

Weekly Current Affairs

7th January – 13th January, 2024

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NATIONAL NEWS

1.UP CM Launches Mobile App Of State Information Commission

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched a software and a mobile application to facilitate e-filing and online hearing of complaints and second appeals in the State Information Commission. After launching the complaint and appeal tracking system at the RTI Bhawan .
- Technology can become a powerful medium to bring changes in a person's life. With the launch of this software and mobile application, no person will have to physically come to the State Information Commission office for their complaints.

2.Tamil Nadu Kicks Off First Jallikattu Event of the year

- Jallikattu, the traditional bull-taming sport, kicked off the year in Tamil Nadu with an event in Thachankurichi village featuring 500 bulls and heavy security. A five-judge Constitution bench of Justices KM Joseph, Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and CT Ravikumar was hearing a batch of petitions challenging Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra governments' laws allowing the bull-taming sport 'Jallikattu' and bullock cart races.
- The event was declared open by Minister for Law S. Raghupathy and Minister for Environment and Climate Change Siva V. Meyyanathan .Mr. Raghupathy administered the oath to the tamers. District Collector I.S. Mercy Ramya and other officials were present.

3.Indian economy to grow at 7.3% in current financial year

- The National Statistical Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has said that the Indian economy will grow by a robust 7.3 per cent in the Financial Year 2023-24 over and above the provisional growth rate of 7.2 per cent during the last financial year.
- NSO in its report based on First Advance Estimates (FAE) of National Income for the financial year 2023-24, said that the construction sector has been estimated to have double-digit growth of 10.7 per cent. It highlighted that all the economic sectors have fared well by witnessing more than six per cent, except for the Agriculture and Allied sectors, for which the estimated growth is 1.8 per cent.

4.Shri Nitin Gadkari inaugurates and lays the foundation stone of 12 National Highway projects with a total length of 105 km worth over Rs 1464 Crore in Kerala

- In Kerala, Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of 12 National Highway projects at a

function to be held at Kasaragod. The projects, worth over 1464 crore rupees have a total length of 105 km.

- Union Ministers Dr V K Singh, V Muraleedharan, and State Public Works Minister Muhammed Riyas are among those scheduled to attend. Furthermore, a focus on eliminating black spots on National Highways is anticipated to contribute to a significant decrease in road accidents.

5. Paytm Enters Partnership with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam to Facilitate Mobile Payments Across the City

- A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by Paytm with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam. In order to enable mobile payments within the Nagar Nigam vicinity this measure was adopted. This is aimed at providing seamless mobile payment services during the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in the city.
- One97 Communications which owns the brand Paytm signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam, to enable Nagar Nigam facilities with mobile payments using Paytm pioneered QR code, Soundbox and card machines.

6. Finance Ministry Greenlights an Additional Rs 1,500 Crore for FAME-II Scheme

- In a strategic move to further propel the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India, the Union Finance Ministry has greenlit an additional allocation of Rs. 1,500 crore for the second phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacture of Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) program.
- The target for supporting the number of vehicles has been raised from 1.56 million to 1.74 million. The target for electric two-wheelers (e2Ws) increased by 50% to 1.55 million. The target for electric three-wheelers (e3Ws) was reduced by 68% to 155,536.

7. Gujarat to host tenth edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit commencing in Gandhinagar

- Gujarat is all set to host the tenth edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit commencing on the coming 10th of January at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar. The Tenth edition will celebrate “20 Years of Vibrant Gujarat as the Summit of Success”. The theme of the summit this time is 'Gateway to the Future'.
- Akashvani's correspondent reports that the tenth edition of the summit is unique in many ways. The tenth edition Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit is being held after a gap of four years as the summit was canceled in 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The anamorphic projection facility will be used for the first time at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit this year.

8. Kyrgyzstan Declared 'Snow Leopard' As National Symbol

- Kyrgyzstan, a country nestled in the heart of Central Asia, has officially declared the snow leopard as its national symbol, signifying a profound commitment to conservation and ecological balance. President Sadyr Zhaparov, through a signed decree, emphasized the snow leopard's role not only as a symbol of natural wealth and cultural prosperity but also as a vital indicator of the stability and health of the mountain ecosystems that cover a substantial portion of the global territory.
- President Zhaparov's decree highlights the crucial role of snow leopards in maintaining ecological equilibrium. The loss of these majestic creatures in the wild poses a significant risk to the fragile balance of the mountain ecosystem, with potential detrimental impacts on various animal species and even on human populations.



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9.PM Modi to inaugurate India's longest sea Bridge Atal Setu in Mumbai on January 12 during Maharashtra visit

- Mumbai and Navi Mumbai have only two road connectivity options. The MTHL is also expected to strengthen connectivity between Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), playing a pivotal role in stimulating urban and industrial development.
- The inauguration of this sea bridge also stands as a testament to India's growing infrastructure prowess. In December 2016, PM Modi laid the foundation stone of the bridge. Marking the historic milestone in India's infrastructure development, the name Atal Setu also honours the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

10.Maharashtra establishes Atpadi conservation reserve to safeguard endangered canids

- The Maharashtra government has established a crucial new wildlife habitat in Sangli district, aptly named the Atpadi Conservation Reserve. Spanning a compact 9.48 sq. km, this reserve prioritizes the protection of the endangered 'canid' family, including wild dogs, wolves, jackals, and foxes.
- Strategically located, Atpadi bridges the gap between the Maini Conservation Area and the Madhok Bird Sanctuary, fostering a safe wildlife corridor. This diverse sanctuary boasts three distinct forest types – semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, and dry deciduous.

11.'Prasadam' India's first hygienic food street in Ujjain

- Spanning an impressive 939 square meters, “Prasadam” stands as a symbol of holistic development. Positioned near the Mahakaleshwar Temple, it is designed not just as a food street but as a multifaceted destination contributing to various aspects of community life. The food street comprises 17 shops, each offering a unique culinary experience.
- “Prasadam” goes beyond offering a culinary delight. It provides an array of facilities, including a dedicated kids’ play area, drinking water facility, CCTV surveillance, ample parking, public conveniences, and spacious seating areas. These facilities are aimed at enhancing the overall experience for visitors and locals alike.

12.Supreme court orders constitution of committee in all high courts for implementation of Judicial pay commission

- Observing that judicial service cannot be equated with the service of other officers of the Government, the Supreme Court rejected the argument that the pay and allowances of judicial officers and other government officers should be equivalent.
- The Court made this observation in the judgment passed in the All India Judges Association case directing the States to implement the recommendations of the Second National Judicial Pay Commission regarding the pay and allowances for judicial officers.

13.Chandubi festival was celebrated along the chandubi Lake in Assam

- Preserving the waterbody, the water level of which has rapidly been lowering over the years, has been the motive for organising the festival every year.It is organised every year for five days starting from the first day of the New Year along the Chandubi lake, which is situated in the state of Assam.
- The main attractions of the Chandubi festival are the local folk culture, ethnic cuisine, local handloom and dresses, boating, etc.The major aim of the Chandubi Festival is to promote eco-tourism in this biodiversity hotspot of Assam.

INTERNATIONL NEWS

1.10th World Tamils Economic Conference & and Global Economic Summit to be held in Chennai

- The 10th World Tamils Economic Conference and Global Economic Summit will be held in Chennai on January 9 and January 10.Nearly 50 speakers are expected to present papers in various sessions, including the global economic situation - opportunities and challenges; start-ups and innovative projects; funding and financial assistance; opportunities in healthcare projects and IT;

communication and artificial intelligence, and women empowerment through education and entrepreneurship.

- The First World Tamils Economic Conference was held in Chennai 2009, the second was in Dubai 2011, third was in Chennai 2016, fourth was in Durban, South Africa 2017 and the Fifth was in Pondicherry 2018, again Sixth was in Chennai 2019, Seventh was virtual 2020, eighth was in Chennai both virtual and physical.

2.South Korea launches ‘workation’ visa for foreigners

- South Korea has introduced a new visa for foreigners allowing them to visit the country on a working holiday or workation. The “workation” or “digital nomad” visa allows foreign nationals to visit South Korea on a working holiday.
- According to Yonhap News Agency, the "digital nomad" or "workation" visa will be given by South Korea's justice ministry to those having a work experience of over a year in one industry and are eligible for remote work. The visa will also be allowed to the families of these employees.

3.Toy exports from India increased 239% over last 8 years

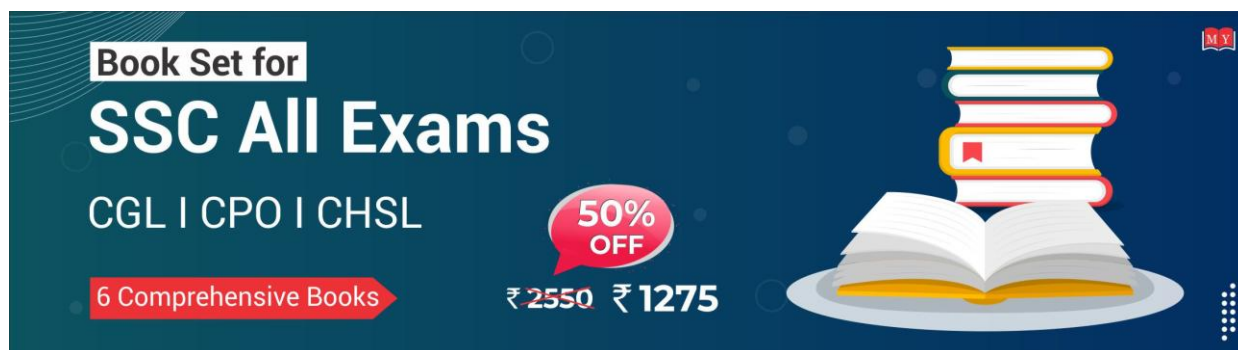
- Exports of toys from India increased 239 per cent over the last eight years to \$326 million in 2022-23 from \$96 million in 2014-15 while imports declined 52 per cent to \$159 million from \$332 million in the same period because of a combination of measures including import tariff increase and quality control, per a case study on the ‘success story of made in India toys’ carried out by IIM Lucknow on behalf of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- In the next eight years, around 12 per cent compounded annual growth rate is expected in the toy sector and exports are likely to increase to \$3 billion by 2028. Toys imports declined 52% from \$332 million to \$159 million in the same period. The study was conducted by IIM Lucknow on behalf of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

4.MoU for several investments to be signed on second day of global investors meet in Tamil Nadu

- During the Global Investors Meet, discussions were held on climate change missions, circular economy, AI, and providing a robust environment for start-ups and SMEs. Climate protection teams will be created in every district. Industries were encouraged to develop initiatives to achieve zero carbon emissions.
- The Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet 2024 has attracted record investments of ₹6.64 lakh crore, much higher than the estimated sum of about ₹5 lakh crore and doubled the investment that was attracted in the previous GIM held in 2019.

5.PM Modi Inaugurates India's Largest Global Trade Show at Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024

- PM Modi Inaugurates India's Largest Global Trade Show at Vibrant Gujarat Summit 2024 Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 10th edition of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar, alongside several global leaders.
- The three-day event is witnessing the participation of 34 partner countries and delegates from over 130 countries. It will also celebrate '20 years of Vibrant Gujarat as the Summit of Success'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's largest Global Trade show at Gandhinagar one day ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024.



6.South Korea passes law banning dog meat trade

- The slaughter and sale of dogs for their meat is to become illegal in South Korea after MPs backed a new law. The legislation, set to come into force by 2027, aims to end the centuries-old practice of humans eating dog meat.
- Dog meat stew, called “boshintang“, is considered a delicacy among some older South Koreans, but the meat has fallen out of favour with diners and is no longer popular with young people. Under the new law the consumption of dog meat itself will not be illegal.

7.India to chair UNESCO's world heritage committee for first time in July

- India is set to chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024, marking a historic milestone for our nation. Vishal V Sharma, India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, announced this decision on January 9.
- The World Heritage Committee, comprising representatives from 21 member states, gathers annually to recognize global cultural and natural heritage. Their work contributes to the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

8.DPIIT organizes startup India Innovation week 2024 from 10th – 18th January 2024

- With an aim to bring together the country's startups, entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is organising the Startup India Innovation Week 2024 from 10th January 2024 to 18th January 2024 to celebrate the Indian Startup Ecosystem and the National Startup Day (16th January 2024).
- Startups Unlocking Infinite Potential on 11th January 2024, at the Tenth Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar, Gujarat which aims to provide a global forum for business networking, knowledge sharing, and inclusive socio-economic development.

NEW APPOINTMENTS AND PERSON IN NEWS

1.Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to chair first Inland Waterways Development Council Meeting in Kolkata

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India, operating under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), is hosting the first-ever meeting of the 'Inland Waterways Development Council' in Kolkata. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, is set to lead discussions with representatives from waterway states, central government officials, and experts aboard the MV Ganga Queen.
- Ministers and officials from various state governments, central government, and domain experts are scheduled to participate in the event. As part of the agenda, Sonowal will unveil several initiatives, including the "Harit Nauka – Guidelines for Green Transition of Inland Vessels" and the River Cruise Tourism Roadmap 2047.

2.Shashi Singh Elected as President of All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA)

- The All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the foremost authority representing India's rubber industry, has recently announced a significant leadership change. Shashi Singh has been elected as the new President, succeeding Ramesh Kejriwal.
- This transition marks a new era for AIRIA, with Singh set to advance the association's mission and goals. With a rich history of over two decades in the rubber industry, Singh has been an integral part of AIRIA. Before his election as President, he served as the senior vice president. His tenure in the association is distinguished by his roles in various committees and as the chief convener for the western region.

3.Kuwait emir appoints Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah as prime minister of Kuwait

- The OPEC member with the world's seventh-largest oil reserves is expected to preserve key Kuwaiti foreign policies, including support for Gulf Arab unity, Western alliances and good ties to Riyadh a priority relationship.
- Kuwait may also look to expand ties to China as it seeks a bigger role in the region, especially after Beijing sponsored a deal that normalised ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March. Kuwait will have to grapple with long-running strains between the ruling family and its critics in the perpetually deadlocked and fractious parliament that critics say have hindered fiscal and economic reform.

4. Justice BR Gavai Nominated as Chairperson of Supreme Court Legal Services Committee

- Supreme Court judge Justice BR Gavai has been nominated as the Chairman of the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC), replacing Justice Sanjiv Khanna – the senior most judge of the top court after the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- The Supreme Court Legal Services Committee is constituted under Section 3A of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, with the aim of providing “free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of society” in cases under the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

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

- The Indian government has named IAS officer Senthil Pandian as the ambassador to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Geneva. This appointment follows the conclusion of Brajendra Navnit's term as India's ambassador to the WTO on March 31, 2024. The decision was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), entrusting Pandian, a 2002 IAS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, with the responsibility for a three-year term from the date of assuming office.
- Senthil Pandian C is currently serving as the commissioner of excise in Uttar Pradesh. His extensive experience in administrative roles within the Indian bureaucracy positions him well to represent the country's interests on the global trade stage. As he takes charge, Pandian steps into a crucial role during a time of unprecedented economic challenges and shifting global trade dynamics.

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

- Bhutanese voters have elected Tshering Tobgay to become Prime Minister for a second time after his party won nearly two-thirds of seats, the election commission said in results released on January 10. The party clinched almost a two-thirds majority, winning 30 seats of the 47 national assembly seats to return to power.

- The election was dominated by serious economic challenges that have called into question the Himalayan kingdom's long-standing policy of prioritising "Gross National Happiness" over growth. Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, Bhutan's key trading partner, offered his "heartiest congratulations to my friend" Tobgay for winning the polls, according to a post on X, formerly Twitter.

7. Gabriel Attal appointed as France's new Prime Minister

- Gabriel Attal has been named next Prime Minister of France, as Emmanuel Macron aims to revive his presidency with a new government. Gabriel Attal is currently working as an education minister. Before Attal, the Socialist leader Laurent Fabius was the youngest French PM, appointed at the age of 37 by President François Mitterrand in 1984.
- At 34, he is the youngest Prime Minister in modern French history, outranking even Socialist Laurent Fabius who was 37 when he was appointed by François Mitterrand in 1984. Mr Attal replaces Élisabeth Borne, who resigned after 20 months in office.

BANKING

1. Reserve Bank of India plans to tighten dividend declaration criteria for banks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed new rules of dividend payout for domestic and overseas banks operating in India. The proposed rules for dividend payout by banks will be effective from the fiscal year 2024-25 onwards.
- The RBI has invited public feedback on the proposed rules, and the deadline for submission is 31 January 2024. Banks with an NNPA (Net Non-Performing Asset) ratio exceeding 6% and a Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) below 11.5% are prohibited from declaring dividends.

2. RBI gives clarity to 'politically exposed persons' term to meet FATF norms

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has updated Know Your Customer (KYC) norms for politically exposed persons (PEPs) who transact with regulated entities (REs), seeking to comply with the recommendations of intergovernmental organisation Financial Action Task Force (FATF),
- PEPs are individuals entrusted with prominent public functions by a foreign country, including the heads of states/governments, senior politicians, senior government or judicial or military officers, senior executives of state-owned corporations and important political party officials.

3. Narayana Health gets IRDAI nod to launch health insurance business

- Narayana Health has received approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to venture into the health insurance business in India.
- The company operates one of the largest hospital chains, known by the brand name Narayana Hospital. With this approval, the count of Standalone Health Insurance Companies (SAHI) will increase from 5 to 6.

4. Tata Pay Secures Payment Aggregator License from RBI

- In a significant development, Tata Pay, the digital payments app under Tata Digital, has been granted a payment aggregator (PA) license by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This license positions Tata Pay among industry leaders such as Razorpay, Cashfree, and Google Pay, enabling it to efficiently handle ecommerce transactions within its subsidiary entities.
- Similar licenses were also obtained by other players like DigiO, a Bengaluru-based identity verification startup supported by Groww, allowing them to integrate payment services with their digital identification solutions.


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5. RBI Introduces Stricter Regulations for Short-Term Commercial Papers and Non-Convertible Debentures

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has tightened rules for the issuance of short term Commercial Papers (CPs) and Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs), with an initial maturity of up to one year. As per the revised norms, CPs and NCDs issued from April 1 onwards will have a minimum denomination of Rs 5 lakh and in multiples of Rs 5 lakh thereafter.
- The new norms are effective from April 1, 2024, and include six key changes. Non-residents are eligible to invest in CPs and NCDs to the extent permitted under FEMA or the rules framed under.

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE

1. ISRO's first Sun mission successfully injected into final orbit

- Positioned around 1.5 million kilometres from Earth, Lagrange Point 1 is a unique location in space where the gravitational forces between the Sun and Earth are in a delicate equilibrium. The L1 point is about 1% of the total

distance between the Earth and the Sun. The Sun's extreme temperatures make a "touchdown" impossible.

- A satellite placed in the halo orbit around the L1 point has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/eclipses. This will provide a greater advantage of observing the solar activities and their effect on space weather in real-time.

2. Indian navy reduced 21 crew members of merchant ship MV Lila Norfolk, including 15 Indians, from pirates off the Somalia coast

- The Indian Navy's elite marine commandos successfully rescued 21 crew members, including 15 Indians, from the Liberian-flagged vessel MV Lila Norfolk on January 5, 2024. The action was a rapid response to an attempted hijacking in the North Arabian Sea.
- The Indian Navy's marine commandos present onboard the mission deployed warship boarded the merchant vessel and have carried out the sanitisation operation. "MV Lila Norfolk sent a message on the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) portal indicating that five to six unknown armed personnel boarded the vessel.

3. ArcelorMittal partners with IIT Madras to create Hyperloop facility in TN

- Steel giant ArcelorMittal has partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras to build "Asia's first" Hyperloop test track facility. ArcelorMittal is collaborating with the IIT Madras's Hyperloop Technology teams — Avishkar Hyperloop, a student team, and TuTr Hyperloop, a startup incubated in IIT Madras, for the project.
- The companies, ArcelorMittal and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS), are providing foundational steel materials as well as engineering, design, and project management expertise to support the construction of Asia's first Hyperloop test track at the 163-acre Discovery campus of IIT Madras, located at Thaiyur on the outskirts of Chennai.

4. Tata Motors introduces 1st pure Electric Vehicle architecture called 'acti.ev'

- Tata Passenger Electric Mobility (TPEM) has launched its first advanced Pure EV architecture, acti.ev, and the Punch.ev, the first product based on this architecture. The Punch.ev can now be booked at Tata Motors showrooms and Tata.ev stores for a payment of ₹21,000.
- Tata Motors introduced the first pure electric vehicle (EV) architecture called 'acti.ev', which will underpin its future portfolio of EVs such as Punch, Sierra, Harrier and Curvv. Tata Motors holds more than 80% share in the electric car market.

5.HFCL bags Rs 1,127 cr order to transform BSNL's Optical Transport Network

- It has secured a Rs 1,127 crore order from Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) aimed at transforming the Optical Transport Network (OTN) infrastructure across the state-owned telco's pan India network.
- HFCL's comprehensive network upgrade will not only cater to the requirements of enterprise and FTTH/broadband services but also position BSNL for the future with the seamless launch of 4G services and the anticipation of 5G services in the coming years.

6.Indian Navy's Elite Marine Commandos Effectively Rescue 21 Crew Members, Including 15 Indians, from MV Lila Norfolk

- Indian Navy rescued all 21 crew members, including 15 Indians, onboard the distressed cargo ship 'MV Lila Norfolk' off Somalia coast. The Navy rushed its warship INS Chennai and deployed maritime operations after a distress signal from the cargo ship signalled the hijacking. The Navy's elite Marine Commandos (Marcos), conducted sanitisation operations on the vessel and confirmed the absence of hijackers.
- Naval warship INS Chennai, a navy destroyer, that was diverted from its anti-piracy patrol, launched its helicopter and issued warning to pirates to abandon the hijacked vessel. The hijacking was reported by the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), a British military organisation that tracks movements of various vessels in strategic waterways.

7.India on top of medals table in Asian Shooting Championship in Jakarta with 07 Gold, 06 Silver, and 06 Bronze medals

- Media SAI In Women's shooting, Rhythm Sangwan bagged the Bronze medal in the 25-meter Pistol event at the Asian Shooting Championship in Jakarta, Indonesia. With this medal, Rhythm confirmed the 16th Paris Olympic quota for the Indian shooting contingent.
- Also, this is the sixth Paris quota in the pistol events for India and the second in women's 25m Pistol. Rhythm ended the tournament with an impressive performance collecting a total of five medals, 1 gold, 2 silver, and 2 bronze medals.

8.India Navy to host MILAN 24 exercise in Visakhapatnam

- The MILAN exercise, initiated in 1995 as part of India's 'Look East policy,' has evolved into a biennial showcase of naval prowess and international collaboration. Following the success of the 11th edition held in Visakhapatnam in February-March 2022, organized under the Eastern Naval Command with the theme 'Camaraderie-Cohesion-Collaboration,' the upcoming edition marks a continuation of this tradition.

- This phase is designed to showcase the naval capabilities of the participating nations, highlighting their dedication to ensuring maritime security in the region. MILAN 24 underscores India's commitment to nurturing partnerships, exchanging ideas, and collectively enhancing maritime security.

9. Tamil Nadu may get four new Biodiversity Heritage sites

- There are several attractions in Arittapatti village but the most notable geographical feature is the chain of seven barren granite hillocks. This rocky landscape surprisingly supports a total of 72 lakes, 200 natural springs and three check dams. One of these lakes, Anaikondan Lake, dates back to the 16th century Pandya kingdom.
- Biodiversity heritage sites are biological areas with unique and ecologically fragile ecosystems comprising rare and threatened species. These kinds of areas are usually home to important species that are not only endemic or endangered but can also be either keystone species, flagship species or umbrella species.



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10. IISc Bengaluru develops heat tolerant vaccine against current strains of SARS-COV-2

- A heat-tolerant vaccine developed by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) researchers to be effective against all current strains of SARS-CoV-2 besides having the potential to be quickly adapted for future variants as well.
- The vaccine candidate has been designed by genetically engineering a domain of the surface spike glycoprotein of SARS-CoV-2, called the Receptor Binding Domain (RBD), which plays a key role in facilitating viral entry and infection. Most of the neutralising antibodies produced by our body target the RBD.

11. Navy chief formally receives Drishti -10 long endurance UAV

- Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is extremely challenging for the Indian Navy since the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) accounts for one of the busiest maritime traffic regions of the world. The IOR sea lines are critical in bringing prosperity to many nations in the region. With the growth of the Chinese Navy, the presence of Chinese submarines and Underwater Unmanned Vehicles (UUV) have increased in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

- Indian Navy is abreast with similar technology induction in many domains. The Navy had inducted the ship command and control system in the mid-eighties and developed an indigenous data link akin to Link 11 for networking warships and aircraft for Command, Control, Communications and Information (C3I) operations. The Navy has also acquired Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)s in the mid-nineties from Israel for long-range surveillance.

BOOKS & AWARDS

1.SVAMITVA Scheme Receives ‘Best Innovation Award’ at Public Policy Dialogues Conclave 2024

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj participated in the Innovation Sandbox presentation and showcased the “Digital Transformation Initiatives in Land Governance through SVAMITVA Scheme” detailing the processes followed by States to digitalize land governance systems transparently and efficiently.
- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been conferred with the prestigious 1st Prize in the Innovation Sandbox presentation for “Digital Transformation Initiatives in Land Governance through SVAMITVA Scheme” at the second annual three-day “Public Policy Dialogues” Conclave of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy (BIPP), Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad during 3rd January to 5th January 2024.

2.West Bengal Secures Geographical Indication (GI) Tags for Sundarban Honey, Black Nunia Rice, Tangail, Gorod & Kadiyal Sarees

- In a significant stride towards safeguarding its cultural and agricultural heritage, West Bengal has successfully obtained Geographical Indication (GI) tags for several products under the National GI Drive Mission. The move aims to protect the unique identity and quality of regional products.
- As part of the GI protection initiative, these products now enjoy legal recognition and protection against unauthorized use, ensuring the economic prosperity of local communities and the preservation of West Bengal’s diverse cultural and agricultural legacy.

3. India tops the list of source markets for tourism into Sri Lanka in 2023

- India has topped the list of source markets for tourism into Sri Lanka in 2023. The island has welcomed 1.487 Million tourists during the last year with India contributing over 20% arrivals. Tourism holds a pivotal position in Sri Lanka’s economy as a top foreign revenue source.
- In all over 3 lakh Indian tourists reached Sri Lanka in 2023 followed by Russia which contributed 1.97 lakh. Tourism holds a pivotal position in Sri Lanka’s economy as a top foreign revenue source. Tourism contributed 2.1 billion USD from 1.1 billion USD achieved in the previous year.

4.Arunachal Pradesh's Adi Kekir, Handmade Carpets, and Wancho Wooden Craft Granted Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

- Itanagar, Three items of Arunachal Pradesh have received the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag, officials said on Wednesday. These are adi kekir (ginger), carpet handmade by Tibetan settlers and wooden items made by the Wancho community.
- A geographical indication or GI is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin. Wancho wooden craft items are unique as they feature tobacco pipes with head-shaped bowls and drinking mugs showing warriors carrying heads.

5.India wins its Gold medal at Zagreb open 2024

- India's young wrestling sensation, Aman Sehrawat, set the stage on fire at the Zagreb Open 2024 by winning a gold medal in the 57 kg category of the men's singles event. The 20-year-old wrestler demonstrated his prowess by defeating China's Zou Wanhao 10-0 in the final, securing victory by technical superiority. This impressive win marked a stellar beginning for Sehrawat in the year 2024.
- Sehrawat, currently ranked 13th in the world, showcased his dominance over his Chinese counterpart right from the initial moments of the final match. With precision and skill, he left no room for error and concluded the fight with a resounding victory, leaving a minute and eight seconds on the clock.

6.Willem Dafoe honoured with first Hollywood walk of Fame star in 2024

- Actor Willem Dafoe has become the first celebrity to be honoured with a Hollywood Walk of Fame star this year. Dafoe, who has featured in almost 150 films, was felicitated on Monday afternoon in California, as reported by CNN. His wife, Giada Colagrande, attended the event, as did his friends and former co-stars Pedro Pascal, Patricia Arquette, Mark Ruffalo, and Camila Morrone.
- The actor concluded his speech by giving a shout-out to his wife and director Giada Colagrande. Finally, thank you to my wife Giada Colagrande, who teaches me gratitude and reminds me not to spit on my luck.

SPORTS

1.ICC announces groups for T20 Men's Cricket World cup 2024

- The 20 teams have been divided into four groups, with five sides in each group. The top two teams from each group will qualify for Super Eights, and the top two teams from each group will proceed to the semi-finals. The tournament will

kick off with the first match to be played between co-host USA and Canada in Dallas. The blockbuster clash between India and Pakistan is scheduled for June 9 in New York.

- This is the very first time 20 teams will be participating, and it will also feature the African nation of Uganda, which has qualified for the first time in any ICC World Cup. A total of 55 matches will be played across nine venues, with six stadiums located in the West Indies and the rest in the USA. Super Eight matches, along with the knockout stage, will be played in the West Indies.

OBITUARY

1. Amruta Someshwara, Scholar and Folklore Expert, Passes Away in Mangaluru, Karnataka

- Scholar, senior writer and folklore expert Amrut Someshwara passed away at his residence near Someshwara-Kotekar in Mangaluru. He was 88. He is survived by his wife and two sons. The last rites will be performed on January 7, sources in his family informed.
- Mr. Someshwara had more than 100 works to his credit, including about 40 Yakshagana scripts written both in Kannada and Tulu. He had retired as Head of the Department of Kannada at Vivekananda College in Puttur, Dakshina Kannada district. He was a visiting professor in the Department of Kannada of Mangalore University.

2. Brazil's 4-time FIFA World Cup champion Mario Zagallo passed away

- Zagallo, who played alongside Pele in Brazil's 1958 and 1962 World Cup-winning teams and later won the trophy as a coach, died Friday of multiple organ failure, said the Barra D'Or hospital in Rio de Janeiro, where he had been treated for a series of health problems in recent months.
- Mario Zagallo, who won two World Cups as a player, one as a coach and another as an assistant coach for Brazil, has passed away at the age of 92. He holds the record for World Cup titles in general with four titles in total. He also holds the record for World Cup finals with six participations.

3. 'India's oldest' sloth bear in captivity passed away in Bhopal zoo

- India's oldest female sloth bear, whose name was Gulabo, has passed away at the Van Vihar National Park and Zoo, located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Gulabo was the oldest sloth bear of the country. She died at the age of 40. She was rescued from a street performer (Madaari) in May 2006, when she was 25 years.
- Gulabo was one of the star attractions in the park. The Van Vihar National Park, located on the banks of Bhopal's Upper Lake, also runs a rescue and breeding centre for sloth bears. A 36-year-old male sloth bear died due to multi-organ failure at a zoo-cum-animal rescue centre in Madhya Pradesh capital Bhopal.

4.Hindustani classical vocalist utsad Rashid khan passed away in Kolkata

- Hindustani classical singer and music maestro Utsad Rashid Khan passed away in Kolkata .He was 55 and is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter. The famous vocalist was suffering from cancer and was admitted to a private health facility in Kolkata in November 2023.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, rushed to the hospital to meet the bereaved family and described Mr. Khan as “truly a world famous classical Indian vocal artist”. Ms. Banerjee said that the body of the music maestro will be kept at Rabindra Sadan, the State’s cultural complex on Wednesday and the final rites will be held with full State honours including a gun salute.

IMPORTANT DAYS

1.Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Or NRI Day observed on 9th January

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas or NRI Day is formally observed on 9 January to celebrate the day when Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa to Mumbai, India. The day is celebrated to acknowledge the contribution of the non-resident Indian community in helping in the development of the country.
- This day plays a significant role as the overseas Indian community gets a shared platform to get themselves engaged with the government and the native people of the land.The conventions are very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

2.World Hindi Day observed on 10th January

- World Hindi Day, also called the Vishwa Hindi Diwas, is observed on January 10. With around 600 million speakers globally, Hindi is one of the most widely spoken languages across the world, along with Mandarin, Chinese, and English.
- On this day in 1949, Hindi was spoken for the first time in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The day is observed around the world to promote the language.Vishwa Hindi Diwas was marked for the first time on January 10, 2006, on the instructions of the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It is an occasion to recognise Hindi as a universal language.

3.National Youth Day observed on 12th January

- National Youth Day is also known as Rashtriya Yuva Diwas and is celebrated on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The day creates awareness and provides knowledge about the rights of people in India. It is a day to educate people to behave properly in the country.
- In 1984, the Indian Government first declared to celebrate the birthday of Swami Vivekananda i.e. 12 January as National Youth Day. Since then the day has been celebrated as National Youth Day all over the country. The

government's main aim is to make a better future for the country by motivating the youths through the way of their life and ideas of the Swami Vivekananda.



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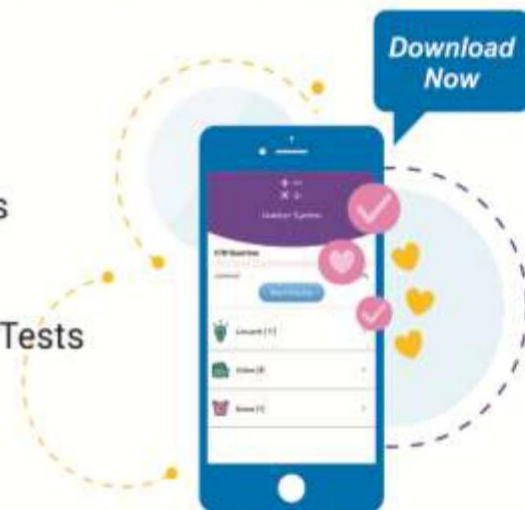
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