than **8 crore (80 million)** employment opportunities from **2017-18 to 2021-22**. This translates to an average of over 2 crore (20 million) employment per year, despite of the fact that the world economy was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020-21 which contradicts Citigroup's assertion of India's inability to generate sufficient employment.

The KLEMS data provides insights into five key inputs in production – Capital (K), Labour (L), Energy (E), Materials (M), and Services (S).

According to the KLEMS database, the total number of employed people as a ratio to the total population has increased to **44.2 percent in FY24** from 34.7 percent in FY18, with the workforce growing by 168 million during the period at 643.3 million.

Total employment was 596.7 million in FY23, thereby adding 46.6 million in FY24.

The unemployment ratio has gone down to **1.4 percent in FY24** from 2.2 percent in FY18.

The services sector, excluding construction, is absorbing most of the workforce moving out of agriculture, a sharp contrast from the 2000-2011 decade when construction was the primary absorber.

National Pension System (NPS) data showed over **775,000** new subscribers in FY24 under the central and state governments, a 30 percent increase from the 594,000 new subscribers in FY23.

The EPFO data shows that more than **13 million** subscribers joined EPFO in FY24, which is more than double the 6.1 million in FY19. Between September 2017 and March 2024, more than 62 million net subscribers have joined EPFO.

- 58.** New research shows that **India** is **fifth** in the world when it comes to innovations in **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)**.

India has filed only **1,350 patents** around this buzzing technology from 2014 to 2023 ranking fifth after **China (38,210), the US (6,276), the Republic of Korea (4,155), and Japan (3,409)** when it comes to a total number of GenAI inventions patented, as per a new report by UN body World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

India has also overtaken the UK (sixth with 714 patents) and Germany (708) when it comes to a number of GenAI patents published.

Indian companies like RN Chidakashi Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services have made important contributions to new ideas in retail AI and contract management, respectively. India is responsible for only 3% of the world's GenAI patents, but the number of patents it publishes each year grows by an amazing 56%.

- 59.** The **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** in India rose **5.9 percent** in **May 2024** over the corresponding period of the previous year. The IIP growth rate in May 2023 was 5.7 percent.

This is according to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation data released on 12th July 2024.

Mining experienced a year-on-year growth of 6.6 percentage points. Manufacturing saw a growth of 4.6 percent while Electricity recorded a significant year-on-year growth of 13.7 percentage points.

The capital goods segment increased by 2.5 percent, consumer durables surged by 12.3 percent, non-durable consumer goods saw a 2.3 percent growth, and goods related to infrastructure and construction experienced a growth of 6.9 percent.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods grew by 7.3 percent.

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GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

- 60.** Minister of State (Defence) **Sanjay Seth** launched the **"GRSE Accelerated Innovation Nurturing Scheme (GAINS 2024)"** of Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (**GRSE**) in Kolkata, West Bengal.

This initiative aligns with the 'Make in India' and 'Start-up India' policies of the Government of India.

'GAINS' is a unique national scheme to encourage and enable MSMEs and Start-Ups to develop innovative solutions that GRSE may incorporate for further technological advancement.

The aim is to leverage the vast ecosystem of MSMEs and Start-Ups to address present and emerging challenges in the **ship design and construction industry** while achieving the objectives of Atmanirbharta.

- 61.** Union Minister of Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, **Kiren Rijiju**, reviewed the physical and financial status of the projects approved under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)** of the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the State of **Arunachal Pradesh**.

During the review meeting, the Union Minister announced the release of financial assistance of **Rs. 35 Crores** as the Central Share to the State for ongoing projects under PMJVK.

He also announced two new projects, one each for Kumchaikha of Diyun Circle and Pakpu Maling.

A roadmap for the early execution of ten approved projects under the Buddhist Development Plan (total estimated cost: Rs. 41.07 crores) was also discussed during the meeting. The program aims at converging various ongoing schemes of the Ministry such as PMJVK, PM-Vikas, and Scholarship as well as the programs and the schemes being administered by National Minorities Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NMDFC).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):

- PMJVK, a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)**, is an area development program under which community infrastructure and basic amenities are being created in the identified areas.
- The scheme is being implemented under the aegis of the State Governments/ Union Territory (UT) Administrations on a fund-sharing pattern and the projects are implemented and managed by the concerned State/ UT Government. The infrastructure built up under the scheme is for the benefit of all people living in the area.
- The scheme was restructured and implemented with effect from **May 2018** as Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK), so as to reduce gaps, if any, in the socio-economic parameters in 1300 identified areas of the country.
- The scheme has been approved with effect from the financial year **2022-23** with the revised guidelines, for implementation in all districts of the country during the period of the 15th Finance Commission Cycle.

62. The **Ministry of Culture** initiated **Project PARI (Public Art of India)** to bring forth public art that draws inspiration from millennia of artistic heritage (lok kala/lok sanskriti) while incorporating modern themes and techniques.

This project is being executed by **Lalit Kala Akademi and National Gallery of Modern Art**. The first intervention under Project PARI is taking place in Delhi. It coincides with the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee scheduled to be held in New Delhi, India between 21-31 July 2024.

More than 150 visual artists from all over the country have come together to create the various wall paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations being prepared under this project.

The creative canvas includes *Phad paintings (Rajasthan)*, *Thangka painting (Sikkim/Ladakh)*, *miniature painting (Himachal Pradesh)*, *Gond art (Madhya Pradesh)*, *Tanjore paintings (Tamil Nadu)*, *Kalamkari (Andhra Pradesh)*, *Alpona art (West Bengal)*, *Cheriyal painting (Telangana)*, *Pichhwai Painting (Rajasthan)*, *Lanjia Saura (Odisha)*, *Pattachitra (West Bengal)*, *Bani Thani*

Painting (Rajasthan), Warli (Maharashtra), Pithora Art (Gujarat), Aipan (Uttarakhand), Kerala Murals (Kerala), Alpana art (Tripura) and more.

Women artists have been an integral part of Project PARI and their participation in large numbers is a testimony of Bharat's NARI SHAKTI.

- 63.** The **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)**, incubated in NITI Aayog in 2018, has collaborated with **TransUnion CIBIL** to launch the **SEHER**, a credit education program.

The program is part of WEP's **Financing Women Collaborative (FWC)**, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at accelerating access to finance for women entrepreneurs.

The SEHER program was launched by Anna Roy, Mission Director, Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and Principal Economic Adviser, NITI Aayog.

SEHER will offer women entrepreneurs access to personalized resources and tools, including financial literacy content.

This program will help support India's USD 5 trillion economy goal as more and more women are empowered to start and grow their businesses profitably.

Note: As per the Udyam Registration Portal (URP) of the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), India has 63 million micro, small, and medium enterprises of which 20.5% are women-owned, employing as many as 27 million people. The Ministry also reported that rural areas have a slightly greater share of women-owned enterprises (22.24%) compared to urban areas (18.42%).

- 64.** The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** and **CyberPeace Foundation** launched the **fifth phase** of the **Digital Shakti Campaign** to digitally empower and upskill women and girls in cyberspace.

Digital Shakti was started in 2018 with the vision of introducing women to the digital era to enhance their skills.

So far, this campaign trained **6 lakh women** to be safe in the digital world. The Phase-V aims to increase that number to **10 lakh (1 million)**.

The campaign has transformed the digital lives of women across India, reaching over 6.86 lakh netizens through direct sessions and over 2.67 crore individuals through online mediums.

Goals of 5th Phase:

- Train **30,000 participants** in each state (numbers may vary by region).
- Establish a strong network of volunteers driving positive change and creating a safe, informed, and innovative digital community.
- Focus on bridging the skill gap, delivering digital literacy training, empowerment workshops, and community engagement.

- Introduce the multilingual **Digital Resource Hub (DRH)** and Chatbot to enhance cybersecurity knowledge and capabilities.
- Create educational videos on various training topics, available on CyberPeace TV (YouTube)

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National Commission for Women (NCW):

The National Commission for Women was set up as a statutory body in January 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. It consists of a chairperson, 5 members, and a member-secretary.

Chairperson: Rekha Sharma

Headquarters: New Delhi

- 65.** The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has notified the draft **Telecommunications (Digital Bharat Nidhi) Rules, 2024** under Sections 26 and 56 of the Telecommunication Act 2023. The purpose of DBN is to increase telecom connectivity in rural areas.

DBN will promote access to and delivery of telecommunication services in underserved rural, remote, and urban areas, and support research and development of telecommunication services, technologies, etc.

DBN has been created under the **Telecommunication Act of 2023** and it will replace the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** under the **Indian Telegraph Act 1885**.

The Balance of Credit under DBN is **non-lapsable** at the end of the financial year.

Telecom companies' contributions to the Digital Bharat Nidhi will first be credited to the **Consolidated Fund of India (CFI)** and then later deposited into the DBN.

An administrator will manage the fund, and projects will be executed by implementers selected through bidding or direct applications, ensuring transparency.

The administrator will tailor payment methods (full, partial, and co-funding) based on specific connectivity needs.

- 66.** In July 2024, Union Minister of Minority Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, **Kiren Rijju**, performed Bhoomi Poojan for the **New Academic Building for Traditional Courses at the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS)** at **Leh**, sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) of the Ministry of Minority Affairs at an estimated cost of Rs. 53 Cr (approx).

The structure would include essential amenities such as Parking, Display Hall, Workshop Hall, Classroom, Teachers room and ancillary facilities.

He also approved the construction of the "School building incorporating Science Lab, Computer Lab & main Indoor Stadium etc. for Duzing photang Ufti, Zansakar" District Kargil,

UT of Ladakh' at an estimated cost of amounting to Rs.32.06 Crore under PMJVK of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

He also approved the two numbers of Examination cum Training Centres for Polytechnic and ITI Courses amounting to total Rs.14.5 Crore for the Department of Minority Welfare, UT of Ladakh (one each in Kargil and Leh) by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under PMJVK.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK), a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), is an area development program of the **Ministry of Minority Affairs** under which community infrastructure and basic amenities are being created in the identified areas.

The scheme is being implemented under the aegis of the State Governments/ Union Territory (UT) Administrations on a fund-sharing pattern and the projects are implemented and managed by the concerned State/ UT Government. The infrastructure built up under the scheme is for the benefit of all people living in the area.

The scheme was restructured and implemented with effect from May 2018 as Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK), so as to reduce gaps, if any, in the socio-economic parameters in 1300 identified areas of the country.

The scheme has been approved with effect from the financial year 2022-23 with the revised guidelines, for implementation in all districts of the country during the period of the 15th Finance Commission Cycle.

The projects are implemented on a fund-sharing arrangement between the Centre and the State Government/UT Administration in the ratio of 90:10 for North East States, Hilly States (J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand)/ UTs with Legislation, 100% for UTs without Legislature and 60:40 for all other States/ UTs. Proposals received from Central Government Organisations are supported 100%.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

- 67. Paradip Port Authority (PPA)** has created a new record with **41.12 Million Metric Tons (MMT)** of cargo handling within the first 100 days of the fiscal year 2024-25.

This outstanding performance sets a record for the port, reflecting a **4.78 percent** growth compared to the 39.25 MMT achieved during the same period in the previous fiscal year, FY 2023-24.

This achievement highlights PPA's ongoing commitment to setting new benchmarks in cargo handling and contributing significantly to the nation's economic growth.

- 68. The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department** has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **MakeMyTrip** to promote tourism in the state.

Under this MoU, MakeMyTrip will work as a strategic partner with the government providing insights on consumer trends, tourist preferences, and supply-side information, which will aid the department in future policymaking.

- 69.** The Ministry of Defence has achieved the highest-ever growth in indigenous **defense production** in value terms during the **Financial Year (FY) 2023-24**.

As per the data received from all Defence Public Sector undertakings (DPSUs), other PSUs manufacturing defense items, and private companies, the value of defense production in the country has gone up to a record-high figure i.e., **Rs 1,26,887 crore**, reflecting a growth of **16.7%** over the defense production of the previous financial year.

The value of defence production in FY 2022-23 was Rs 1,08,684 crore.

Of the total value of production (VoP) in 2023-24, about 79.2% has been contributed by DPSUs/other PSUs and 20.8% by the private sector. The data shows that in terms of absolute value, both DPSUs/PSUs and the private sector have recorded a steady growth in defense production.

The defense exports touched a record-high of Rs 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24, reflecting a growth of 32.5% over the last fiscal when the figure was Rs 15,920 crore.

This feat has been achieved due to the policy reforms/initiatives and ease of doing business brought in by the Government in the last 10 years with a focus on attaining self-reliance.

- 70. Bajaj Auto**, the world's leading manufacturer of two-wheelers and three-wheelers, has introduced the **Freedom 125**, marking the debut of the world's first motorcycle to run on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG).

This 125-cc commuter bike operates on both petrol and CNG, aiming to significantly lower operational costs for riders in its category.

It is priced between **Rs.95,000 and Rs.1.10 lakh** (ex-showroom).

The CNG cylinder, positioned under the petrol tank, integrates seamlessly with the bike's design, distinguishing itself subtly from other models.

The motorcycle features separate filler nozzles for CNG and petrol, catering to their distinct storage requirements.

The petrol tank holds 2 liters, while the CNG tank has a capacity of 2 kg.

The fuel efficiency is rated at **102 km/kg** for CNG and **64 km/l** for petrol.

The initial rollout will be in **Gujarat and Maharashtra**, with plans to export to markets including Egypt, Tanzania, Peru, Indonesia, and Bangladesh.

- 71.** Indian Railways' **Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) Vadodara** and **Airbus** have collaborated to significantly strengthen **aerospace teaching and research**.

A definitive agreement was signed at Rail Bhawan, New Delhi between Rémi Maillard (President and Managing Director, AIRBUS India and South Asia) and Prof. Manoj Choudhary (Vice-Chancellor, Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya).

The agreement includes a full scholarship program for **40 GSV students** for the entire program duration, setting up the Centre of Excellence at GSV as well as the Airbus Aviation Chair Professor position at GSV.

GSV and Airbus will also partner for executive training for working professionals in the aviation sector.

GSV is a "first of its kind" university aiming to fulfill the mandate of the National Developmental Plans across railways, aviation, shipping, ports, highways, roads, and waterways.

Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV) Vadodara:

GSV was established through an Act of Parliament in 2022, for creating best-in-class manpower and talent for the entire transportation and logistics sectors. This Central University is sponsored by the Ministry of Railways, Govt. of India and has Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister of Railways, Information and Broadcasting, Electronics and IT as its First Chancellor.

- 72.** The Government of India (GoI) has made the **ISI mark** mandatory for **stainless steel** and **aluminum kitchen utensils** to ensure product safety and quality.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, issued a Quality Control Order on March 14, making the ISI mark compulsory for these kitchen utensils.

The order prohibits the manufacture, import, sale, distribution, storage, or exhibition for sale of any stainless steel or aluminum utensils that do not bear the BIS standard mark.

This development follows the BIS' recent formulation of comprehensive standards for kitchen items, including IS 14756:2022 for stainless steel and IS 1660:2024 for aluminum utensils.

Indian Standards Institution (ISI) mark is developed by **BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards)**.

- 73.** The **Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), Mumbai** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay** to advance maritime safety through the development of a ship trajectory prediction tool.

The trajectory prediction of disabled ships is a critical aspect of maritime safety, facilitating early warnings and rescue operation planning.

Understanding and predicting the movement of disabled ships and floating objects drifting in the open sea, under the influence of location-specific environmental conditions, is essential for timely and effective response and rescue efforts.

The proposed work will focus on developing a trajectory prediction tool for disabled ships and floating objects.

This tool will enable quick response for locating the drifting vessels, as well as rerouting nearby vessels to improve maritime safety.

The project under the current initiative aims to develop a 'Made in India' software system and will enhance maritime safety, rescue, and support operations.

- 74.** **Adani Group** has become the main sponsor of the Indian team for the **Paris 2024 Olympics** through a campaign launched with themed **#DeshkaGeetAtOlympics**. The campaign focuses on the athletes who have trained for hours and years to achieve victory and hear the national anthem after a victory.

The centerpiece of the campaign is an inspiring film that depicts top Indian athletes in intense training, emphasizes the goal of surpassing the Tokyo Olympics medal tally, and captures the athletes' aspirations to hear the national anthem in Paris.

- 75. The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL)**, a wholly owned subsidiary of EESL, to help facilitate ***"Sustainable Transport for Rural Entrepreneurs through Electric Bicycles" (STREE)*** for Self Help Group (SHG) Women under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

The STREE intends to empower the rural economy, especially the rural women by providing them access to green mobility through the introduction of electric bicycles.

This MoU of Green Mobility will further support the economic & social empowerment of rural women and accelerate enabling of Lakhpati Didis in line with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision.

The project aims to build livelihood opportunities independence and prosperity amongst SHG women, elevating their socio-economic standing.

Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL):

CESL is a subsidiary of state-owned Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a joint venture of public sector companies under the Ministry of Power, Government of India. CESL is focused on energy solutions that lie at the confluence of renewable energy, electric mobility, and climate change.

Headquarters: New Delhi

MD & CEO: Vishal Kapoor

- 76. The Karnataka** government has signed two Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) worth **Rs 1,040 crore** with **DN Solutions and EMNI Company Limited** in **Seoul, South Korea**.

The MoUs were signed on the second day of the delegation's visit, led by Karnataka Minister for Large and Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development M B Patil.

He also participated in the *'Roadshow on Investment Opportunities in Karnataka'* in Seoul, South Korea, which was organized by the Karnataka government and the Embassy of India.

First MoU: EMNI Co. Ltd has committed to invest Rs 40 crore for battery technology advancements. The MoU is for investing in the storage, testing, and recycling of LG Energy Solution's battery cells in Karnataka.

Second MoU: DN Solutions has committed to invest Rs 1,000 crore towards establishing machine manufacturing facilities, a research and development center, and a technical support center for Indian manufacturing companies.

- 77. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate and jointly work as a **Project Service Provider** for **Design, Construction and Consultancy Projects in India and Abroad**.

This partnership aims to synergize the joint efforts of DMRC and RVNL in the upcoming projects in India and abroad as Project Service Provider for Metro/Railways/High Speed Rail/Highways/Mega-Bridges/Tunnels/Institutional Buildings/Workshops or Depots/S&T works/Railway Electrification.

This collaboration between DMRC and RVNL will help to develop new projects in India and abroad.

- 78. The Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL)**, a 'Maharatna' and a Fortune Global 500 Company, has partnered with the **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)** as the official Principal Partner for four years, starting from Paris Olympics 2024 through Los Angeles Olympics 2028.

The partnership aims to support and salute the determination of Indian athletes, particularly those from humble backgrounds and remote areas of India.

- 79. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** has signed two important Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) toward empowering persons with disabilities.

First MoU: It is signed with the **"Enable Me" Access Association (EMA)** with the aim:

- To provide training on Universal Design using Indian accessibility standards and create integrated tools for disseminating knowledge of these standards.
- To provide joint training on Indian accessibility standards for various groups identified by DEPwD.
- To develop a software tool for accessibility education.
- To support the Accessible India Campaign 2.0 and assist DEPwD in highlighting and rectifying policies that undermine the RPwD Act-2016 and other mandatory guidelines.

Second MoU: It is signed with the **Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center (ISLRTC) and YUNIKEE**. The aim is to provide free and accessible skills to the deaf community and their youth. With this skill knowledge, deaf youth will be able to advance their careers, secure high-quality jobs, and receive promotions in their current jobs.

- 80. Researchers at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru** and their collaborators have developed an automated code that can be used as an online tool to create a catalogue of Near Infrared (NIR) stars for the **Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)**, which is a planned telescope proposed to be built on **Mauna Kea**, on the island of Hawaii.

The online tool to create a comprehensive star catalogue for the Adaptive Optics (AO) system of the upcoming TMT can enable this ground-based telescope-- one of the largest to be operational in the next decade – to generate sharper astronomical images.

The AOS system on TMT, known as the Narrow Field Infrared Adaptive Optics System (NFIRAOS), will be enhanced by a Laser Guide Star (LGS) facility.

This facility will project up to nine lasers into the sky to create artificial guide stars. However, atmospheric turbulence affects these laser beams, so measuring atmospheric tip-tilt is uncertain. To correct these effects, the AO system requires feedback from three real stars, known as Natural Guide Stars (NGS).

For optimal performance, simulations indicate that NFIRAOS requires at least three NGS within its field of view, each as bright as 22 magnitudes in the near-infrared J waveband. Currently, no such comprehensive catalogue of stars exists which will provide NGS in all regions of the sky.

India is a key partner in the TMT project, with the India TMT Center at the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru** leading the national collaboration. India's participation in the TMT collaboration involves three institutes: the IIA, Bengaluru, the Inter-University Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune, and the Aryabhata Research Institute for Observational Sciences (ARIES), Nainital.

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- 81.** The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **M. S. A Research Foundation (MSSRF)** to work together for livelihood generation among rural, tribal, and farming communities.

The MoU entails creating a framework and meaningful association for the transfer of affordable, proven and selected technologies with societal relevance available across the CSIR laboratories/institutes and mentoring the SHGs/NGOs/FPOs and other voluntary organizations selected by MSSRF for livelihood generation and empowerment of women, tribal population.

- 82.** The **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, has set a new record in production, sales, and new employment generation in the financial year **2023-24**.

- As per the provisional figures for the FY 2023-24, there has been an increase of **399.69 percent (approximately 400%) in sales, 314.79 percent (approximately 315%) in production, and 80.96 percent (approximately 81%) in new employment generation** compared to the financial year 2013-14.
- In the financial year 2022-23, there was an increase of 332.14% in sales, 267.52% in production, and 69.75% in new employment generation compared to 2013-14.

- First time in the history of independent India, the sales of KVIC products have crossed **Rs. 1.55 lakh crore** in the financial year 2023-24.
- The sales of indigenous Khadi and village industry products made by artisans in rural areas, which were Rs. 31154.20 crore in the financial year 2013-14, have increased to the highest level of Rs. 155673.12 crore in the financial year 2023-24, which is the greatest achievement so far.
- In the financial year 2023-24, KVIC's efforts have created **10.17 lakh new jobs** in rural areas, strengthening rural India's economy.
- The production of Khadi and village industry products, which was Rs. 26,109.08 crores in the financial year 2013-14, reached Rs. 108,297.68 crores in the financial year 2023-24, a jump of **314.79 percent**, while the production in the financial year 2022-23 was Rs. 95956.67 crores.
- The sales were Rs. 31,154.20 crores in the financial year 2013-14, they reached Rs. 1,55,673.12 crore in the financial year 2023-24. While the production of Khadi fabrics was Rs. 811.08 crores in the financial year 2013-14, it reached Rs. 3,206 crores in the financial year 2023-24.
- The cumulative employment was 1.30 crore in the financial year 2013-14, it reached 1.87 crores in 2023-24, with an increase of **43.65 percent**. Similarly, while 5.62 lakh new jobs were created in the financial year 2013-14, it reached 10.17 lakh in the financial year 2023-24, with an increase of **80.96 percent**. 4.98 lakh rural Khadi artisans (spinners and weavers) and workers are also employed in manufacturing Khadi fabrics.
- The business of Khadi and Gramodyog Bhavan, New Delhi, was Rs. 51.13 crores in the financial year 2013-14, it increased by **87.23 percent** to Rs. 95.74 crores in the financial year 2023-24.

83. The **Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)** has awarded **seven new projects** to industries under the Technology Development Fund scheme for various requirements of the Armed Forces and aerospace & defense sectors.

The aim is to nurture industries, especially MSMEs & start-ups, in defense and aerospace sectors.

Projects	Awarded to
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(I) Indigenous Scenario and Sensor Simulation Toolkit	Oxygen 2 Innovation Pvt Ltd, Noida
(II) Long-range Remotely Operated Vehicles for Detection & Neutralisation	IROV Technologies Pvt Limited, Kochi
(III) Development of Ice Detection Sensor for Aircraft	Craftlogic Labs Pvt Ltd, Bengaluru
(IV) Development of Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System-based Timing Acquisition & Dissemination System	Accord Software & Systems Pvt Ltd, Bengaluru
(V) Development of Radar Signal Processor with Active Antenna Array Simulator	Data Pattern (India) Limited, Chennai
(VI) Underwater Launched Unmanned Aerial Vehicle	Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt Ltd, Pune
(VIII) Development of Graphene-Based Smart & E-textiles for Multifunctional Wearable Applications	Alohatech Private Limited, Coimbatore

- 84.** The **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC) Logistics Data Services Limited (NLDS)** and **Gujarat Infrastructure Development Board (GIDB)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to digitize the logistics landscape in Gujarat by leveraging the **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)**.

This MoU will develop the Gujarat ULIP Dashboard by NLDS.

The dashboard, designed to operate on a Hub-spoke model, will seamlessly integrate with various state departments, ensuring a continuous flow of information. It will provide real-time visibility into key logistics parameters such as shipment tracking, vehicle utilization, infrastructure availability, transit times, etc.

BANKING & FINANCE

- 85.** The **State Bank of India (SBI)** has launched **11 initiatives**, including UPI tap and pay, YONO Business and Corporate Internet Banking for small businesses, and automated intimation on loan proposals, catering to diversified customer profiles and their banking needs, on the occasion of its **69th Foundation Day** (1 July 1955).

- SBI introduced tap and pay on the **BHIM SBI PAY app** and end-to-end digital loans against mutual funds on the YONO app. Transactions under Rs.500 leverage UPI Lite for a pin-less experience, while transactions beyond ₹500 will require a UPI PIN.
- The **YONO Business / Corporate Internet Banking** product offers simplified role management with no mandatory admin or regulator. The new feature offers a limit of Rs.50 lakh per transaction and facilitates quick transfers up to Rs.25,000 per transaction with a daily limit of Rs.5 lakh.
- SBI introduced a new functionality for borrower's home loan processing. **Home loan borrowers** will now receive automated e-mail and SMS notifications regarding the status of their loan application at various processing stages.
- SBI launched **35 new Agricultural Centralised Processing Cells (Agri CPCs)** to revamp and mitigate risks in its agricultural loan portfolio.
- SBI also announced an initiative, which is a fully digital end-to-end journey for **SBI Surya Ghar Loan**. The users can opt for credit to install solar rooftops under the central government's PM Surya Ghar Scheme, offering loans for up to 10 KW capacity.
- SBI opened a second **Global NRI Centre (GNC) in Patiala, Punjab**. These centers serve as hubs of excellence, providing specialized services to NRI customers.
- SBI launched comprehensively redesigned **High Court branches** aimed at enhancing services for the legal community.

86. The **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** has raised its stake in **IDFC First Bank** from 0.20% to **2.68%**. LIC bought 18,60,34,900 shares at an average price of Rs 80.63 via a private placement offer.

In terms of number of shares, the holding has increased from a little more than 1.42 crore to over 20.02 crore.

The overall acquisition cost is Rs.1500 crore.

87. **Paytm** has launched '**Health Saathi**', an exclusive health and income protection plan for its merchant partners, available on the 'Paytm for Business' app. The plan offers a monthly subscription of **Rs.35**.

This initiative is part of our ongoing efforts to support our vast network of merchant partners by providing them with affordable, comprehensive healthcare benefits.

The plan offers a range of services that include unlimited doctor teleconsultation, in-person doctor visits (OPD) within its partner network. It also includes income protection cover in the event of business interruptions due to accidents, natural calamities such as floods, and fires, or strikes.

The doctor teleconsultation service is powered by MediBuddy, providing additional benefits including discounts at leading pharmacies and on diagnostic tests.

The pilot for 'Paytm Health Saathi' started in May 2024.

88. The **Border Security Forces (BSF)**, in collaboration with State Bank of India (SBI), conducted a **"Grow with the Trees"** plantation event at BSF Headquarters in **Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir**.

The objective was to enhance green cover and raise awareness about the significance of tree planting.

BSF officials, jawans, SBI Bank representatives, and schoolchildren from Kendriya Vidyalaya participated in the initiative.

This effort aims to promote sustainability and build a spirit of camaraderie and cooperation among all participants.

89. The Board of **Bandhan Bank Limited** has approved the appointment of **Ratan Kumar Kesh** as its **interim Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**.

His appointment is effective from 10th July 2024 for a period of 3 months or until an appointment of a regular MD & CEO, whichever is earlier.

He has succeeded Chandra Shekhar Ghosh.

Earlier, he served as the Executive Director (ED) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Bandhan Bank (since March 2023).

90. **EXIM Bank** has sanctioned a **USD 2.5 million** Line of Credit (LoC) for the installation of a solar photo voltaic power plant at **Cheddi Jagan International Airport in Timehri, Guyana**.

The agreement is effective from **24th June 2024**.

Out of the total credit by Exim Bank under the agreement, goods, works and services of the value of at least 75 percent of the contract price shall be supplied by the seller from India, and the remaining 25 percent of goods and services may be procured by the seller for the purpose of the eligible contract from outside India

The last date of disbursement is **48 months** after the project's completion.

91. The **Himachal Pradesh State Cooperative Bank (HPSCB)**, the leading bank of Himachal Pradesh, has collaborated with Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Limited (**Star Health Insurance**), India's largest retail health insurance company, to enhance access to health insurance across the region, particularly in rural areas where the bank holds a significant presence.

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This partnership focusing on rural and Tier 3 regions, is in line with IRDAI's commitment of 'Insurance for all by 2047'.

- 92. Tata Asset Management Company** has launched **India's first-ever tourism index fund** – the Tata Nifty India Tourism Index Fund. The Tata Nifty India Tourism Index Fund will track the Nifty India Tourism Index (TRI, i.e., total returns index).

The NFO (New Fund Offer) opened on July 08, 2024, and will close on July 19, 2024.

The minimum investment amount during the NFO period is **Rs 5,000** and can be increased in multiples of Rs 1.

An exit load of 0.25% of the applicable net asset value (NAV) will be applied if you redeem units on or before 15 days of allotment.

The fund has given 32% weightage to the hotels and resorts sector. It is followed by airlines (19%), restaurants (19%), tour, travel related services (16%), airports and airport services (10%) and luggage (3%).

This index can house a maximum of 30 stocks from the parent index Nifty 500.

- 93. Punjab National Bank (PNB)** has introduced a new feature called **Safety Ring** for its Internet Banking System (IBS) and Mobile Banking System (MBS).

This optional feature adds an extra layer of security to help minimize losses in the event of unauthorized access by fraudsters.

The Safety Ring feature allows customers to set a daily transaction limit specifically for term deposits (TDs), either for online closures or for availing overdraft facilities on TDs, up to a pre-determined limit.

This limit serves as a consolidated cap across all digital channels, ensuring that transactions involving TDs cannot exceed the set amount.

Customers can set their Safety Ring limit either through PNB branches or online via IBS/MBS. The limit can be modified through online mode and will be effective after a cooling period of 24 hours or through the branch instantly.

- 94. ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund** has introduced the ICICI Prudential Nifty Oil & Gas ETF, **India's first exchange-traded fund (ETF) in the oil and gas sector.**

The scheme will track the **Nifty Oil & Gas Total Return Index**, an index that reflects the performance of listed sector companies.

This is an open-ended scheme, meaning investors can redeem their units at any time.

Fund managers: Nishit Patel and Priya Sridhar

Minimum investment: Rs 100 (plus in multiples of Re 1).

The scheme involves **"very high risk."**

The New Fund Offer (NFO) started on 8th July and will close on 18th July 2024.

The Nifty Oil & Gas Index comprises a maximum of 15 stocks listed on the National Stock Exchange. The selection ensures that no single company holds more than 33 percent of the

weight and the combined weight of the top three companies does not surpass 62 percent of the index.

- 95. Ageas Federal Life Insurance** has launched a new pension plan called the '**Golden Years Pension Plan**' to provide a comprehensive solution for securing the financial futures of policyholders during their retirement years.

It is a Unit Linked, Non-Participating, Individual Pension Plan specifically designed to provide financial stability during retirement.

The plan offers an 'Early Investment Booster' feature that provides additional allocations to encourage early retirement planning for those aged **18-35**.

It allows entry ages of **18-70 years** for the Classic Option and up to **60 years** for the Golden Waiver of Premium Option.

The plan offers flexibility in premium payment options and the ability to choose between immediate or deferred annuity payouts.

- 96. Federal Bank**, a private sector bank, has entered into a Bancassurance tie-up with **Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance**, a private life insurer, to enable Federal Bank's customers to seamlessly access Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance's products, across the Bank's extensive network in India.

This partnership aims to bring a diverse range of life insurance solutions across our touchpoints.

Bancassurance:

It 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.

- 97.** The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of eight Executive Directors (EDs) in Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PGICs).

- **Rashmi Bajpai**, currently serving as the General Manager (GM) in **Oriental Insurance Company Ltd (OICL)**, has been selected as the ED in the same company.
- **Amit Mishra**, who presently holds the position of GM in New India Assurance Company Ltd (NIACL), has been designated as ED in **OICL**.
- **Hitesh Ramesh Chandra Joshi**, the current GM in **GIC Re**, has been appointed as ED in the same company.

- **Radhika C.S.**, currently GM in United India Insurance Company Ltd (UIICL), has been appointed as ED in **GIC Re**.
- **T. Babu Paul**, presently GM in **National Insurance Company Ltd (NICL)**, has been appointed as ED in the same company.
- **Prasad C.G.**, currently GM in NIACL, has been appointed as ED in **NICL**.
- **Sunita Gupta**, currently GM in OICL, has been appointed as ED in **UIICL**.
- **Dasarathi Singh**, currently GM in **Agriculture Insurance Company of India Ltd**, has been appointed as ED in the same company.

The aforementioned top executives have tenures ranging from less than a year to four years.

- 98. BNP Paribas** has signed a multi-year partnership agreement with **Mistral AI**, a Paris-based AI startup, to provide access to all current and future commercial models of Mistral AI across all the business lines of BNP Paribas.

The partnership is expanding upon their initial collaboration which began in September 2023. Under this partnership, BNP Paribas will implement Mistral AI's Large Language Models (LLM) across business areas like customer support, sales, and Information Technology (IT).

- 99. Muthoot Finance** has been selected for the **Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) Mutual Evaluation report 2023-24**. It is the **only NBFC in India** to have been selected to represent the entire NBFC segment in the On-site Evaluation by the FATF team which visited India in November 2023.

This recognition underscores the company's adherence to global standards in combating money laundering and terrorist financing. The evaluation will enhance Muthoot Finance's reputation and open up new international collaboration opportunities.

FATF placed India in its 'regular follow-up category', in a select group with only four other G20 countries.

The FATF Mutual Evaluation is a comprehensive review process that assesses a country's compliance with international anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) standards.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1989 by the G7 countries to develop policies to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. It sets international standards and conducts evaluations to ensure compliance with these standards.

Headquarters: Paris, France

- 100.** The clean energy company, **Greenko Group**, backed by Singapore's GIC sovereign wealth fund, has secured a **Rs.6200 crore** credit line from the **National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)** to partially refinance offshore debt.

Greenko plans to use these funds to prepay 2 sets of dollar bonds worth over USD 1 billion maturing in 2025 (January and July) and the disbursements will occur in tranches.

Loan pricing is linked to the NaBFID Lending Rate and has multiple maturities extending up to 23 years.

RBI IN NEWS

- 101.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) penalized five banks, including **Punjab National Bank (PNB)**, for non-compliance with various RBI directions.

RBI penalized **Rs.1.31 crore** to PNB for non-compliance with RBI directions regarding 'Loans and Advances: Statutory and Other Restrictions' and the 'Reserve Bank of India (Know Your Customer (KYC) Direction, 2016.'

According to the RBI, PNB sanctioned working capital demand loans to two state government-owned corporations against amounts receivable from the government by way of subsidies/refunds/reimbursements, which is a violation of RBI directions.

PNB also failed to preserve records pertaining to the identification of customers and their addresses obtained during the course of a business relationship in certain accounts.

The RBI also penalized four cooperative banks with various penalty amounts. These banks include *The Gujarat Rajya Karmachari Co-operative Bank, Gujarat; The Rohika Central Co-operative Bank, Madhubani, Bihar; The National Co-operative Bank, Mumbai, Maharashtra; and The Bank Employees' Co-operative Bank, West Bengal.*

- 102.** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the reappointment of **Govind Singh** as the managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO) of **Utkarsh Small Finance Bank (Utkarsh SFB)**.

He has been appointed for a period of three years w.e.f. September 21, 2024.

He was appointed as MD & CEO of Utkarsh SFB in 2017.

- 103.** The **Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)**, which captures the extent of financial inclusion across the country, increased by **4.1 points** to **64.2** in **March 2024** from 60.1 in March 2023.

The improvement in the index was due to growth witnessed across all sub-indices. It is mainly contributed by the usage dimension, reflecting the deepening of financial inclusion.

Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index):

- The Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index), launched by the **Reserve Bank of India** (RBI) on August 17, **2021**, tracks the progress of ensuring access to financial services, timely credit, and affordability for vulnerable groups.
- The FI-Index is published annually every July.
- The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.
- The FI-Index comprises three broad parameters: Access (having a weight of 35 percent in the index), Usage (weight 45 percent), and Quality (weight 20 percent) with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

104. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been awarded Russia's highest civilian honour, the **Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle**, for "exceptional services in promoting special & privileged strategic partnership between Russia and India and friendly relations between the Russian and Indian peoples."

The award was announced in **2019**.

He is the **first Indian leader** to be conferred with this award.

The Order of St. Andrew the Apostle:

- Tsar Peter the Great (1672–1725) established the Order of Saint Andrew in 1698. The order was abolished in 1918 following the Russian Revolution, which overthrew the Tsarist regime. It was re-established in 1998 by an Executive Order of the President of Russia.
- The award is given to prominent government and public figures, military leaders, and outstanding representatives of science, culture, art, and various sectors of the economy for exceptional services to Russia.
- It can also be awarded to heads of foreign states for outstanding services to the Russian Federation.
- Its name comes from Saint Andrew, who is believed to be one of the apostles or 12 original followers of Jesus.

105. Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Tech, has been awarded the "**Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur**" (Knight of the Legion of Honour) by **France**.

The award was presented by **Thierry Mathou**, Ambassador of France to India, in New Delhi.

The award recognizes her contributions to the business world, constant endeavor to promote economic ties between France and India, as well as her unwavering commitment to social and environmental causes.

Her forward-thinking focus on AI and cybersecurity has kept HCL at the industry's cutting edge and promoted strong business relations between France and India.

She took charge as the Chairperson of HCL Tech in July 2020 and became the first woman to lead a listed IT company in India.

Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur:

It was established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte. The award is given by the French Republic for outstanding service to France, regardless of the recipient's nationality.

106. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has approved the designation of **11 new biosphere reserves** in 11 countries, including Belgium and Gambia for the first time and two transboundary biosphere reserves.

With these new biosphere reserves covering a total area of 37 400 km², equivalent to the size of the Netherlands, the World Network of Biosphere Reserves now totals **759 sites** in 136 countries.

These additions were decided during the 36th session of the International Co-ordinating Council, the governing body of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere program, which is composed of 34 representatives of UNESCO Member States.

The Council held its session in Agadir, Morocco, from 2 to 5 July following the UNESCO Conference on Soils.

The 11 newly designated biosphere reserves are:

- Kempen-Broek Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Belgium, Kingdom of the Netherlands)
- Darién Norte Chocoano Biosphere Reserve (Colombia)
- Madre de las Aguas Biosphere Reserve (Dominican Republic)
- Niumi Biosphere Reserve (Gambia)
- Colli Euganei Biosphere Reserve (Italy)
- Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Italy, & Slovenia)
- **Khar Us Lake Biosphere Reserve (Mongolia)**
- yApayaos Biosphere Reserve (Philippines)
- Changnyeong Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Korea)
- Val d'Aran Biosphere Reserve (Spain)
- Irati Biosphere Reserve (Spain)

107. Nagaland has been chosen as the **Best State in Horticulture** in the prestigious **Agriculture Leadership Awards 2024**. The award has been given to the state for its outstanding work in introducing innovative programs and policies for horticulture development, which has positively touched the lives of large number of farmers and rural people in the State.

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Nagaland's Minister for Women Resource Development & Horticulture, Salhoutuonuo Kruse received the award at the 15th Agriculture Leadership Conclave held in New Delhi. Nagaland has achieved G.I registration of three horticultural crops viz., Naga Mircha, Naga Tree Tomato, and Naga Sweet Cucumber.

The Agriculture Leadership Awards were instituted in 2008 to recognize excellence and leadership roles played by individuals and organizations towards the development of Indian agriculture and bringing about rural prosperity. The awards are given to recognize the efforts making significant contributions in agriculture, livestock, social and rural development.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

108. Arunachal Pradesh governor **Lt Gen K T Parnaik** (retd) has released a book titled **"Kargil War – The Turning Point"** at Rajendra Singhji Army Officers Institute in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

The book, authored by the former commanding officer of the 2nd battalion of the Rajputana Rifles, the late **Col MB Ravindranath**, offers insight into the actions and operations of the battalion from May to July 1999, during Operation Vijay.

The battalion was instrumental in capturing the imposing Tololing area in the Drass sector on 12 and 13 June 1999. It was the first success of the Indian Army and proved to be the turning point during **Operation Vijay**.

The 12-chapter book provides comprehensive details, starting from 'The Gathering Storm', when the intrusions came to light in early May of 1999, to the unit's movement from Kigam to Drass, the preparations, acclimatization, and training of troops, and the planning and attacks on Tololing on 13 June and Three Pimples on 28 June 1999.

PERSON IN NEWS

109. Labour Party leader **Keir Starmer** became the **Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK)**. He replaced Rishi Sunak. He previously served as Leader of the Opposition from 2020 to 2024.

In the recent elections, the Labour Party secured 412 of the 650 seats in the UK House of Commons.

110. Reformist candidate **Masoud Pezeshkian** has been elected as the new **President of Iran**.

He succeeded President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a chopper crash along with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and other officials in Iran's remote northwest in May 2024.

111. The **Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA)**, led by Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, has been designated as the **Nodal Ministry for Haj Committee of India (HCoI)**, a statutory body that organizes the Haj pilgrimage for Indian pilgrims.

Earlier, the work related to the management of the Haj pilgrimage, including the administration of the Haj Committee Act, 2002, and rules made thereunder was handled by the Ministry of External Affairs.

These rules may be called the Haj Committee (Amendment) Rules, 2024. In the Haj Committee Rules, 2002, the words 'Ministry of External Affairs', the words 'Ministry of Minority Affairs' shall be substituted."

The Ministry of Minority Affairs in the central government shall request Union ministries of external affairs, home affairs, finance and civil aviation to nominate one officer each, not below the rank of the joint secretary to the government of India, serving in the respective ministries, as ex- officio members of the committee.

112. The President of India, **Droupadi Murmu**, inaugurated the **Divine Retreat Centre of Brahma Kumaris** at Haridamada village near **Bhubaneswar, Odisha**.

She also launched a national campaign '**Lifestyle for Sustainability**' of Brahma Kumaris. The campaign aims to establish harmony with nature and live a nature-friendly life.

113. **Indian Energy Exchange (IEX)** board has approved the proposal to reappoint **Satyanarayan Goel** as its Chairman and Managing Director (**CMD**) for a period of 3 years. His appointment is effective from 10th August 2024.

The board also decided to elevate **Rohit Bajaj**, currently serving as Executive Director (non-board) -- Business Development, Strategy, Regulatory Affairs, and IT, as the Joint Managing Director for three years.

The board also approved the appointment of **Rajeev Gupta** as the Non-Executive Independent Director of the company.

114. **Prof. (Dr.) Soumya Swaminathan** has been appointed as the **Principal Advisor** at the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare for the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme** on a pro bono basis.

- She will provide technical advice on the overall strategy to achieve program goals, suggest policy directions and necessary course corrections for optimal outcomes, and advise on research strategy.

- She will also assist in the formation of expert groups with top talent globally.
- She will support the Union Health Ministry, state officials, and development partners in assessing the impact of the programme.

She was the former Chief Scientist of the World Health Organization and has also served as the Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) previously.

- 115. Lt Gen Shankar Narayan**, NM, VSM, has been appointed as the Commandant of the Army Hospital (Research & Referral), the apex hospital of the Armed Forces Medical Services. He is an alumnus of the 1982 ('U') batch of the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune.
- 116.** The **Government of Bihar** has appointed a transgender person **Manvi Madhu Kashyap** as a Sub-Inspector of Police. This is the first time that the state has appointed a transgender person to the post.
- In June 2024, Tripura's social welfare department directed all district magistrates to establish transgender protection cells aimed at addressing grievances and enhancing the community's welfare.
- 117.** Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar presided as Chief Guest over the **3rd Cyber Security Conference organized by the Global Counter Terrorism Council (GCTC)** at Vigyan Bhavan in **New Delhi**.
- The conference brings together leaders to address the importance of building cyber resilience to strengthen their defences against attacks at the enterprise level.

OBITUARIES

- 118.** Veteran actress **Smriti Biswas**, best known for her work in Bengali, Hindi, and Marathi films, has passed away in Nashik, Maharashtra at the age of 100. She was born on 17 February 1924.
- She was born into a Christian family as Smritirekha Biswas.
- She debuted in the film world as a child artist with the Bengali movie **Sandhya** in 1930.
- She last appeared in the Hindi film **Modern Girl (1961)**, directed by R. Bhattacharya.

SPORTS

- 119.** Former Indian opener **Gautam Gambhir** has been named as the **new head coach of the India men's cricket team**. He will take over from Rahul Dravid after a successful ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 campaign.

He steered Kolkata Knight Riders to a title win as a mentor in the 2024 edition of the Indian Premier League.

He won the ICC Test Player of the Year for 2009 and named in the World Test XI that year. In 2011, his spectacular knock in the final of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup propelled India to a Cricket World Cup win after 28 years.

120. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) has announced that **Neeraj Chopra**, the men's javelin throw defending champion, will lead the **30-member** Indian athletics team at the **Paris 2024 Olympics**.

The 30-member athletics squad includes 18 men and 12 women athletes.

Indian athletics team for the Paris 2024 Olympics:

- Avinash Sable (men's 3000m steeplechase)
- Neeraj Chopra (men's javelin throw)
- Kishore Jena (men's javelin throw)
- Tajinderpal Singh Toor (men's shot put)
- Praveen Chithravel (men's triple jump)
- Abdulla Aboobacker (men's triple jump)
- Sarvesh Kushare (men's high jump)
- Akshdeep Singh (men's 20km race walk)
- Vikash Singh (men's 20km race walk)
- Paramjeet Singh Bisht (men's 20km race walk)
- Muhammed Anas (men's 4x400m relay)
- Muhammed Ajmal (men's 4x400m relay)
- Amoj Jacob (men's 4x400m relay)
- Santhosh Kumar Tamilarasan (men's 4x400m relay)
- Rajesh Ramesh (men's 4x400m relay)
- Mijo Chacko Kurian (men's 4x400m relay)
- Suraj Panwar (race walk mixed marathon)
- Jeswin Aldrin (men's long jump)
- Kiran Pahal (women's 400m)
- Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase and 5,000m)
- Jyothi Yarraji (women's 100m hurdles)
- Annu Rani (women's javelin throw)
- Abha Khatua (women's shot put)
- Jyothika Sri Dandi (women's 4x400m relay)
- Subha Venkatesan (women's 4x400m relay)
- Vithya Ramraj (women's 4x400m relay)
- MR Poovamma (women's 4x400m relay)
- Prachi (women's 4x400m relay)
- Priyanka Goswami (women's 20km race walk and race walk mixed marathon)
- Ankita Dhyani (women's 5000m)

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- 121.** The **Khelo India Women's Wushu League Northern Zone 2024** was organized at the **Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports** in **Patiala, Punjab** from 9th July to 13th July 2024.

The event witnessed the participation of 350 athletes across sub-junior, junior, and senior categories from Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The event, organized by SAI Patiala, encompasses both Sanda (fighting) and Taolu (forms). International medallists Ayeera Chisti (18 years) and Komal Nagar (19 years), who train at the NSNIS Patiala Centre, also participated in the event.

In June 2024, **Khelo India Women's Wushu League South Zone 2024** was organized in **Karnataka**.

The Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports funds the Rs 7.2 lakh prize money competition conducted by the Wushu Federation of India. The top eight wushu athletes from the sub-junior, junior, and senior events will get cash incentives.

- 122.** British Formula One (F1) Mercedes driver **Lewis Hamilton** has won the **F1 British Grand Prix 2024** held at Silverstone Circuit in England, the United Kingdom.

He has become the first F1 driver to have won this race for the **9th time** extending the record, which he previously shared with Michael Schumacher.

This is the **104th Grand Prix** win of Lewis Hamilton's career.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen finished 2nd in the race, followed by McLaren's Lando Norris in the 3rd spot.

- 123.** Four-time Olympian and 2012 men's 10m air rifle bronze medallist **Gagan Narang** has been chosen to replace Mary Kom as **India's chef-de-mission** for the **2024 Paris Olympics**. He has been promoted from deputy chef-de-mission to chef-de-mission.

P.V. Sindhu has been named the **female flagbearer** for the Olympics.

Mary Kom stepped down from her role as chef-de-mission for the 2024 Paris Olympics due to health issues.

The Paris Olympics will begin on July 26 and continue until August 11.

- 124.** Sports brand **PUMA India** has announced a significant partnership with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), becoming the Official **Footwear Partner** for the Indian contingent at the

Paris Olympics 2024. This collaboration marks a major step in supporting Indian athletes on the global stage and promoting sports excellence in the country.

- 125.** England all-rounder and skipper **Ben Stokes** has reached the milestone of taking **200 Test wickets**. He is only the **third player** in the history of the game to achieve the double of 200 wickets and 6000 runs. He reached this milestone by dismissing Kirk McKenzie in the second innings of the first Test match against West Indies at the Lord's in July 2024.

The other two players who share the unique record are Sir Garfield Sobers of the West Indies and Jacques Kallis of South Africa.

- 126.** The International Cricket Council (ICC) has chosen Indian pace bowler **Jasprit Bumrah** as the **ICC Men's Player of the Month for June 2024**. His stellar bowling performance helped the Indian men's cricket team lift the ICC T20 World Cup. He alone took 15 wickets in 8 matches during the World Cup, which made him Player of the Tournament.

On the other hand, ICC also chose Indian women's team vice-captain **Smriti Mandhana** as the **ICC Women's Player of the Month for June 2024**, beating out England's Maia Bouchier and Sri Lanka's Vishmi Gunaratne. Smriti won the title for her fabulous batting display against South Africa.

IMPORTANT DAYS

- 127. National Fish Farmer's Day** is observed annually on **10th July** to recognize the contributions of the fish farmers, aquaculture industry professionals, and other stakeholders towards sustainable development of the fisheries sector.

The year 2024 marks the observance of the **24th National Fish Farmers Day**.

The day also marks the observance of the **National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) Foundation Day**.

NFDB was set up in 2006 as an autonomous organization under the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.

The day was first observed in **2001**.

- 128. World Population Day** is observed annually on **11th July** to raise awareness about global population issues. The United Nations Development Programme's Governing Council established the 'World Population Day' in 1989 after the global population crossed five billion in 1987. The day was first observed in **1990**.

Theme 2024: *"Leave no one behind, count everyone"*

- 129. International Malala Day** is observed annually on **12th July** to honour the Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who works for women's right to education across the globe. Since July 12

was her birthday, therefore the United Nations promptly declared that the day will be celebrated as 'Malala Day' to honour the young activist.

Malala Yousafzai:

She was born in Mingora, Pakistan in 1997. She began advocating for women's education in 2008. In 2012, she was attacked by the Taliban. She was awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize** in **2014** in recognition of her efforts for children's rights which had begun even before she was shot. In 2015, an asteroid '**316201 Malala**' was named in honor of Malala Yousufzai. She has also authored a book titled '**We Are Displaced**' which chronicles her experiences of traveling the world and visiting refugee camps.

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- 130. World Youth Skills Day** is observed annually on **15th July** to highlight the importance of equipping young people with skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The day was first observed in 2015.

Theme 2024: "Youth Skills for Peace and Development"

Important Day	Date/Month	Theme for 2024	Remark
National Students Day	9 th July		The day commemorate the foundation of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student organization.
National Fish Farmers Day	10 th July		The day was first observed in 2001.
World Population Day	11 th July	Leave no one behind, count everyone	The day was first observed in 1990.
International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica	11 th July		
International Malala Day	12 th July		The day celebrates the birth anniversary of the Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who works for women's right to education across the globe.

International Day of Combatting Sand and Dust Storms (SDS)	12 th July		
World Paper Bag Day	12 th July		
World Youth Skills Day	15 th July	Youth Skills for Peace and Development	The day was first observed in 2015.

