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MONTHLY — Current Affairs

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NATIONAL NEWS

Centre approves reconstruction plan worth over 1658 crore rupees for Joshimath in Uttarakhand

- The Union government approved the Recovery and Reconstruction (R&R) plan of Rs 1658 crore for subsidence-hit Joshimath town. The decision was taken by a high-level committee, headed by Union home minister and minister of cooperation, Amit Shah.
- As per the approved plan, Rs 1080 crore of central assistance will be allocated from the National Disaster Response Fund. A High-Level Committee under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah approved the plan.

Vice President says retired judges keeping country's arbitral system in tight fist grip

- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar lamented that retired judges have kept the arbitral system of the country in a "tight fist grip", denying chance to other qualified minds. He suggested that the time has come when we need to introspect and move forward by bringing about necessary changes, including, if required, by legislation.
- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar lamented that retired judges have kept the arbitral system of the country in a tight fist grip, denying chance to other qualified minds.

Civic body looks to rename firozabad to chandra nagar

- This proposal was supported by 11 out of 12 executive members in the municipal corporation executive meeting and passed unanimously. The proposal to change the name of Aligarh to Harigarh has also been passed in the municipal corporation of Aligarh.
- The proposal, which was first made by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) corporator Avneesh Valmiki, was approved by 11 out of 12 members of the Firozabad Nagar Nigam executive committee. The plan seeks to rename the city after Raja Chandra Sen, who ruled the region in the 16th century, people familiar with the matter.

PM launches Green Credit Initiative at COP28 climate conference aimed at reshaping global environmental policies

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Green Credit Initiative,' a pathbreaking program aimed at reshaping global environmental policies. He also launched the official portal of the Green credit initiative at COP28.

- The Prime Minister highlighted the limitations of the current carbon credit system, influenced by commercial interests and lacking a sense of social responsibility, paving the way for a new philosophy embodied in the 'Green Credit' concept.

Delhi Government School Pioneers First-of-its-Kind Biodiversity Park to Foster Ecosystem Education and Green Practices

- A Delhi government school has established the first-of-its-kind biodiversity park to promote the ecosystem and provide students with hands-on learning experiences in agriculture, farming, nature, and greenery.
- The park features a diverse range of plant life, including native Indian flowers, various rose varieties, an Amrapali mango tree, different types of curry leaves, lemon trees, and plants imported from Telangana and South Africa.

Ministry of Tourism launches National Best Tourism Village and National Best Rural Homestays Competition 2024

- Ministry of Tourism has launched National Best Tourism Village Competition 2024 and the National Best Rural Homestay Competition 2024 to strengthen the promotion and development of Rural Tourism in the country.
- The earlier version of the National Best Tourism Village Competition 2023 recognized 35 villages all over India in Gold, Silver, and Bronze categories. For the enhancement of Rural Tourism in India the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India launched the comprehensive National Strategy and Roadmap for the Development of Rural Tourism in India, along with the National Strategy for the Promotion of Rural Homestays.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin Announces Establishment of Footwear Park with a Budget of Rs 400 Crore

- The Tamil Nadu government has planned to set up a footwear manufacturing park at an outlay of Rs 400 crore on a 250-acre land. The industrial project would generate 20,000 new jobs in Ranipet district.
- Through public-private partnerships, Stalin stated that the government also planned to set up industrial parks on 50-acre land for the leather and footwear industries in Tamil Nadu.

Delhi Government Set to Notify Motor Vehicle Aggregator Scheme

- In a major diplomatic win, Pakistan emerged victorious over India in the elections for the Vice Chair position on the UNESCO Executive Board for the term 2023-2025. The elections,

held during the 218th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board in Paris, saw Pakistan securing an impressive 38 votes out of the 58-member board, while India received 18 votes.

- The scheme mandates a complete transition to electric vehicles (EVs) for all cab aggregators and delivery service providers by 2030.

Congress announces Revanth Reddy as CM of Telangana

- The Congress central leadership has named Telangana party chief A. Revanth Reddy as its choice of Chief Minister of the State. He will take the oath of office on December 7. Mr. Reddy was named the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), and he will become the first Congress Chief Minister of Telangana, a State formed in 2014.
- Born in 1969 at Kondareddy Pally village in the present Nagurkurnool district in Telangana, he entered politics in 2006 and was elected as Zila Parishad member. He was later elected as Member of Legislative Council as independent from MLAs quota. He won from Kodangal Assembly constituency in 2009 from TDP and again in 2014.

Madagascar Court Upholds Andry Rajoelina's Presidential Election Victory

- Madagascar's Constitutional Court has confirmed President Andry Rajoelina re-election following a controversial election a fortnight ago. The court said Mr Rajoelina secured 59% of the votes cast, declaring him elected for a third term.
- It dismissed complaints by the opposition over the credibility of the vote, which recorded a low turnout of 46%. 10 out of 13 presidential contenders had withdrawn their candidacies but their names remained on the ballot.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inaugurates new factory of Dixon Technology in Noida

- Padget Electronics, a wholly owned subsidiary of Dixon Technologies, inaugurated a new smartphone manufacturing facility in Noida in the presence of Union Minister of Electronics. This new factory of Dixon Technology will boost the local manufacturing of smartphones.
- The company has invested Rs 256 crore in the facility that takes up 2.7 lakh square feet and has an annual capacity of 25 million units, the company said in a statement. "It is a momentous step towards our commitment of boosting the local smartphone manufacturing system in India," Sunil Vachani, executive chairman, Dixon Technologies said in a statement.

India to Extend \$250 Million Line of Credit to Kenya for the Modernization of its Agricultural Sector

- India extended a \$250 million Line of Credit for modernisation of agriculture in Kenya. Announcing the initiative PM Modi said both sides will carry out joint military exercises and will collaborate on counter-terror projects.
- India is willing to share its experience in developing Digital Public Infrastructure with Kenya. Mr Modi also announced that Kenya has expressed interest in joining the International Solar Alliance and Global Biofuels Alliance.

Congress Designates Revanth Reddy as Chief Minister Candidate for Telangana

- Telangana Congress President, Anumula Revanth Reddy, appointed as the new Chief Minister of Telangana. Revanth Reddy was named the Leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), marking his ascent as the first Congress Chief Minister of Telangana, a State formed in 2014.
- The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled for December 7, 2023 in Hyderabad, where Revanth Reddy will officially take office.

Government decides to implement component of “Nari Adalat” in phased manner

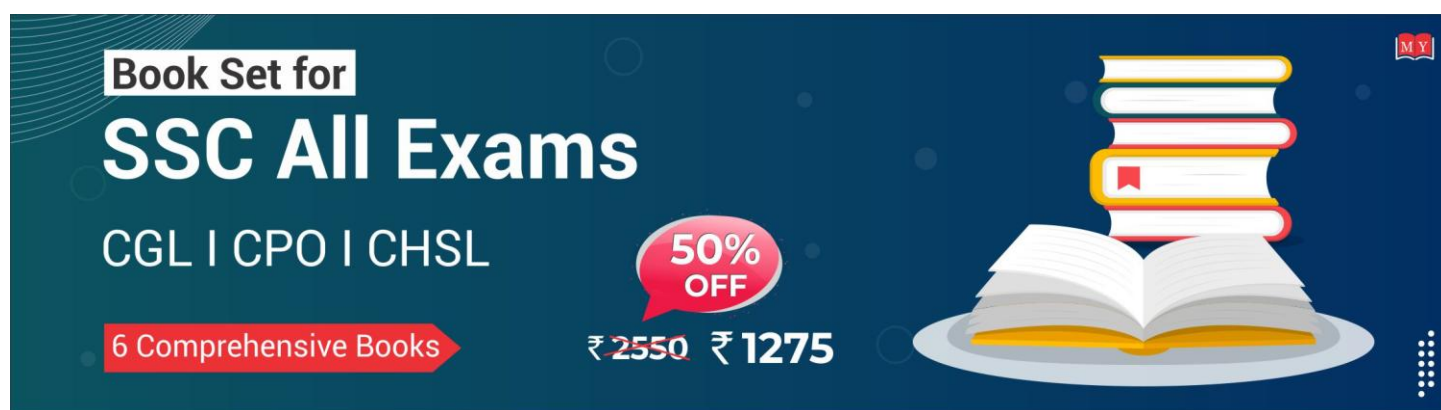
- Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani has informed the Rajya Sabha that the Government has decided to implement the component of "Nari Adalat" in a phased manner under Mission Shakti.
- In a written reply to a question, the Minister said in the first phase, Assam and the Union Jammu and Kashmir have been selected by her Ministry to implement the component of Nari Adalat. In Jammu and Kashmir, it is being implemented in two aspirational districts - Kupwara and Baramulla and in Assam, seven districts namely Barpeta, Goalpara, South Salmara Mankachar, Udalguri, Darrang, Morigaon and Kamrup have been covered under it.

Govt Unveils ‘Mera Goan, Meri Dharohar’ Project to Document village Heritage

- Minister G. Kishan Reddy reveals "Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar" project, a key element of the National Mission on Cultural Mapping, aiming to showcase the cultural diversity within Indian villages.
- Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, responsible for culture, tourism, and the development of the North Eastern Region, announced a groundbreaking project in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The initiative, titled “Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar” (MGMD), is set to spotlight the cultural richness embedded in villages across the nation.

India to host 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference in New Delhi

- India will host the four-day 27th WAIPA World Investment Conference in New Delhi. National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of the Government of India, and World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies are organizing the conference at the India International Convention & Expo Centre - Yashobhoomi, New Delhi.
- Under the aegis of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, it will be the largest World Investment Conference ever. Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, and Textiles, Piyush Goyal will deliver the keynote address on the Role of Trade and Investment in the Decade of Action on 13th December.



Lok Sabha Discusses Jammu and Kashmir Bills for Reservation and Reorganisation

- The Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, amends the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation Act, 2004. The Act provides reservation in jobs and admission in professional institutions to members of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other socially and educationally backward classes.
- On the other hand, the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 amends the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. The 2019 Act amended the Second Schedule of the 1950 Act to specify the total number of seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly to be 83. The proposed Bill increases the total number of seats to 90.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Gives Green Signal to Chennai's First Urban Flood Mitigation Project Worth 561.29 Crore

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the first urban flood mitigation project worth 561.29 crore for 'Integrated Flood Management Project' for the Chennai Basin Project, Union home minister Amit Shah said in a statement.

- The project includes Centre's assistance of 500 crore and the mitigation project will help make Chennai flood-resilient. This happens to be the first in a series of urban flood mitigation efforts and will help develop a broader framework for urban flood management.

PM Formalization of Micro Food Processing Enterprises Scheme

- The centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme was launched on 29th June, 2020 by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- The scheme has completed two years and a journey that started with the zest to empower the unorganized Micro Enterprises continues to fulfill the aim of formalising the food processing sector and celebrating their tremendous support towards the economy, has borne good results for the sector.

India to spend 57 lakh crore rupees on adaptation to climate change over next 7 years

- New Delhi told UN Framework for Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) that India has spent about 13.35 lakh crore in 2021-22, just over 5.5 percent of its GDP, on climate adaptation and expects to incur another about 57 lakh crore rupees over the next seven years for this purpose.
- This is India's latest submission filed that includes its first assessment of adaptation requirements. But this is only in the business-as-usual scenario, that is only if climate vulnerability does not deteriorate during this period. Climate-induced damage could escalate this amount by another 15.5 lakh crore rupees.

Clean Ganga Mission signs pact with Mississippi River Initiative

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) recently signed a Memorandum of Common Purpose (MoCP) with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI), which represents 124 cities/towns situated along the banks of the Mississippi River, the United States.
- NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from 2016, consequent to the constitution of the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred to as National Ganga Council).

India's 1st Telecom Centre of Excellence to come up in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur

- The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government has announced plans to build India's first Telecom Centre of Excellence in Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee. The state government

has announced to shell out as much as Rs 30 crore in establishing a research centre at IIT Roorkee in Saharanpur.

- According to the state government, the new centre will not just widen UP's participation in technology and innovation but will also propel the telecommunications sector.

India's emission intensity reduced by 33% between 2005 and 2019

- India firmly believes that equity and climate justice must be the basis of climate action and this can be ensured only when the developed countries take the lead in combating climate change, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said here at the COP28.
- Delivering the national statement at the high-level segment during the ongoing annual climate conference, Mr Yadav also highlighted India's contribution to the global actions in restricting temperature rise by reducing emission intensity much ahead of the promised target year as mentioned in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), country's action plan for dealing with the impacts of climate change.

NHAI Inks Agreement to Develop Multi Modal Logistics Park at Nagpur at a cost of Rs. 673 crores

- The MMLP will be developed in an area of 150 acres under the Public Private Partnership model at an estimated cost of Rs.673 crore. This project is poised to be the first MMLP in Maharashtra under the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, making it a significant milestone in the country's development.
- The MMLP will be developed in three phases. The Phase-I with an investment of Rs. 137 crore is expected to be completed in two years. MMLP will cater to about 9.47 million metric tonnes (MMT) cargo in the horizon period of 45 years and will give huge boost to the industrial zones in the catchment region such as Nagpur, Wardha, Chandrapur and Gondiya.

India's Retail Inflation 5.55 per cent in November 2023

- India's retail inflation surged sharply to 5.55 per cent in November after falling to a four-month low of 4.8 per cent in October, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.
- The uptick in retail inflation has been attributed to a sharp rise in food prices. Notably, the food inflation for November registered at 8.70 per cent. While inflation remains within the RBI's comfort zone, the surge in inflation could make the central bank's job difficult going forward.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurates 10-feet tall statue of Mahatma Gandhi, Delhi

- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh inaugurated a 10-feet tall statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Gandhi Darshan near Rajghat, Delhi on December 10, 2023. In his address, the Raksha Mantri described the statue as a befitting tribute to the Father of the Nation, who played a central role in freeing India from foreign rule and worked for the upliftment of the weaker sections of society to lead a dignified life.
- He asserted that Mahatma Gandhi continues to live in the heart of every Indian, while great leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr & Nelson Mandela took inspiration from his ideas and vision for the betterment of people in their countries.

National Mission for Clean Ganga

- The operational area of this project comprises the Ganges Basin and all states through which the river flows, including Delhi. The objective of the National Mission for Clean Ganga is to reduce pollution and ensure rejuvenation of the Ganga river.
- This can be achieved by promoting intersectoral co-ordination for comprehensive planning & management and maintaining minimum ecological flow in the river, with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.

Ola's Bhavish Aggarwal Unveils 'Made For India' Krutrim AI

- Krutrim AI Designs, the new artificial intelligence venture founded by Bhavish Aggarwal, co-founder of Ola, has introduced a family of multilingual AI models specifically tailored to address the distinctive requirements of the Indian ecosystem. The models, named Krutrim Pro, are designed to operate in 22 Indian languages, emphasizing cultural connect and accessibility at India-first cost structures.
- Krutrim, which means 'artificial' in Sanskrit, comes in two sizes. The base model, Krutrim, is trained on an impressive 2 trillion tokens and unique datasets. Its larger counterpart, Krutrim Pro, is set to launch next quarter, boasts advanced problem-solving and task execution capabilities. Aggarwal highlights the importance of India-specific training data, cultural context and cost considerations for successful AI implementation in the country.

PM Modi Unveils Varanasi's Swarved Mahamandir, World's Largest Meditation Center

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday inaugurated the world's largest meditation centre Swarved Mahamandir in Varanasi. Following the inauguration, he along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took a tour of the centre that can seat 20,000 people at a

time for meditation. Verses of the Swarveda have been carved upon the walls of the Mahamandir -- a seven-floor superstructure.

- The Swarved Mahamandir is a mesmerizing architectural marvel, seamlessly blending traditional and modern design elements. Intricate marble carvings adorn its structure, and towering lotus-shaped domes reflect the rich cultural heritage of Varanasi. The seven-floor superstructure stands as a testament to the city's spiritual legacy while embracing contemporary aesthetics.

India's overall exports in November 2023 is estimated at USD 62.58 Billion; an increase of 1.23 percent over Nov 2022

- India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in November 2023 is estimated to be USD 62.58 Billion, exhibiting a positive growth of 1.23 per cent over November 2022. Overall imports in November 2023 is estimated to be USD 67.88 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of (-) 6.16 per cent over November 2022.
- India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in April-November 2023 are estimated to be USD 499.46 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of (-) 1.39 per cent over April-November 2022. Overall imports in April-November 2023 are estimated to be USD 560.90 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of (-) 7.58 per cent over April-November 2022.

Shah Rukh Khan named top Asian celebrity in the world for 'saving' Bollywood

- Shah Rukh Khan has clinched the top spot in the "Top 50 Asian Celebrities In The World" list for 2023. Published by the UK-based Eastern Eye newspaper, the list sees Khan outshining global stars from cinema, television, music, arts, literature and social media.
- His blockbuster hits, Pathaan and Jawan, along with the much-anticipated Dunki, have played a pivotal role in reviving the Hindi cinema industry.

Union Minister Smriti Irani inaugurates National Programme on Anganwadi-cum-Crèches in New Delhi

- Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated National Programme on Anganwadi-cum-Crèches in New Delhi. Government has planned to open 17 thousand creches all around the country and urged states and districts officials to identify groups of women construction workers and women farm labourers who can take advantage of the initiative.
- childcare is a big economic opportunity for women who work in self-help groups and form cooperatives. She said, her Ministry will provide a framework for such engagement where

the safety of the child, nutrition and health needs of the child are ascertained whoever seeks to serve in the segment in a private capacity.

JCI launches dedicated app for jute farmers

- The Jute Corporation of India launched an app that would provide vital knowledge to farmers on various issues for optimal jute cultivation and maximisation of income. Rachna Shah, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, launched the 'Paat-Mitro' app. It will also feature information on jute gradation parameters, farmer-centric schemes like 'Jute-ICARE', weather forecasts and procurement policies.
- The new app will help jute farmers and revitalizing the industry. With increased access to information, technical advancements, and market opportunities, Indian jute farmers can unlock a brighter future and contribute to the sustainable development of the sector.

India's coal demand to grow at 3.5% annually till 2026

- India's coal demand is expected to increase by 3.5% annually till 2026, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). In its latest coal report, IEA estimates India's coal demand to rise to 1,397 million tonnes (mt). Coal demand in India accounted for 14% of the global demand.
- It is expected that the demand have increased by 8% or 98 mt in 2023. IEA forecasts 2.4% annual growth in coal consumption for power generation for the next three years. IEA said renewable energy generation is forecast to grow by 12% annually. IEA estimates a moderate increase in coal for power generation of 69 mt to 2026. IEA estimates non-power thermal coal and lignite consumption to have increased by 12 mt in 2023, to 243 mt. India is the world's second largest consumer of the coal.

Central Railway to install panic switches at 117 railway stations

- The Central Railway will be installing panic switches at 117 railway stations on its network, a top official said here. Speaking at his first news conference after taking charge of the post, Central Railway general manager Ram Karan Yadav said two panic switches will be installed on each platform at 117 stations.
- The work is expected to be complete within a year. Yadav further said that all ladies coaches in the CR's local trains in Mumbai will get emergency talkback system and CCTV cameras by March 2024. Of 771 ladies coaches, 512 coaches already have the emergency talkback system and 421 coaches have CCTV.

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MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme)

- Union Minister for MSME Shri Narayan Rane launched three sub- schemes under the aegis of the RAMP programme . These are MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme), MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme) MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments.
- The MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme) is the first ever scheme in the Government to support circular economy projects

which will be done through credit subsidy and will lead to realising the dream of MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.

ICAI Reveals new logo for chartered Accountants of India

- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, recognized as the world's largest professional body of Chartered Accountants, recently revealed a new logo that encapsulates its commitment to an India-first approach and its role as a trusted partner in nation-building.
- Complementing this, an upside-down tricolour tick mark, traditionally used by Chartered Accountants during audits, has been incorporated. This element is intended to symbolize the wisdom and value contributed by accounting professionals.

According to India Skill Report 2024 Kerala is the most preferred state to work in India

- Kerala is the second state with the most employable resources among the 18-21 age group, according to the report published by talent assessment agency Wheebox in association with All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Association of Indian Universities (AIU), Google and Taggd.
- Two cities, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram, in Kerala have emerged as the most preferred places to work among the youth in India, according to the recently-published India Skills Report 2024.

Centre launches 3 sub-schemes under RAMP including Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments for MSMEs

- Union Minister for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched three sub-schemes under the aegis of the RAMP programme. The Ministry is also taking new initiatives under the existing schemes to provide enhanced support to the MSMEs.
- These are MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme), MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme) MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payments.

1467 projects of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) have been brought under the Bhoomi Rashi Portal

- The objective of Bhoomi Rashi portal is to provide a single point platform for online processing of land acquisition notifications to accelerate highway infrastructure development projects in India and payment of compensation for land acquisition.
- All the Land Acquisition notifications are submitted online by the concerned revenue official of the State Government, duly designated as Competent Authority for Land Acquisition

(CALA) and after the approval of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, these are sent online to the Government of India Press through e-Gazette.

Meta Collaborates with ONDC to Bolster Small Businesses in India

- Meta has partnered with ONDC to help small businesses embrace digital commerce. The partnership aims to enable and educate small retail players to build conversational buyer and seller experiences on WhatsApp through the ecosystem of Meta's business and technical solution providers.
- As part of the initiative, ONDC will help them bring their services onto its network to help them drive commerce. Meta, a prominent technology company, has entered into a collaboration with the government-backed ecommerce network Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

Ministry of Rural Development signs MoU with Reliance Retail's JioMart, to onboard DAY-NRLM's SHGs

- Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Reliance Retail's JioMart towards its efforts to help enhance the outreach of the products of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) thereby empowering the rural SHG artisans.
- Speaking on the occasion, Additional Secretary, Rural Livelihoods, Ministry of Rural Development Charanjit Singh said that this collaboration will enable SHGs to be on-boarded as sellers onto the e-commerce fold on JioMart and this initiative will further boost MoRD's provision under the SARAS collection to be available to a larger consumer base. With this alliance, SHGs will get to widen their market and visibility and offer their curated products to customers of JioMart across India.

Bhutan Unveils Ambitious Project for a 1,000-sq. km. Green City along Assam Border, Linking South Asia to Southeast Asia

- Bhutan, a picturesque Himalayan kingdom, is set to embark on a transformative journey with the announcement of its ambitious "Gelephu Smartcity Project." The Bhutanese King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, revealed the plans for a massive "international city" spanning over 1,000 sq. km. on the border with Assam.
- The Gelephu Smartcity Project aims to adhere to environmental standards and sustainability goals. In addition to becoming Bhutan's second international airport, the plans include "zero

emission” industries and a “mindfulness city” that capitalizes on Bhutan’s strengths in tourism and wellness.

IMF Reclassified India’s Exchange Rate Regime from Floating to Stabilized Arrangement

- India’s de facto exchange rate regime has been reclassified by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) from “floating” to “stabilised arrangement” for the period December 2022 to October 2023.
- However, IMF has retained the de jure classification as “floating” after an article IV review.

Quality Council of India to Provide Technical Support to Andhra Pradesh Govt. in Agriculture & Allied Sectors

- The Andhra Pradesh State government and Quality Council of India (QCI) organised a ‘Andhra Pradesh Gunvatta Sankalp’, a one-day workshop to discuss and deliberate on quality interventions in agriculture and allied sectors to augment and support State governments’ initiatives towards quality improvement.
- Andhra Pradesh was the first State in the country to receive the accreditation from the QCI for issuing IndGAP (India Good Agricultural Practices) Certification which helps the farmers, Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) and exporters to access markets in more than 130 countries across the globe.

Parliament passes ‘Telecommunications Bill, 2023’

- The Universal Service Obligation Fund has been established under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 to provide for telecom services in underserved areas. The Indian Parliament approved the Telecom Bill 2023 on December 21, 2023.
- The bill aims to ensure widespread access to telecommunication services through satellite spectrum assignment in a liberalised and technologically neutral manner. The bill adopts a non-auction route and proposes to assign the satellite spectrum through administrative method aligning with global best practices, and emphasising global harmonisation and standardisation for satellite spectrum assignments.

Uttar Pradesh Plans to Develop India’s First AI City in Lucknow

- Uttar Pradesh (UP) is taking a step forward in promoting plans to build India’s first Artificial Intelligence (AI) City in Lucknow. According to a report by Grand View Research, the global AI market size was \$137 billion in 2022 and is anticipated to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 37.3% from 2023 to 2030.

- The government has also announced that it will provide 40 acres for the project in the Nadarganj Industrial Area. The AI city will also incorporate luxury and affordable residential complexes while keeping walk-to-work in mind.

Centre declares Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) as unlawful association under UAPA

- The Ministry of Home Affairs banned the Masarat Alam faction of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim League under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for five years. Mr Shah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Government's message is loud and clear that anyone acting against the unity, sovereignty, and integrity of the nation will not be spared and face the full wrath of the law.
- This organization and its members are involved in anti-national and secessionist activities in J&K supporting terrorist activities and inciting people to establish Islamic rule in J&K. Union Home Minister Amit Shah in a social media post this organization and its members are involved in anti-national and secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, supporting terrorist activities and inciting people to establish Islamic rule in Jammu and Kashmir.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

World digital competitiveness index 2023 released

- The International Institute for Management Development (IMD) unveiled its 2023 World Digital Competitiveness Ranking (WDCR) revealing India's position at 49th among 64 economies. According to IMD's study, India has made significant in terms of cybersecurity knowledge but lacks on fronts like technology and future readiness.
- The WDCR is a comprehensive assessment that provides insights into how nations are navigating the digital landscape amid the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). This ranking sheds light on crucial elements contributing to a nation's digital prowess, a quality gaining paramount importance as technology continues to reshape societies globally.

India re elected to the international maritime organisation council

- India was re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council with the highest tally at elections held at its Assembly in London for the 2024-25 biennium. The 33rd Assembly of the IMO Council is being held from 27 November to 6 December 2023 at the IMO Headquarters in London.

- The Council is an executive body of the IMO and is responsible for monitoring the work of the organization. India's re-election falls under the Category of 10 states with "the largest interest in international seaborne trade", alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

NLCIL Signs MoU with TNSDC & NTTF for Skill Development Training Programme for Unemployed Youth

- NLC India Limited, a Navratna PSU under the Ministry of Coal, entered into a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Chennai with Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation (TNSDC), the Nodal Agency of Government of Tamil Nadu for skill development and M/s Nettur Technical Training Foundation (NTTF), Bengaluru, a pioneer institution on providing skill training to unemployed youth, to meet the present industry demands.
- This collaboration of NLCIL, TNSDC & NTTF will impart job-oriented skill development training for 540 wards of project affected families (PAFs) of NLCIL's operating areas in Neyveli.
- NLCIL has committed to spend Rs1.12 lakh per candidate for this free residential programme under its budget for Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R).
- This programme will help the candidates to become technically trained and get employment opportunities in premier companies.

World's first portable hospital 'Aarogya Maitri Aid Cube' unveiled in Gurugram

- The World's first portable hospital, 'Aarogya Maitri Aid Cube' was unveiled in Gurugram. Designed indigenously under the Project 'BHISHM', the modular trauma management and aid system is made up of 72 detachable mini-cubes, each being a specialized station for emergency response and humanitarian efforts.
- It can handle bullet injuries, burns, head, spinal and chest injuries, minor surgeries, fractures and major bleeding. It can treat as many as 200 patients. These cubes are light and portable, and can be rapidly deployed anywhere, from airdrops to ground transportation.

India's foreign exchange reserves increase by 2.538 billion US dollar to 597.935 billion US dollar

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's foreign exchange reserves increased by 2.538 billion US dollar to 597.935 billion US dollar for the week ended 24th November. In the

previous reporting week, the overall reserves had jumped 5.077 billion US dollar to 595.397 billion US dollar.

- According to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI for the week ended 24th November, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by 2.14 billion US dollar to 528.531 billion US dollar.

Pakistan Secures Vice Chair Post at UNESCO with a 10-Vote Lead Over India


- Pakistan secured a significant victory over India in the UNESCO executive board election for the post of vice-chair. The Pakistani candidate received 38 votes, while the Indian candidate received only 18.
- Pakistan's victory of being elected as vice chair of the UNESCO Executive Board for 2023-2025 from the Asia Pacific Group, is being seen as a major setback for Indian diplomats in the UN.

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Pakistan Submits BRICS Membership Application in 2024

- Pakistan has filed an application to join the BRICS group of nations in 2024 and is counting on Russia's assistance during the membership process, Russia's official TASS news agency quoted Jamali as saying.
- Pakistan has already applied for membership in the BRICS-Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa which is set to expand next year with the admission of six new members under the Russian Presidency.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Advocates India as Host for 2028 Climate Conference, Urges Nations to Prioritise Global Interests

- India has hosted this annual climate change conference once earlier, COP8 in 2002. Then, the scale of this conference used to be much smaller unlike the most high-profile annual

event that it has evolved into now, attracting the attendance of over 100 heads of states and governments, topmost global business leaders, celebrities and others.

- Emphasizes the need for developing countries to have appropriate access to the remaining global carbon budget. Speaking at the high-level segment of the COP28 meeting in Dubai (UAE), he also proposed to host the 2028 climate change conference, COP33, in India.

Centre Greenlights Resumption of GIAN Scheme in Fourth Phase After COVID Hiatus

- Eight years after its inception, the Ministry of Education is gearing up to restart the fourth phase of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN).
- The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), after evaluating the scheme, recommended its continuation. Since the beginning of the scheme in 2015-16, 1,612 foreign faculty members have visited the country to deliver courses from 59 countries.

India and China Opt Out of Pledge alongside 118 Nations at COP28

- India and China, two major economies and leading coal consumers, chose not to join a pledge made by 118 nations at the UN's climate summit (COP28). The pledge aimed to triple the global capacity for renewable energy generation to at least 11,000 GW and double the average annual rate of energy efficiency by 2030.
- A total of 118 countries, including Japan, Australia, Canada, Chile, Brazil, Nigeria, and Barbados, supported the initiative to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030 during the UN's climate talks. The primary goal of the pledge is to decrease reliance on fossil fuels in global energy production.

UPI Transaction Value Hits Record ₹17.4 Lakh Crore in November 2023

- UPI transactions hit a new record of Rs 17.4 lakh crore in November 2023, however, volumes dipped marginally from 11.4 billion in October to 11.2 billion reflecting the fewer days and the end of sales.
- Compared to a year ago, UPI transactions increased by 54% in terms of the number of transactions and by 46% in terms of value. UPI transaction volume declined slightly to 1,124 crore from 1,141 crore in October.

China Adopts 'One Province, One policy' Approach to Financial Risk Management

- The country should make a greater effort in financial risk management but the policies need to be tailored, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, the Xinhua News Agency cited Li

Yunze, head of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, as saying in an interview. Provinces have to devise their own policies on how to handle risks, according to the report.

- The world's second-largest economy has struggled for traction this year as a bounceback from restrictive Covid Zero policies proved to be softer than expected and a property crisis dragged on. That's prompted successive waves of support from central and local authorities, but some economists have argued that government debt is now too concentrated at the local level.

Argentina's Entry into BRICS Postponed, Not Joining Developing Economies Bloc Next Year as Planned

- Argentina's entry into the BRICS bloc of developing economies, originally scheduled for January 1, 2024, has been postponed. Argentina won't join the China-led BRICS bloc during Javier Milei's presidency, his incoming top diplomat, underscoring the significant foreign policy shift his administration plans once in office.
- Initially, President Alberto Fernández expressed enthusiasm about the invitation, believing it would open up new markets for Argentina.

NMCG Launches Global River Cities Alliance at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai

- The alliance includes countries such as Egypt, Netherlands, Denmark, Ghana, Australia, Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan, and river-cities of The Hague (Den Haag) from the Netherlands, Adelaide from Australia, and Szolnok of Hungary.
- GRCA is a unique alliance covering 275+ global river-cities in 11 countries, international funding agencies and knowledge management partners and is first of its kind in the world. The launch of GRCA, signifies a momentous step in global efforts toward river conservation and sustainable water management.

IRCON International shares tank over 8% as govt launches OFS to sell up to 8% stake

- The government last evening announced that it would sell up to 8% stake in the company via the OFS at a floor price of Rs 154 per share.
- The plan includes selling 4% of the company, with an option to sell an additional 4% if the offer is oversubscribed, it said in a stock exchange filing. "Offer for Sale in IRCON opens tomorrow for Non Retail investors. Retail investors can bid on Friday. Govt. would divest 8% equity including Green Shoe option," posted DIPAM Secretary on X platform.

India Chosen as the Flagship Nation for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Green Voyage 2050 Project

- Due to the global nature of international shipping having diversity of stakeholders of all nationalities involved, emission from the maritime transport sector is addressed by the IMO through the International Convention for Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL). India is a signatory to this Convention.
- The Government of India has implemented all MARPOL regulations pertaining to carbon emissions on Indian Ships. At present, the regulations mainly pertain to reduction of carbon emission through enhanced energy efficiency and achieving a progressively enhanced (yearly) carbon intensity reduction.

India-United States Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Dialogue held in New Delhi

- India-United States Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Dialogue was held in New Delhi to address illicit finance risk across both the countries. The meeting was held on Wednesday, between Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra and the US Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Brian Nelson.
- In a joint statement, both the sides said that the dialogue is an effective forum for India and the US to share perspectives and best practices in addressing illicit finance risk in the international financial system. The statement further said that the forum discussed each country's efforts to enhance transparency in beneficial ownership, including the implementation of beneficial ownership registries, and tools to improve data quality.

China launches deepest lab on Earth, it is more than 2,000m below ground

- The world's deepest and largest underground laboratory became operational in China, state news agency Xinhua reported on Thursday (Dec 7). The report said that the 2,400-metre-deep physics laboratory is located in southwest China's Sichuan Province.
- The report mentioned the scientists think that the lab provides a major boost to the global search for dark matter, which is a hypothetical form of matter that appears not to interact with light or the electromagnetic field. It is expected that the lab will open up new frontiers in deep-earth experiments as the extreme depth will help the scientists by blocking most cosmic rays that mess with the observation.

With \$10 b in 4 years, Tamil Nadu ranks fourth in attracting FDI

- Cumulative Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow in to Tamil Nadu has touched nearly \$10 billion in the last four years from the period between October 2019 and September 2023. Tamil Nadu ranks fourth in attracting FDI in the period between Oct 2019 and September 2023, after Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat--but a distant fourth.
- With the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meeting scheduled to take place on January 7 and 8, 2024 in Chennai, the State government hopes to attract more investment to the State. The tiny states of Haryana and Telangana are close behind Tamil Nadu.

Bengaluru Airport's T2 named among 'world's most beautiful airports'

- In a recent announcement from UNESCO's Prix Versailles 2023, Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) Terminal 2 (T2) managed to stand out, and has been recognized as one of the 'world's most beautiful airports.' The world judges panel, chaired by renowned fashion designer Elie Saab, bestowed this honour, and honoured T2 with the recognition, making it the sole Indian airport to receive such esteemed recognition.
- The airport was honoured with the prestigious 'Special Prize for an Interior' in recognition of its outstanding design. This global acknowledgment highlights the airport's commitment to exceptional design and architectural brilliance on an international level.

India's forex reserves reach \$615.97 billion, highest in 20 months

- India's foreign exchange (FX) reserves rose for the fifth time in the week ending December 15, touching an over 20-month high of \$615.97 billion- the highest level since March 2022. In the previous week ended December 8, reserves had risen by \$2.82 billion to \$606.86 billion, as per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.
- Within reserves, foreign currency assets increased by \$ 8.35 billion to \$545.05 billion as of December 15, whereas gold reserves rose \$446 million to \$47.58 billion. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up \$135 million to \$18.32 billion. Further, data showed that India's reserve position with the IMF stood at \$5.02 billion, \$181 million higher on the week. They had touched an all-time high of \$645 billion in October 2021.

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Aditya Birla Sun Life and IDFC First Bank Forge Partnership for Joint Financial Solutions

- In a strategic move to broaden their service offerings and strengthen their market presence, Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance and IDFC First Bank have joined forces through a bancassurance partnership. This collaboration aims to provide comprehensive insurance solutions to the bank's extensive customer base by leveraging the robust distribution network of IDFC First Bank.
- Under the newly-formed alliance, Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance is set to capitalize on the widespread reach of IDFC First Bank. This move is poised to enhance accessibility and make financial protection and planning easily available to a broader segment of customers served by the bank's extensive distribution network.

Egypt's El-Sisi Secures Third Presidential Term with 89.6% Majority Vote

- Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won the third Presidential Election in Egypt by winning 89.6% of the vote in the election. His term as President of Egypt has been extended to 6 years. The election came as Egypt grapples with a slow-growing economic crisis and tries to manage the risk of an outbreak of war in Gaza, which borders Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.
- Voting took place in Egypt for three days from December 10 to 12, 2023. He was elected to the presidency in 2014, and re-elected in 2018, both times with 97% of the vote. In 2019, the constitution was amended, extending the presidential term from four to six years and allowing Mr Sisi to stand for a third term.

Cabinet approves the Migration and Mobility Agreement between India and Italy

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has given its ex-post facto approval to the proposal of Ministry of External Affairs to sign and ratify the

Migration and Mobility Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Italian Republic.

- The Agreement would enhance people-to-people contacts, foster mobility of students, skilled workers, business people and young professionals and strengthen cooperation on issues related to irregular migration between the two sides.

UGC alerts students against pursuing MPhil as it is no longer recognized degree

- University Grant Commission has issued a notification, alerting students against pursuing an MPhil degree as it is no longer recognised. The commission has also warned universities against offering the programme and admissions for the 2023-24 academic year are prohibited.
- It has come to the knowledge that few universities are inviting fresh applications for the MPhil (Master of Philosophy) programme. It added that an MPhil degree is not a recognised degree now. UGC had earlier declared the MPhil degree illegitimate, instructing higher educational institutions not to offer MPhil programmes.

China launched 3 satellites into orbit from south china sea

- China successfully launched a Long March-11 carrier rocket into space, sending three satellites into planned orbit. The Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center launched the rocket from waters off the coast of Yangjiang, south China's Guangdong Province. The satellites, Shiyang-24C, will be mainly used for space science and technology experiments.
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8th edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs concludes in Bangkok, Thailand

- The 8th edition of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs (CoC) concluded in Bangkok, Thailand. The conclave organized by Royal Thai Navy began on the 19th of this month. Chiefs of Navies or Senior Delegates from 27 Members or Observer countries participated in the event. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral R Hari Kumar, attended the event with a three-member Indian Naval delegation.
- During the Conclave of Chiefs, Thailand assumed the duties of Chair of IONS, and the Work Plan for the next two years was finalized. As a first, the Flag designed by India was

selected as the IONS Flag. India also took over as the co-chair of IONS Working Groups on Maritime Security and HADR for the forthcoming cycle.

NEW APPOINTMENT AND PERSON IN NEWS

Veera Rana Creates History as Second Female Bureaucrat Appointed Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh

- In a significant decision made by the government of Madhya Pradesh under the leadership of Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the state's 1988 batch IAS officer, Veera Rana, has been entrusted with the Additional Charge of Chief Secretary. This historic appointment makes her the second woman bureaucrat in the history of Madhya Pradesh to assume the role of Chief Secretary.
- The government issued an official order on the night of November 29, formalising Ms. Rana's elevation to the position of chief secretary. Currently, Mrs. Rana holds the position of Chairperson of the Madhya Pradesh Board of Secondary Education and also serves as the additional charge of the state's agriculture production commissioner.

Air Force officer Manisha Padhi appointed as India's first woman Aide de Camp

- Squadron Leader Manisha Padhi has become the first woman officer from the armed forces to be appointed as an Aide-De-Camp (ADC) to a Governor, lending weight to the government's effort towards nari-shakti.
- Mizoram Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati has appointed a woman Indian Air Force officer from Odisha, squadron leader Manisha Padhi, as India's first Woman Aide-De-Camp (ADC) from the Indian Armed Forces at a brief ceremony held at the Raj Bhawan in Aizawl.

Jitesh John Appointed as Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India's New Executive Director & Sandip Garg Assumes Role as its Member

- John has a post-graduate degree in Economics and has completed 21 years in Central Government in various capacities. He has experience working in financial, Energy, Infrastructure and Small and Medium Enterprises sectors.
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Centre appoints Rakesh Asthana, and 6 others as National Human Rights Commission special monitors

- The Central Government appointed 7 people, including a former Delhi police commissioner Rakesh Ashthana, as ‘special monitors’ of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) until September 22, 2025
- According to the order, Asthana will work as a special monitor who will oversee thematic areas of terrorism, counter-insurgency, communal riots, and Left-wing extremism.

Hindustan Unilever Limited Appoints Former Revenue Secretary Tarun Bajaj as Independent Director for a 5-Year Term

- Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) has appointed Tarun Bajaj (61) as an independent director on its board, effective 1st December 2023, for a period of 5 years. He has also chaired the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund and was the Director on the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India as well as the Board of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
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ZPM Chief Lalduhoma Set to Take Oath as New Chief Minister of Mizoram

- Zoram People’s Movement (ZPM) leader Lalduhoma took oath as the new chief minister of Mizoram, making him the first leader not belonging to either the Mizo National Front (MNF) or the Congress to hold that post. Eleven other newly elected MLAs from the party also took oath as ministers.
- His swearing-in ceremony will be held at Raj Bhawan in Aizawl. Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati will administer the oath to Mr Lalduhoma. During the ceremony, several other ZPM leaders also took oath as ministers.

World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 appoints UAE’s Mohammed Al Ramsi as Chairman

- United Arab Emirates' Mohammed Al Ramsi has been appointed Chairman of World Radiocommunication Conference 2023 (WRC 23). The event is being held in Dubai, UAE, from November 20th to December 15th, 2023. Al-Ramsi said that he felt great responsibility and was confident that he would succeed in this endeavor.

- He added that the UAE was a key advocate for international cooperation and an influential contributor to achieving development goals. WRC is organised by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) every four years to revise the global use of radio-frequency spectrum, geostationary-satellite and non-geostationary-satellite orbits.

Vishnu Deo Sai to be sworn in as Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

- Mohan Yadav along with his two deputies Jagdish Devda and Rajendra Shukla took oath. Meanwhile, Vishnu Deo Sai will be sworn in as the CM of Chhattisgarh in Raipur. Along with Sai, Vijay Sharma and Arun Sao will take the oath as the deputy CMs.
- Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Mohan Yadav took oath as the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh. Apart from Yadav, Jagdish Devda and Rajendra Shukla took oath as deputy CMs of the state. Meanwhile, Rajasthan chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma will take oath on December 15.

Rajya Sabha passes Bill to appoint Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commissioners

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, the legislation that will guide the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Election Commissioners (EC) in future.
- Denying the Opposition's charges that the Supreme Court was being kept away from the process of selecting the CEC and ECs, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said in the Rajya Sabha that the Bill had been prepared following a direction from the Supreme Court. Mr. Meghwal said that, so far, the appointments had not been guided by any laws, and the Bill made the process transparent.

Guinea-Bissau president reappoints Geraldo Martins as Prime Minister

- Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló has reappointed Geraldo Martins as prime minister (PM) after dissolving his government.
- Geraldo Martins was first appointed prime minister in August, 2023. As a former senior executive at the World Bank, he served as minister of finance under the presidency of former President Jose Mario Vaz. He is a member of the former ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) party which now leads an opposition coalition.

Sanjay Singh Becomes New Chief Of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)

- Sanjay Singh was elected the new president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) with his panel comfortably winning most of the posts in the delayed polls to assert control over the sports body.
- Sanjay Singh is the vice president of the Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Association and previously served on the WFI's executive council. He has also been the national federation's joint secretary since 2019. He will take over the reins of the WFI chief from Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

India's Sakshi Malik quits over election of new wrestling federation chief

- Acclaimed Indian wrestler Sakshi Malik, a bronze medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, declared her retirement in protest of the Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) recent leadership change. The move follows allegations of sexual abuse against the ousted president, Brij Bhushan Singh, and the controversial election of his close ally, Sanjay Singh.
- Sakshi Malik, a vocal advocate against harassment in Indian sports, led protests earlier in the year, demanding accountability for Singh's alleged sexual misconduct towards female wrestlers. Charges filed in June accused Singh of harassing six athletes, including a minor, during his tenure as WFI chief.

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Bisleri Appoints Deepika Padukone as Global Brand Ambassador

- Bisleri, India's leading mineral water brand has roped in Global Indian Icon Deepika Padukone as its first-ever global brand ambassador in the new campaign Bisleri #DrinkItUp. The campaign is a fresh and never seen before take on hydration infusing excitement and fun.
- The ad film showcases Padukone grooving to a snappy and modern take on the iconic song 'Jhoom Jhoom Jhoom Baba' while relishing the pure refreshment of the original beverage, 'water'. The integrated campaign will be promoted across various platforms, including television, digital, Out-of-Home media, delivery vehicles, influencer engagement, OTT platforms, and much more.

PM Modi becomes World's no.1 leader in terms of Subscribers on YT

- The number of subscribers on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal YouTube channel crossed 20 million, with the Indian leader becoming the only world leader to have this distinction and leading his contemporaries by a long distance.
- The prime minister set up his YouTube channel in 2007 when he was Gujarat chief minister and is considered a pioneer in Indian politics in understanding the potential of social media in public communication and is credited for harnessing it to huge success.

Satish Kumar Kalra Appointed as Interim Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of North East Small Finance Bank

- The North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB) has announced the appointment of Satish Kumar Kalra as its Interim Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer. With approval of both the NESFB board and the Reserve Bank of India, Kalra has been appointed to the top post of NESFB.

- Kalra's professional journey is marked by his tenure at Andhra Bank as the Managing Director & CEO, and Executive Director, where he drove significant growth achieving a 13 percent compound annual growth rate in credit and added over 1200 branches worldwide.

BANKING NEWS

RBI and Bank of England Ink MoU for Collaboration and Information Sharing on CCIL

- The Reserve Bank of India and the Bank of England (BoE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration and the exchange of information related to the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL).
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Bank of England (BoE) took a significant step towards fostering international financial cooperation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The focus of this MoU is on collaboration and the exchange of information related to the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd (CCIL).

RBI Grants Approval for CSB Bank Promoter to Maintain 26% Stake in the Lender

- The promoter of India's CSB Bank has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India to retain a 26% stake in the lender, instead of 15% as advised by the central bank earlier, CSB. However, following a legal battle with Uday Kotak, the promoter of Kotak Mahindra Bank, the regulator permitted promoters to retain up to 26% in banks.
- FIH Mauritius Investments Ltd (FIHM), which currently holds a 49.72% stake in the Thrissur, Kerala-based bank according to BSE data, shall bring down its shareholding within 15 years from the date of completion of investments.

RBI Allows Banks to Open Current Accounts for Export Proceeds Alongside Special Rupee Vostro Accounts

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) permitted banks to open additional current accounts for export proceeds in addition to special rupee vostro accounts with a view to provide greater operational flexibility to exporters.
- To provide greater operational flexibility to exporters, banks maintaining a special rupee vostro account as per the provisions of the RBI circular dated July 11, 2022 are permitted to open an additional special current account for its exporter constituent exclusively for settlement of their export transactions.

Private general insurers expand market share to 53.58% in H1 FY24

- In the first half of FY24, private general insurance companies (insurers) boosted their combined market share to 53.58% in gross direct premium underwritten from 50.81% in the corresponding period a year ago.
- About 31 insurers from the non-life industry had underwritten gross direct premiums of Rs 1.43 lakh crore in the first six months of FY24, as per the data on segment-wise gross direct premiums up to September 2023, as per data of Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

Bharti Airtel becomes the 8th company to surpass 6 lakh crore Mcap

- The full market capitalisation of Bharti Airtel (partly plus fully paid-up) hit ₹ 6 lakh crore for the first time on Monday, after Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) resounding victory in state elections buoyed the overall market sentiment.
- Share of Bharti Airtel added another 2%, taking their year-to-date gain to 28%. In contrast, the benchmark Nifty has gained 14.3% during the same period. The stock has been generating positive returns for the last five years, with 2019 being the highest.

Union Bank of India Partners with Accenture to Speed up Data-Driven Transformation

- IT services and consulting company Accenture has collaborated with the Union Bank of India, a public sector bank, to create a secure and scalable enterprise data lake platform. This platform, equipped with advanced analytics and reporting capabilities, aims to enhance the bank's operational efficiency and improve its ability to provide customer-centric banking services while managing risks.
- As per the company, the collaboration aims at utilising predictive analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, the platform will harness both structured and unstructured data from the bank and external sources.

Federal Bank and NeML Forge Strategic Collaboration to Enhance E-Procurement and Integrate E-Auction Processes

- Federal Bank has announced a collaboration with Mumbai-headquartered NCDEX e-Markets Limited (NeML) to strengthen the integration of its e-procurement and e-auction systems. The alliance is expected to facilitate an advanced e-procurement solution, streamlining processes for Central and State government organisations.

- NeML, a wholly owned subsidiary of National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX), holds a commanding market share in transparent price discovery across more than 90 commodities.

LIC Ranks as the Fourth-Largest Insurer Globally by Reserves

- Public sector life insurance behemoth, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the world's fourth largest insurer based on reserves, as per a report released by S&P Global Market Intelligence.
- LIC follows Allianz SE, China Life Insurance and Nippon Life Insurance on the list of top largest life insurers. LIC has reserves of \$500 billion while Nippon's reading is at \$536 billion. China Life Insurance has \$616 billion, and Allianz SE has \$750 billion in reserves.

SBI Card joins Bharat BillPay in the credit card category

- NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd. (NBBL), the wholly-owned subsidiary of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), announced that it has on-boarded SBI Card, under the credit card category of Bharat BillPay.
- To simplify the way customers manage their credit card bill payments by providing them better convenience and accessibility. The other major credit card issuers under this category are Kotak Mahindra Bank, BoB Financial, Federal Bank, AU Small Finance Bank, IndusInd Bank, and Canara Bank.

Ministry of Finance Reports Banks Writing Off ₹10.6 Lakh Crore in the Last 5 Years

- The government informed the Lok Sabha that in the last five years, Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) wrote off nearly Rs 10.6 lakh crore, with almost half of this amount belonging to large industrial houses.
- Half of the written-off amount, approximately 50%, is attributed to large industrial houses. Clarification on Write-Offs : Write-offs do not imply a waiver of liabilities for borrowers; they are still obligated to repay. The process of recovery of dues from the borrower in written-off loan accounts continues.

SBI to acquire 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds

- SBI currently holds a 60 percent stake in SBI Pension Funds. Through this latest transaction, the company is set to increase its stake to 80 percent, acquiring the additional shares for a sum of ₹ 229.52 crore. The remaining 20 percent stake in SBI Pension Funds is held by SBI Funds Management.

- In its regulatory statement, SBI noted that both the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) have given their approval for the planned acquisition. The remaining 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds is held by SBI Funds Management.

ADB Grants \$98 Million Loan to Enhance Access to Disease-Free Planting Materials for Horticulture Crop Farmers in India

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$98 million loan to improve horticulture crop farmers' access to certified disease-free planting materials, which will boost their crops' yield, quality, and resilience to climate impacts.
- ADB's financing will support the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program (CPP), which was announced in February 2023 to establish clean plant centers and a certification scheme that will ensure farmers can purchase disease-free planting materials from private nurseries.

RBI keeps policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 percent

- The RBI Governor also said that the central bank has proposed to hike the limit of UPI transactions in hospitals and educational institutions from one lakh rupees to 5 lakhs.
- The RBI Governor highlighted that while the global economy is showing signs of slowdown, the Indian economy presents a picture of resilience and momentum. The real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Q2 of the current financial year has exceeded all forecasts.

Aditya Birla Health Launches 'Activ One' Product Offering 100% Returns

- Aditya Birla Health Insurance Company Limited (ABHICL), the health insurance division of Aditya Birla Capital, a prominent and diversified financial services provider in India, has introduced 'Activ One.'
- This streamlined and all-encompassing health insurance plan is designed to offer policyholders personalised solutions, addressing not only their health insurance requirements but also fostering their journey towards optimal well-being.

RBI MPC kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5%, FY24 GDP estimate hiked to 7%

- Interest rates on home, vehicle, personal and other loans in the banking system will remain unchanged with the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India keeping the Repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent in its monetary policy review amid rising risks to inflation due to the recent spike in vegetable prices.

- The central bank also retained the stance of the monetary policy as ‘withdrawal of accommodation’. With better-than-expected second-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) print at 7.6 per cent, the RBI has also revised its growth estimate upwards to 7 per cent from 6.5 per cent for FY 2024. The inflation estimate for the fiscal remained unchanged at 5.4 per cent.

RBI Increases UPI Payment Limits for Hospitals and Educational Institutions to Rs 5 Lakhs per Transaction, Up from Rs 1 Lakh

- The higher UPI payment limits aim to assist consumers in making transactions of larger amounts for educational and healthcare purposes. RBI Increases UPI Payment Limits for Hospitals and Educational Institutions to Rs 5 Lakhs per Transaction, Up from Rs 1 Lakh.
- The transaction limit of UPI was capped at Rs 1 lakh per transaction, barring a few categories. The decision was announced by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das during the bi-monthly Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

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ACKO Partners with PhonePe to Facilitate Insurance Accessibility for Millions

- ACKO General Insurance and PhonePe have joined forces to revolutionize the landscape of insurance accessibility in India. This strategic collaboration aims to provide users with a

comprehensive range of car and bike insurance products directly through the PhonePe platform.

- The collaboration between ACKO and PhonePe is a strategic alliance that leverages the strengths of both entities. ACKO, known for its customer-centric approach, combines forces with PhonePe's extensive distribution network.

Bank of India Introduces Nari Shakti Savings Account

- Bank of India has launched 'Nari Shakti Savings Account' catering to women aged 18 and above with an independent source of income. Bank of India (BoI) has launched an exclusive savings bank product for women (Nari Shakti Savings Account) with an independent source of income.
- The savings account offers personal accident insurance cover as high as ₹ 100 lakh, discounted health insurance and wellness products, rebates on locker facilities for gold and diamond account holders, and free facilities for platinum SB A/C holders.

SEBI's Proposal to Reduce NCD Face Value from ₹1 Lakh to ₹10,000

- SEBI, in the agenda 'Introduction of Regulatory Framework for Online Bond Platforms' placed before the Board in the meeting held on September 30, 2023 approved the proposal to reduce the face value from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 lakh.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed significant changes to the issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and non-convertible redeemable preference shares (NCRPS) to enhance the participation of non-institutional investors in the corporate bond market and to manage associated risks.

RBI Permits Regulated Entities to Utilize HDFC Bank-Crunchfish AB's Offline Payments Solution

- The Reserve Bank of India has concluded the Offline Retail Payments pilot that Crunchfish participated in together with HDFC Bank and IDFC First Bank. The project has been successful, and the solution may now be considered for adoption by regulated entities subject to compliance with applicable regulatory requirements.
- The RBI further stated that the product may be considered for adoption by regulated entities. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced on Monday that an 'Offline Retail Payments' solution created by HDFC Bank in collaboration with Crunchfish AB has been cleared for deployment by banks and other financial institutions.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Italy on Cooperation in the field of Industrial Property Rights

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry of the Republic of India and the Directorate General for the Protection of Industrial Property-Italian Patent and Trademark Office of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy of the Italian Republic on Cooperation in the field of Industrial Property Rights.
- The MoU will promote between the Participants the establishment of a mechanism that allows them to develop cooperation activities in the field of IP and information technology services related to this field.

iVIS Collaborates with ICICI Bank to Enhance Security through Advanced E-Surveillance Services

- iVIS, a subsidiary of Magellanic Cloud, has announced its empanelment with ICICI Bank for the delivery of e-surveillance services across branches. This strategic collaboration enables iVIS to offer AI/ML and IoT technology-enabled e-surveillance services, which will include real-time video monitoring and recording, facial recognition, incident detection, reporting, and data analytics.
- iVIS will strengthen the branch-level security operations of ICICI Bank, such as ATMs and cash counter operations, with real-time threat mitigation, remote security management, and automated response systems. iVis is skilled in its e-surveillance segment, with a centre in its Hyderabad office that oversees 20,000 ATMs and banking sites across the country.

Kotak Mahindra Bank partners with IITK to launch Kotak School of Sustainability through its CSR program

- To address the challenges of global warming, and promote pedigree education, research, and outreach, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) and the Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) joined hands to launch Kotak School of Sustainability.
- The newly launched Kotak School of Sustainability is India's first fully integrated school of sustainability at IIT Kanpur. According to KMBL, this initiative will provide leadership solutions towards sustainability actions and prepare future generations to lead the cause of sustainable development.

ICICI Bank Limited Approves the Appointment of Mr. Sandeep Batra as a Wholetime Director

- The Board of ICICI Bank Limited approved the proposal to resume seeking approval from RBI for the appointment of Mr. Sandeep Batra as a Wholetime Director (designated as Executive Director) of the Bank, for a period of five years or date of retirement, whichever is earlier, effective from September 17, 2020 or the date of approval from RBI.
- Sandeep Batra has been serving as ED on ICICI Bank's Board, overseeing the Corporate Centre since July 2018. His responsibilities span across crucial domains, including credit, corporate communications, data science, finance, human resources, legal, operations, customer service, technology, and secretarial groups. Additionally, he holds administrative responsibility for the risk function, internal audit, and compliance groups.

LIC gets time till 2032 to follow 25% public shareholding rule

- State-owned India's largest insurer LIC or Life Insurance Corporation of India has been exempted till 2032 to follow 25% minimum public shareholding norms. In May 2022, the government had sold 3.5% stake in LIC IPO, which was an entirely (offer for sale) worth around Rs 21,000 crore. It remains India's largest IPO to date.
- The stock is now down around 19% from its IPO issue price of Rs 949 per share. LIC shares ended 0.5% higher at Rs 764.55 on the BSE . However, in the last few weeks the stock has seen fresh buying interest. In the last one month alone LIC is up 25%.

SEBI proposes option of T +0 , instantaneous settlement for equity cash segment

- Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in a consultation paper has proposed the implementation of optional T+0 and instant settlement cycle of trades in the equity cash segment.
- SEBI introduced the T+3 settlement cycle in 2002, the T+2 settlement cycle was introduced in 2003 and the current T+1 settlement cycle was introduced in 2021 and was fully implemented by January 2023.

SBI Mutual Fund Acquires 1.5% Stake in Karur Vysya Bank for Rs 190 Crore

- SBI Mutual Fund acquired shares of scheduled commercial bank Karur Vysya Bank (KVB) for Rs 190 crore through open market transactions. According to the bulk deal data available with the BSE and NSE, SBI Mutual Fund (MF) purchased a total of 1,20,00,000 shares, amounting to a 1.5% stake in Karur Vysya Bank.

- The shares were picked at an average price of Rs 162 apiece on both bourses, taking the combined aggregate deal size to Rs 194.40 crore. Shares of Karur Vysya Bank rose 1.32 per cent to close at Rs 164.90 apiece on the BSE and gained 0.52 per cent to settle at Rs 164.70 per piece on the NSE.

World Bank Greenlights \$300 Million Initiative to Enhance Urban Water and Sewerage Infrastructure in Tamil Nadu

- The \$300 million Tamil Nadu Climate Resilient Urban Development Program will help 21 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) update their delivery systems and provide quality and efficient water supply and sewerage services to consumers.
- Tamil Nadu is one of the most urbanized states in India and faces increasing impacts of climate shocks like floods and droughts. For its rapidly growing population, access to services like water and sanitation is essential for more climate-resilient cities.

DCB partners with Easy Home Finance to offer economical housing loans

- India's leading mortgage tech company have entered a colending business alliance to offer affordable home loans in the country. This alliance seeks to leverage DCB Bank's expertise in the affordable housing segment and EASY's tech capabilities to enable quick disbursement of affordable home loans and fulfill the dream of many an Indian of owning a home.
- DCB Bank has built a granular and secure home loan portfolio across varied geographies and has built expertise in credit assessment for a range of loans such as, prime home loans, affordable home loans, Loan against Property (LAP), Micro-LAP, loan for home improvement, and construction finance for developers as well.

RBI's Model Anticipates Retail Inflation to Reach 4.8% in FY25

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released projections for India's economic performance, utilizing its Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) model. The forecast indicates a real GDP growth of 7.1% for the fiscal year 2023-24, surpassing the previous estimate of 7%, and a subsequent slowdown to 6% in the following fiscal year, 2024-25.
- The repo rate is anticipated to remain steady at 6.5% throughout most of FY25. This aligns with the RBI's dual focus on aligning inflation with the 4% target and supporting economic growth.

India & the Asian Development Bank (ADB) ink \$100 million loan pact to enhance urban services and boost tourism infrastructure in the state of Tripura

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$100 million loan to improve urban services and tourism facilities in the northeastern state of Tripura, India. This project will support the state as a gateway to the northeast region by developing tourist destinations along the national highways and by improving urban governance and financial sustainability.
- The project will upgrade urban water supply systems by installing 42 kilometers (km) of new transmission and distribution pipes, establish 4 new water treatment plants, and improve 55 km of stormwater drains. It will improve 21 km of urban roads that will incorporate features that respond to the needs of the elderly, women, children, and disabled.

MSME lender U Gro Capital raises ₹250 crore from Dutch development bank

- U GRO Capital, a lendingtech platform catering to MSMEs, has raised Rs 250 crore (approximately USD 30 million) through non-convertible debentures (NCDs) from FMO, the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank. The fully subscribed NCDs issuance follows U GRO Capital's earlier funding of Rs 340 crore (USD 41.3 million) from the Denmark government's development financial institution and long-term shareholders.
- Having offered credit to over 80,000 small businesses in the last five years, U GRO Capital aims to work towards financial inclusion. Shachindra Nath, Founder and Managing Director, focuses on the significance of partnerships with global DFIs, collaborating with FMO to address the diverse financial needs of India's underserved MSMEs.

NABARD's Initiative to Access Global Climate Capital for the Indian Agricultural Sector

- The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has teamed up with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to help the farming sector tackle the adverse impact of climate change. The collaboration is aimed at enhancing food security and climate financing in India's ANR sector. NABARD will also receive support to formulate a climate financing policy and its adoption.
- Intellect Advisory Services Private Limited will manage the TCU set up under the agreement. The firm has experience in managing large-scale programmes in agriculture and other allied sectors, with a focus on climate adaptation and mitigation.

IndusInd Bank Divests from Nippon Life India Asset, Sells Shares Valued at Rs 795 Crore

- Private sector lender IndusInd Bank is likely to have sold its entire 2.86% stake in Nippon Life AMC via block deal, according to reports. Exchange data showed that 1.78 crore shares of Nippon Life AMC changed hands in block deal window following which the stock rallied up to 8.2% to the day's and 52-week high of Rs 486.80.
- SBI Mutual Fund (MF), ICICI Prudential MF, Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance, ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company, Societe Generale and Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore, were among the buyers.

IndusInd Bank introduces 'eSvarna', India's first Corporate Credit Card on RuPay network

- IndusInd Bank announced the launch of 'IndusInd Bank eSvarna', India's first corporate credit card on the RuPay network. This launch positions IndusInd Bank as the first in the country to integrate UPI functionality with a corporate credit card. The card facilitates smooth transactions at merchant outlets and allows users the flexibility to make UPI payments by linking the card with UPI-enabled apps.
- IndusInd Bank eSvarna credit cardholders can look forward to a luxurious travel experience, including complimentary lounge access and fuel surcharge waiver.

ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund revises symbols for 28 ETF schemes

- ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund has announced changes in its exchange-traded fund (ETF) product symbols on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and National Stock Exchange (NSE). The codes will now be a combination of the name of the fund and the suffix 'IETF' (stands for ICICI Prudential ETF).
- The move to standardise the naming convention of schemes comes in line with the Securities Exchange Board of India's (SEBI's) master circular, which outlines the categorisation of schemes.

SEBI approves appointment of ex-IAS Pramod Agrawal as BSE Chairman

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has given its nod to the appointment of Pramod Agrawal, the former Chief of Coal India, as the Chairman of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). This regulatory approval paves the way for Agrawal to assume his role on the Governing Board of BSE, effective from January 17, 2024.
- The move comes as the term of the current Chairman, SS Mundra, concludes on January 16, 2024. On December 13, 2023, the Board of BSE formally approved the appointment of Pramod Agrawal as the Chairman of the Governing Board. SS Mundra, the outgoing

Chairman and former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), assumed the position in May 2022.

HDFC Life and NKGSB Co-Operative Bank Form Strategic Corporate Partnership

- HDFC Life, one of India's leading insurers, and NKGSB Co-operative Bank Ltd, having a legacy of 106 years, have entered into a Corporate Agency tie-up enabling NKGSB Co-operative Bank customers to avail life insurance products of HDFC Life.
- NKGSB Co-operative Bank with a Banking legacy of 106 years is delighted to enter into a strategic and momentous alliance with HDFC Life Insurance Company to provide life insurance solutions that cater to various needs of individuals – protection, pension, savings, investment and annuity. a bouquet of traditional, term, pensions and annuity products of HDFC Life.

85 Percent of VGF-funded BESS Power Reserved for Discoms

- Under the scheme, VGF to the extent of up to 40% of capital cost for BESS shall be provided by the Central Government. Public and private sector entities shall be selected through the bidding process to be conducted by the Implementing Agency(ies) as per the provisions of the Scheme and Bidding Guidelines for the development of BESS.
- The projects under the scheme will be approved during a period of 3 years (2023-24 to 2025-26) and for passing on the scheme to consumers of the Discoms, at least 85% of the power from VGF-funded BESS projects shall be first offered to Discoms before making it available for others.

India Secures ₹932 Crore Loan from JICA for Sustainable Development Goals Implementation

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has sealed a Rs 932 crore loan deal to bolster India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiatives. JICA's statement outlines a strategic focus on policy actions, effective practices, and bolstering the Japan-India partnership through human resource exchange.
- In consultation with NITI Aayog, the loan will prioritise policy actions in five crucial fields: health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure.

SCIENCE TECH & DEFENCE NEWS

Scheme to provide drones to 1500 self help groups get cabinet nod

- The Union Cabinet has approved a central sector scheme to provide drones to women self help groups (SHGs), with an outlay of Rs 1,261 crore. The decision was taken at a Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Cabinet nod for Rs 1,261 cr scheme to provide drones to 15,000 women SHGs for 2 years. New Delhi, Nov 29 (PTI) The Union Cabinet has approved a central scheme to provide drones to 15,000 progressive women Self Help Groups (SHGs) with an outlay of Rs 1,261 crore for two years beginning 2024-25.

Countries Back New Global Guidelines, Crafted by the US and UK, to Enhance Cybersecurity in Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- Agencies from 18 countries, including the US, endorse new UK- developed guidelines on AI cyber security. Written in partnership with industry, guidelines advise developers on the security of AI systems. THE UK has published the first global guidelines to ensure the secure development of AI technology.
- Guidelines for Secure AI System Development, led by GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre and developed with US's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, build on AI Safety Summit to establish global collaboration on AI.

NASA Unveils Initiative to Send ISRO-Selected Indian Astronaut to International Space Station by 2024

- US space agency National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) plans to train an Indian astronaut for a mission to the International Space Station (ISS) by the end of 2024.
- Bill Nelson, the administrator of NASA, made this announcement during his visit to Delhi, India. A major collaboration between India and the United States is the NISAR satellite, set to be launched in the first quarter of 2024.

Amazon Pay Introduces Video KYC Service in Sign Language for Customers with Hearing and Speech Impairments

- Amazon Pay has launched a video sign language Know Your Customer (KYC) service for hearing and speech impaired customers.

- The initiative enables two-way video communication in sign-language between Amazon Pay employees and customers. The goal is to make the KYC process easy for those who rely on sign language, and make digital payments more inclusive.

India set to launch its first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite – ISRO

- India is preparing to launch its inaugural X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- Two scientific payloads onboard will observe X-Ray sources during the spacecraft's transit through Earth's shadow (eclipse period). The spacecraft will carry two scientific payloads in a low earth orbit.

'India Internet Governance Forum 2023' to discuss public policy issues related to Internet in New Delhi

- 'India Internet Governance Forum 2023' will be held in New Delhi. The forum is a multi-stakeholder platform bringing together representatives from various groups to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet. The theme of the event is Moving Forward – Calibrating Bharat's Digital Agenda.
- Electronic and IT Ministry stated, the event is an effort to discuss issues such as building a secure, trusted and resilient cyberspace for Bharat, Enabling Innovation for India's Developmental Goals, Bridging Divides and Calibrating Bharat's Digital Agenda.

Indian Navy ranks to be renamed as per Indian culture, PM Modi during Navy Day celebrations

- While congratulating the Indian Navy for appointing India's first woman commanding officer of the naval ship, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushed for a culture rejig in the ranks of Indian Navy. PM Modi announced that the ranks of the Navy personnel and officers will be renamed as per the Indian culture.
- During his Navy Day address, PM Modi revealed the plans of the Indian government, which is working on to increase the women's power in our defence forces. We are also working on increasing women's power in our defence forces.

SpaceX launches South Korea's first military spy satellite from California

- A SpaceX rocket launched South Korea's first military spy satellite, intensifying a space race on the peninsula after Pyongyang launched its own first military eye in the sky last week. The rocket was emblazoned with the word "KOREA."

- Seoul's reconnaissance satellite, carried by one of Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon 9 rockets, lifted off from the Vandenberg US Space Force Base in California. Seoul plans to launch 4 additional spy satellites by the end of 2025 to bolster its reconnaissance capacity over the North.

Indian Army's Captain Geetika Koul becomes first woman medical officer to be deployed at Siachen

- Indian Army's Captain Geetika Koul becomes first woman medical officer to be deployed at Siachen. Indian Army's Captain Geetika Koul has become the army's first woman medical officer to be deployed at Siachen — the highest battlefield in the world. Prior to her deployment, Captain Koul completed the rigorous training at Siachen Battle School.
- Captain Geetika Koul from the Snow Leopard Brigade has become the first woman medical officer in the Indian Army to be deployed at Siachen, the world's highest battlefield, the Fire and Fury Corps.

Voice Over 5G Or Vo5G Is Gradually Replacing VoLTE Across The Globe

- Vo5G/VoNR is the future standard for voice calling that operates over 5G networks, providing improved speed, capacity, and responsiveness compared to 4G networks.
- VoNR aims to provide superior voice quality, clearer audio, and reduced latency compared to previous voice technologies like VoLTE. VoNR operates using the 5G Core (5GC) network architecture, which provides a more flexible and scalable framework for delivering voice services.

INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant to be deployed for Milan-2024

- INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant — at the Eastern seaboard in Visakhapatnam during Milan-2024, scheduled from February 19 to 27 under the aegis of Eastern Naval Command. This is the second time ENC will be hosting the flagship international naval exercise, which will witness participation from nearly 50 friendly countries and 20 foreign warships along with a maritime patrol aircraft.
- An international maritime seminar, tabletop exercises, demonstration of Indian Navy's deep submergence rescue vessel, a multilateral exercise at sea, a city parade, and a host of other social and cultural events would be some of the highlights of Milan-2024.

Japan Unveils JT-60SA, The World's Largest Experimental Nuclear Fusion Reactor

- In a historic moment for the field of nuclear fusion research, the JT-60SA, the world's largest and most advanced experimental nuclear fusion reactor, has officially commenced

operations in Japan's Ibaraki Prefecture. Developed as a collaborative effort between the European Union and Japan, the JT-60SA represents a significant step forward in harnessing the potential of nuclear fusion as a clean and sustainable energy source.

- As the world grapples with the pressing need for sustainable energy solutions, the inauguration of the JT-60SA serves as a beacon of hope in the quest for harnessing nuclear fusion for practical energy generation.

Dubai Unveils World's Largest Concentrated Solar Power Project during COP28

- The fourth phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park has been inaugurated by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.
- This marks the launch of the world's largest Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) project. According to Guinness World Records, the project includes the world's tallest solar tower at 263.126 metres and the largest thermal energy storage capacity with a capacity of 5,907 megawatt hours.

India Allocates Rs.100 Crore Annually to Support International Solar Alliance for Energy Transition in Developing Economies (2022-2025)

- The Government of India has taken several steps and initiatives to promote and accelerate renewable energy capacity in the country with the target to achieve 500 GW of installed electric capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030.
- India is actively advancing its commitment to renewable energy and power, aligning with the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which emphasizes the goal of tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030. The Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy and Power, Shri R. K. Singh, highlighted several key initiatives undertaken by the Indian government.

Google Introduces Gemini: An AI Model Engineered to Mimic Human Behavior

- Google took its next leap in artificial intelligence with the launch of project Gemini, an AI model trained to behave in human-like ways that's likely to intensify the debate about the technology's potential promise and perils.
- The rollout will unfold in phases, with less sophisticated versions of Gemini called "Nano" and "Pro" being immediately incorporated into Google's AI-powered chatbot Bard and its Pixel 8 Pro smartphone.

Indian Navy conducts Exercise Prasthan Off Mumbai Coast

- The Indian Navy, in collaboration with various defense, state, and civil agencies, recently concluded a comprehensive two-phased exercise named 'Prasthan' in the Offshore Development Area off the Mumbai coast. This exercise, conducted every six months, is pivotal in validating and refining measures and procedures aimed at addressing various contingencies that may arise in oil production platforms.
- The exercise, which is conducted every six months, was held on the R12A (Ratna) Platform of Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) around 83 km away from Mumbai harbour. The 'Prasthan' is conducted to validate measures and procedures to address various contingencies that may arise in the oil production platforms and was held in two phases.

Russia Unveils two new Nuclear- Powered Submarines

- President Vladimir Putin unveiled two new nuclear-powered submarines that he said would soon start patrolling the Pacific. He oversaw the raising of navy's flag on the newly built nuclear submarines. Speaking at the shipyard, Mr Putin pledged to carry out plans to modernise the Russian navy.
- The Emperor Alexander III is the seventh Borei-class atomic-powered submarine to enter the service. Each of them is armed with 16 nuclear-tipped Bulava intercontinental ballistic missiles. Mr Putin announced that three more such submarines are under construction.

CoinSwitch introduces the overarching brand PeepalCo, targeting expansion in wealth technology

- Cryptocurrency platform CoinSwitch has unveiled PeepalCo, a new umbrella brand to house all its business segments, as it plans to expand into a wealth-tech platform. PeepalCo will house CoinSwitch, the crypto retail app, and CoinSwitch PRO, the advanced trading platform, soon-to-be-launched platform with newer investment classes and wealth-management division catering to high net worth Individuals (HNIs).
- The restructuring will enable each of these businesses to stay nimble and innovate while adhering to the highest compliance and regulatory standards. Ashish Singhal, Co-founder and Group CEO, Govind Soni, Co-founder and Group CTO, and Vimal Sagar Tiwari, Co-founder and Group COO, of PeepalCo, will guide the various initiatives by the group and will have a professional management to lead and operate each of the initiatives.

BEL Receives Orders Worth Rs.4878 Crores from Indian Army

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking, has recently clinched a significant order worth Rs.4,522 crore from the Indian Army. The order,

pertaining to the supply of fuses for various calibres, is a testament to BEL's continued commitment to contributing to the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) initiative.

- The project is set to involve the collaboration of Indian Electronics and associated Industries, including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serving as sub-vendors for BEL. The contract, signed on December 15, 2023, marks a strategic milestone for BEL and the Indian Army. The requirement for the indigenization of critical technologies was a pivotal aspect of the tender, aligning with the nation's push for self-reliance.

IndiGo receives IFSC Gift City approval to set up an aircraft leasing shop

- Interglobe Aviation, the parent company of India's largest airline, IndiGo, has received approval from IFSC Gift City to establish an aircraft leasing venture. Over the next 5 years, the company aims to invest approximately ₹ 11,500 crore in the IFSC aircraft leasing segment. The funds will come from promoter investments, according to the company's application to the IFSC.
- IndiGo plans to operate under the name 'Interglobe Aviation Financial Services IFSC Private Limited,' focusing on operating leasing, financial leasing, and other related services for aircraft. The estimated Free on Board (FOB) value for the export of services over a five-year period is projected at ₹ 11,563 crore, resulting in a Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) of ₹ 6,090 crore after a foreign exchange outgo of ₹ 11,502 crore.

IAF Successfully Testfires 'SAMAR' Air Defense Missile System In Andhra Pradesh

- In a major success for its in-house design and development efforts, the Indian Air Force has successfully testfired its SAMAR air defence missile system. The IAF has developed the Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation (SAMAR) air defence missile system by using its old Russian-origin air-to-air missile systems.
- SAMAR is a quick reaction surface-to-air missile system, ingeniously crafted by the IAF's 7 Base Repair Depot (BRD) and 11 BRD, in collaboration with Simran Flowtech Industries and Yamazuki Denki. Notably, the system repurposes old Russian-origin Vympel R-73 and R-27 air-to-air missiles, demonstrating an innovative approach to maximize existing resources.

Defense Ministry Greenlights Acquisition of 6,400 Rockets for Pinaka Weapon System

- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has given the green light for the acquisition of 6,400 new rockets for the Pinaka weapon system. The Defence Ministry has given approval to Rs 2,800

crore proposal for buying around 6,400 rockets for Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher systems.

- At its recent meeting, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the proposal for the acquisition of two types of these rockets, called Area Denial Munition Type 2 and Type-3. The Indian army is mandated to procure the rockets exclusively from indigenous sources, emphasizing self-reliance in defense capabilities. Two main contenders include the Economic Explosives Limited of Solar Industries and the Munitions India Limited.

Tesla Introduces ‘Optimus Gen 2,’ an Advanced Humanoid Robot Designed to Automate Repetitive Tasks

- Tesla has unveiled “Optimus Gen 2”, a new generation of its humanoid robot that should be able to take over repetitive tasks from humans. Optimus, also known as Tesla Bot, has not been taken seriously by many outside of the more hardcore Tesla fans, and for good reason. With this new version, Tesla says that the robot is now able to walk 30% faster. The company also claims a 10 kg weight reduction while improving balance.

Govt app to allow live tracking of cargo across land, rail, sea & air

- India Inc will soon be able to track live movement of its cargo across all transportation modes-land, rail, sea and air-through a single app. More than 700 companies have signed up on the app to be launched soon by the government.
- The National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) is involved in developing the app. It would track and trace consignments based on their specific tracking code and measure the reliability of truck movement, and aid real time vehicle visibility.

Bihar Police to launch ‘Mission Investigation 75 days’ from January 1 2024

- In a significant move, the Bihar Police has announced the implementation of ‘Mission Investigation@75 Days,’ aiming to streamline and expedite the criminal justice process in the state. Starting from January 1 next year, investigators will be mandated to complete the investigation of cases within 75 days of the registration of First Information Reports (FIRs).
- To enhance accountability and efficiency, the performances of all police stations and district police will undergo monthly reviews starting January 1, 2024. This proactive approach by the Bihar government reflects a commitment to making the state police force more people-friendly and accountable.

ISRO bags Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for Chandrayaan-3

- ISRO has been awarded the Leif Erikson Lunar Prize by the Husavik Museum for its achievements in advancing lunar exploration and contributing to understanding celestial mysteries through the successful Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- The accolade recognizes ISRO's indomitable spirit and technological prowess in achieving the first-ever soft landing near the Moon's South Pole on August 23, 2023.

BOOKS & AWARDS NEWS

Safeena Husain, Founder of Educate Girls, honoured with the WISE Prize for Education

- The prestigious WISE Award was honoured to Safina Hussain at the WISE 11 Summit (World Innovation Summit for Education). The WISE Prize for Education is the first global award of its kind that honours an individual for outstanding contributions to education.
- Educate Girls is an example of this innovative approach, using AI to identify villages with a high number of out-of-school girls. More than 21,000 gender champions go door-to-door in India's most remote villages to identify these girls.

Nagaland Gears Up for the Commencement of the 24th Hornbill Festival 2023 at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama

- Coinciding with Nagaland Statehood Day celebration, the 24th edition of the Hornbill Festival 2023 will kick start at the Naga Heritage Village Kisama from. United States of America, Germany and Columbia are the Country Partners and Assam as Partner state for this year edition.
- The United States of America (USA), Germany, and Colombia are the Country Partners, and Assam is the Partner State for the 24th Hornbill Festival. Governor of Nagaland, La Ganesan, and Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio were the Chief Guests at the festival.

India will be the largest cotton producer

- India will strive to become the largest cotton producer globally, Minister for Textiles, Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, inaugurating an annual global meeting of a UN recognised body of cotton producing and consuming nations.
- At the 81st plenary session of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), the Minister, India has the largest area under cotton cultivation and is the second largest producer Mr. Goyal stressed, adding that the textile advisory group on cotton will work towards improving productivity similar to the level in countries like Australia.

Sheetal Devi win best young athlete award in APC conference

- Riyadh, (IANS) Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games gold medallist Asila Mirzayorova from Uzbekistan and the winner of China's historic first cross-country skiing gold medal, Peng Zheng were announced as best female and best male athlete at the fourth edition of Asian Awards at an awards ceremony during the Asian Paralympic Committee's Conference and General Assembly.
- India's Sheetal Devi, the 'armless archer' who went viral after her performances in Hangzhou picked up the best youth athlete. Award winners were announced in six categories – Best Male Athlete, Best Female Athlete, Best Youth Athlete, Best Team Performance, Best Photography and Exemplary Asian Official.

Olympian Murali Sreeshankar to be Honoured with the Jimmy George Award

- Kerala-born long jumper Olympian Murali Sreeshankar will receive the Jimmy George Award. The award consists of a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a plaque. Murali Sreeshankar will be presented with the Jimmy George Award on December 22, 2023.
- The award committee, including Jimmy George's brothers – Robert Bobby, Jose, Sebastian, and Stanely – recognized Sreeshankar as the best sportsperson from Kerala. Sreeshankar has won the 35th Jimmy George Foundation award for the best sportsperson of Kerala.

ESIC Receives Prestigious ISSA Vision Zero 2023 Award at 23rd World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Sydney, Australia

- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) bagged the "International Social Security Association's ISSA Vision Zero 2023" Award at the 23rd World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in Sydney, Australia.
- It aims to promote dynamic social security as the social dimension in a globalising world by supporting excellence in social security administration. It was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization.

Indian- origin Novelist Meira Chand Receives Singapore's Highest Arts Award

- The three Cultural Medallion recipients and five Young Artist Award recipients made significant contributions to Singapore's vibrant arts and cultural landscape across different art forms, said a media release. "Collectively, they have helped to shape and define our distinct cultural identity over the years, drawing from the richness of communities within Singapore and around the region," it added

- Established in 1979, the Cultural Medallion recognises individuals whose artistic excellence, as well as contributions and commitment to the arts, have shaped Singapore's growing cultural landscape. Individuals conferred with Singapore's top arts accolade have made significant strides locally and internationally, displayed extraordinary leadership and inspired younger artists.

Jay Shah Honoured with Sports Business Leader of The year Award


- Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Jay Shah has been awarded the 'Sports Business Leader of the Year' 2023 at the CCI Sports Business Awards. Jay Shah is the first person in the Indian sports administration to receive this honour. Jay Shah is currently the President of the Asian Cricket Council.
- Jay Shah's journey in cricket administration began with his role at the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA). After his tenure with GCA, Shah assumed the position of Honorary Secretary at BCCI at the age of 31.

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NTPC Wins Two Silver Awards in Brandon Hall Group's Excellence in Technology Awards

- NTPC, India's largest integrated power company, has been declared as the winner at the Brandon Hall Group's Excellence in Technology Awards 2023 in an online broadcast held.
- NTPC stands out as the only PSU in India to secure dual accolades in the Technology Awards category. The company received the coveted silver awards in two distinct categories: "Best Advance in Corporate Wellbeing Technology" and "Best Advance in Augmented and Virtual Reality."

DARPG launches Scheme and Web-portal for National Awards for e-Governance 2024

- Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances DARPG has launched the scheme and web-portal for National Awards for e-Governance NAeG. The objective of the

Scheme is to recognize and promote excellence in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives. The purpose is also to encourage innovations in successful e-Governance solutions.

- In a statement, DAPRG informed that the nominations for the National Awards for e-Governance 2024 can be registered and submitted online at www.nceg.gov.in. The National Awards for e-Governance Scheme is recognized amongst the most competitive and prestigious digital governance awards schemes in the country.

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- The company received the coveted silver awards in two distinct categories: "Best Advance in Corporate Wellbeing Technology" and "Best Advance in Augmented and Virtual Reality." This recognition underscores NTPC's commitment to innovation and technological excellence, placing it at the forefront of advancements in corporate wellbeing and immersive technologies.

Indian Armed Forces officers awarded 'Golden Owl' for outstanding performance at DSCSC Sri Lanka

- All three Indian Armed Forces officers undergoing the Command and Staff Course at Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) in Sri Lanka have been awarded the 'Golden Owl' for their outstanding performance.
- The DSCSC course is a program designed to prepare senior officers for leadership roles in joint operations and higher command. The "Golden Owl" award admires analytical skills, strategic thinking, and potential for future leadership.

Javed Akhtar to be felicitated with Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival

- Veteran lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar will be honoured with the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival. The award ceremony will take place at Rukmini Auditorium in the MGM University campus.

- The Padmapani Award selection committee comprises Girish Kasarvall, Ashok Vajpeyi, Latika Padgaonkar, Ashok Rane and Chandrakant Kulkarni. Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival is to showcase the best of film produced recently and in the past. It is organized by Marathwada Art Culture and Film Foundation. It will be organized by 3rd-7th January, 2024. It is a platform to encourage aspiring filmmakers, technicians, artists and young film enthusiasts.

Poet Sukrita Paul Kumar Wins Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for 'Salt & Pepper'

- Explore literary excellence with the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize. Celebrating poets like Sukrita Paul Kumar and Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee for their impactful contributions. Discover award-winning works and societal achievements now.
- The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize was presented to poet-critic Sukrita Paul Kumar for her work 'Salt & Pepper: Selected Poems' in its sixth edition. Kumar received a USD 5,000 award, a Tagore statue, and a diploma for his service to writing at the award event.

President of India Confers Crompton with the Prestigious National Energy Conservation Award 2023

- Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd. (CGCEL), one of India's leading consumer electrical companies, has been conferred with the prestigious National Energy Conservation Award 2023. The honor was conferred by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu and the Ministry of Power through its body viz. Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- The National Energy Conservation Awards (NECA) is a prominent annual event that highlights exceptional contributions to energy conservation. Since its inception on December 14, 1991, these awards, presented by the esteemed dignitaries of the Government of India, acknowledges the exemplary efforts in energy conservation being undertaken across diverse sectors of the economy.

Ashwini kumar has written the book 'A Democracy in Retreat: Revisiting the Ends of Power'

- New Delhi Former Union law minister Ashwani Kumar's latest book, A Democracy in Retreat: Revisiting the End of Power, was launched at an event in New Delhi in the presence of prominent personalities from fields ranging from politics to judiciary.
- Among the distinguished guests at the book launch were former Vice-President Hamid Ansari, former Supreme Court judge justice Madan B Lokur (retd), and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Kumar Jha.

Former bureaucrat Poonam Khetrapal Singh honoured by Bhutanese King

- Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh has been awarded Bhutan's National Order of Merit Gold Medal. Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh is the WHO Regional Director (South-East Asia). Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh has been awarded for her distinguished services to the country. Dr Singh is an Indian national.
- The King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk honoured her at Bhutan's 116th National Day celebration.

6 Indian heritage projects awarded UNESCO Asia Pacific Award 2023

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has recognized four Indian projects for their outstanding contributions to cultural heritage conservation in the Asia-Pacific region. This prestigious recognition reflects India's commitment to preserving its rich past for future generations.
- The resilient urban revitalization project of Rambagh Gate and Ramparts in Amritsar, Punjab, received the highest honor, the "Award of Excellence." The jury lauded the project for its inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring that the revitalized heritage site benefits the broader community.

Anmol Kharb wins women's singles title at National Badminton Championships in Guwahati

- Young rising women's singles shuttler Anmol Kharb put up an outstanding performance to win the national title as she defeated Punjab's Tanvi Sharma, with a stunning 15-21, 21-17, 16-8 win, in the women's singles final at the 85th Senior National Badminton Championships 2023 in Assam's Guwahati evening. The prestigious tournament, organised by the Badminton Association of India (BAI), was held in Assam after four years.
- In the women's singles title clash, which lasted almost an hour, Tanvi was a game ahead against the Haryana shuttler after the first game. However, that did not faze Anmol's, the India No. 1 in U-19 and U-17 BAI rankings, confidence, as she used angles on court very well, along with her excellent court coverage to make her mark in next two games.

Vita Dani makes History as a first Indian on ITTF governing board

- Commenting on her remarkable achievement, Vita Dani expressed her excitement, stating, "It is a great feeling to be inducted into an organization that aligns perfectly with my vision for the growth of table tennis and its impact on the community."

- Vita Dani, through her organization, Dani Foundation, has been instrumental in shaping the upward trajectory of table tennis in India. Her commitment to the sport extends beyond the international stage, with a focus on nurturing talent and creating opportunities for aspiring players within the country.

SPORTS NEWS

R Vaishali becomes india's third female chess grandmaster

- Vaishali achieved her first GM norm in 2019 and took three years to win the second norm in 2022. And, finally, after a year later she obtained her third and final norm in the Qatar Open in October. Vaishali's coach RB Ramesh, who has played a pivotal role in her career so far, was a proud man.
- Vaishali isn't the first from her family to become the Grandmaster, though. Her younger brother R. Praggnanandhaa had got the GM title in 2018, when he was just 12. R. Vaishali became only the third woman from India to get the Grandmaster (GM) title, the highest a chess player could aspire for. Koneru Humpy was the first; she was, in fact, the world's youngest female player ever, when she became a GM in 2002, at the age of 15.

Nirmala Sitharaman And Three Other Indian Secure Sports on Forbes' "world's 100 Most Powerful Women" of 2023

- In the latest release of Forbes' annual list of "The World's Most Powerful Women," four notable Indian figures have garnered recognition. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, HCL Corporation Chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Steel Authority Of India Chairperson Soma Mondal, and Biocon Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw have earned positions on this prestigious list.
- Nirmala Sitharaman, serving as India's first full-time female finance minister, achieves her best ranking yet at number 32, marking her fifth consecutive appearance on the list. Forbes highlights her groundbreaking role and emphasizes her prior experiences at the UK-based Agricultural Engineers Association and BBC World Service before entering politics.

Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur formally inaugurates first-ever Khelo India Para Games in New Delhi

- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur formally declared the Khelo India Para Games 2023 open in a dazzling ceremony at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall in

New Delhi. The Khelo India Para Games is being organised at three venues - Indira Gandhi Stadium, Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium and Karni Singh Shooting Range in the national capital.

- The Competition will be held in seven para-sports which include athletics, shooting, archery, football, badminton, table tennis and weightlifting. More than 1,400 participants from across 32 states and Union Territories including Services Sports Control Board are participating in the 8-day event.

Khelo India Games to be held in Tamil Nadu in January, 2024

- Khelo India Games will be held in Tamil Nadu in January next year. The State Government said that the games will be held in Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy from 19th to 31st January, 2024.
- More than 5,500 sports persons and over 1,600 coaches are expected to participate in the event. More than 1000 referees and 1200 volunteers will be part of the sporting event in which 27 types of sport will be played. For the first time, squash will be included in Khelo India games.

Paes, Amritraj become first Asian men to be inducted into International Tennis Hall of Fame

- Former doubles world No. 1 Leander Paes and broadcaster and promoter Vijay Amritraj of India have become the first Asian men to be inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Besides the duo, renowned journalist and writer Richard Evans have also been elected in the Ultimate Honour in Tennis.
- Paes, an 18-time Grand Slam champion in doubles and mixed doubles, has been selected in the player category, while Amritraj and United Kingdom's Evans are inductees in the contributor category, which is considered for election every two years. The contributor category recognises true pioneers, visionary leaders, or individuals/groups who have made a transcendent impact on the sport.

India's Hardik Singh named FIH player of the year, Savita Punia bags third women's goalkeeper of the year award

- India's Hardik Singh and Savita won the 2023 FIH Players of the Year and FIH Goalkeeper of the year award, announced the International Hockey Federation on Tuesday.
- Following a vote by an Expert Panel, National Associations - represented by their respective national teams' captains and coaches - fans and media, Xan de Waard (Netherlands) also

won the FIH Players of the Year. While Dutch goalkeeper Pirmin Blaak also won the FIH Goalkeepers of the Year award, the awards for FIH Rising Stars went to Teresa Lima (ESP) and Gaspard Xavier (FRA).

Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur to launch Official logo and mascot for Khelo India Youth Games in Chennai

- Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur will launch the Official logo and mascot for Khelo India Youth Games in Chennai. He will attend the ceremony as the chief guest for the launch of official logo, jersey, mascot, and torch. The Khelo India Youth Games will be held from January 19th to 31st next year. The upcoming edition will take place in Chennai, Trichy, Madurai and Coimbatore. The previous editions of the Youth Games have been held in Delhi, Pune, Guwahati, Panchkula, and Bhopal.

The 6th edition of Khelo India Youth Games be held in jan 2024 in Tamil nadu

- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur and Tamil Nadu Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin released the mascot for the 6th Khelo India Youth Games in Chennai on 22 December 2023. For the first time, Squash will be included in these games.
- The official logo, jersey, torch and themed song for the 6th Khelo India Youth Games were also launched on the occasion. The 6th Khelo India Youth Games will be held from 19 to 31 January 2024 in tamilnadu. It will be organised in Chennai, Trichy, Madurai and Coimbatore. More than 5500 players will participate in it.

India's Hardik Singh named FIH player of the year, Savita Punia bags third women's goalkeeper of the year award

- India's Hardik Singh and Savita won the 2023 FIH Players of the Year and FIH Goalkeeper of the year award, announced the International Hockey Federation. Indian women's hockey team goalkeeper Savita, who won the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year Awards in 2021 and 2022, has been nominated for the third consecutive time in the same category at this year's FIH Hockey Stars Awards.
- Indian hockey players Hardik Singh and Savita Punia have won major awards at the FIH Hockey Star Awards for the 2023 season. Singh was named the men's player of the year while Punia won the best women's goalkeeper of the year award.

Sony Sports ropes in Kartik Aaryan as brand ambassador for football

- Sony Sports Network (SSN) has kicked off a new era of football enthusiasm in India by appointing Bollywood heartthrob and Gen Z icon Kartik Aaryan as their official brand

ambassador for the beautiful game. This strategic partnership aims to bring football closer to a wider Indian audience and ignite passion for the sport across generations.

- Aaryan, known for his electrifying performances on screen, is an admitted football fanatic. His love for the sport, rooted in his youth and fueled by unwavering support for Real Madrid, resonates deeply with millions of Indian football enthusiasts.

Coca-Cola extends global partnership with ICC

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) and Coca-Cola have extended their global multi-million dollar sponsorship agreement for another eight years, covering ICC events across Test, ODI, and T20 formats until the end of 2031.
- While the financial terms of the deal have not been disclosed, sources close to the development say that the eight-year sponsorship agreement could be worth over \$100 million, or \$12.5 million per year, a significant increase from the \$8–10 million that global partners presently pay per year.

OBITUARY NEWS

Malayalam actress and musician subbulakshmi passed away at 87

- Iconic actor and musician R Subbalakshmi, aged 87 and the mother of actress-dancer Thara Kalyan, has passed away. She breathed her last night. Renowned for her significant impact on Malayalam cinema and television, Subbalakshmi distinguished herself with outstanding portrayals in grandmother roles.
- R Subbalakshmi has done numerous roles in films like ‘Kalyanaraman’, ‘Nandanam’, ‘Pandippada’, ‘CID Moosa’, ‘Thilakkam’ and many others. She has acted in over 75 films in different film industries over the years. She was recently seen in the Tamil blockbuster ‘Beast’ starring Vijay in the lead. She was also seen in ‘Ye Maaya Chesave’ starring Naga Chaitanya. Not just in the southern film industries, she even played smaller parts in many Hindi films as well.

Veteran Communist and CPI Kerala secretary Kanam Rajendran passed away

- The state secretary of the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) Kanam Rajendran passed away at the age of 73 in Kochi, Kerala. Kanam Rajendran was born on 10 November 1950 in Koottikkal village of Kerala’s Kottayam district.

- He entered politics at a tender age and became the state secretary of the Communist Party of India's (CPI's) youth wing All India Youth Front (AIYF) at 23. In March 2015, he was elected the Secretary of Communist Party of India Kerala State Council.

Padma Bhushan Awardee and Advocate for Social Service Dr. V Mohini Giri Passes Away at 86

- The renowned Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize has named poet-critic Sukrita Paul Kumar as its sixth recipient for her book, "Salt & Pepper: Selected Poems". This prestigious award recognizes outstanding literary work from around the globe, promoting world peace, literature, art, education, and human rights.
- At the award ceremony, Kumar received a cash prize of USD 5,000, a Tagore statue, and a certificate acknowledging her significant contribution to literature. In recognition of his exceptional contributions to social welfare, Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee was awarded the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for Social Achievement. This further signifies the award's dedication to highlighting both artistic and societal impacts.

IMPORTANT DAYS NEWS

Indian Navy Day observed on 4th December

- India celebrates Navy Day every year on December 4th to honour the unwavering dedication and selfless service of the Indian Navy. The day marks the audacious attack carried out by the Indian Navy on Karachi harbour during the 1971 Indo-Pak War, also known as 'Operation Trident.'
- This decisive strike crippled Pakistan's naval forces and played a pivotal role in India's ultimate victory in the war. It's a momentous occasion that pays tribute to the brave men and women of the Indian Navy who have risked their lives in service to their country.

International Volunteer Day Observed on 5th December

- Mandated by the UN General Assembly, the International Volunteer Day is held each year on 5 December. It is viewed as a unique chance for volunteers and organizations to celebrate their efforts, to share their values, and to promote their work among their communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, government authorities and the private sector.

- Organized Volunteering was started in the 18th Century and mainly to carry out military services rather than give back to society.

International Mountain Day observer on 11th December

- International Mountain Day 2023 is observed on the 11th of December 2023. In the United States, there was a tradition where students skip classes and visit the nearby mountains and surround them for recreation. This is a kind of celebration in the United States.
- The United Nations General Assembly declared the International Year of Mountains in 2002. The U.N. establishes December 11 as International Mountain Day each year for the protection and sustainability of mountains. Mountain Day is established and celebrated in Japan as a national holiday for people.

Universal Health Coverage Day observed on 12th December

- Universal Health Coverage Day is celebrated annually on December 12 and is promoted by the World Health Organization. December 12 is the anniversary of the first unanimous United Nations resolution calling for all nations to provide for their citizens affordable, quality health care.
- Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day is observed on December 12 every year. Although, the right to quality health services and financial protection is universal, but half of the world's population still lacks access to essential health services, and almost 25% faces financial hardship due to out-of-pocket health spending, which is a human rights violation.

National Energy Conservation day

- The National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated on December 14 every year, in order to spread the message on the importance of conserving energy and to showcase the achievements of the nation in energy efficiency and conservation. The President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu will grace the National Energy Conservation Day 2023 function being held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi on December 14, 2023.
- The National Energy Conservation Day and the Awards are being organized by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under Ministry of Power, Government of India, which is mandated as per the Energy Conservation Act 2001, to regulate and promote energy efficiency and its conservation in India.

International Migrants Day is observed on every year on 18th December

- International Migrants Day 2023 is observed on the 18th of December 2023. Although the day was established in 2000, it has been observed since 1997 that several Asian migrant

organizations designated December 18 as the day to advocate for the respect, rights, and protection of migrants.

- On account of the ever-increasing number of migrants around the world, on December 4, 2000, the United Nations General Assembly declared December 18 as the day for International Migrants. Goals connected to migration are included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations. Among them is education access, which will result in improved prospects and a higher standard of living.

National Mathematics Day is observed every year on 22nd December

- National Mathematics Day 2023 is observed on the 22nd of December 2023. The renowned mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan, whose works had a widespread impact both in India and around the world, is the driving force behind the establishment of Mathematics Day in that country.
- Ramanujan was born in 1887 to an Iyengar Brahmin family in Erode, Tamil Nadu. Despite having little formal schooling, he mastered trigonometry at the age of 12 and created a number of his own theorems. In 1918, he also became a Fellow of the Royal Society, one of the youngest individuals to hold this prestigious status.

National Farmer's Day 2023 is observed every year on 23rd December

- Every year on December 23, India celebrates National Farmer's Day, dedicated to honouring our nation's backbone – the farmers. It's a day to acknowledge their tireless efforts, the sweat and sun they toil under, and the bountiful harvests that grace our tables. But as we savour the fruits of their labour, let's delve deeper into this important day's theme, history, and significance.
- Theme: Cultivating the Future: Innovation and Sustainability in Agriculture
- This year's theme resonates with the ever-evolving landscape of agriculture. It calls for recognising the crucial role of innovation and sustainable practices in ensuring food security for future generations. From adopting water-saving techniques to embracing eco-friendly fertilisers, farmers are the stewards of our land, and their choices impact not only their livelihoods but also the health of our planet.

France President Emmanuel Macron to be Chief Guest for 75th Republic Day celebrations

- President of France Emmanuel Macron will be the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day celebrations. External Affairs Ministry, at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

the President of France will visit India for the Republic Day celebrations. India and France share a high degree of convergence on a range of regional and global issues. This year, both countries are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the India-France Strategic Partnership. Prime Minister Modi was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade held on 14 July 2023 in Paris.

National Consumer day observed on 24 December 2023

- Understanding consumer rights remains pivotal in today's market landscape. While marketplaces ideally operate on ethical principles, consumers may face exploitation without adequate awareness of their rights. Recognising and exercising these rights promotes fair trade and safeguards consumers from potential pitfalls.
- In 1986, the Consumer Protection Act was passed and received the assent of the President on December 24. Since then, National Consumer Rights Day has been celebrated on this day to commemorate the occasion. The Consumer Protection Act acts to protect consumers from defective goods, negligent services, and unfair trade practices.

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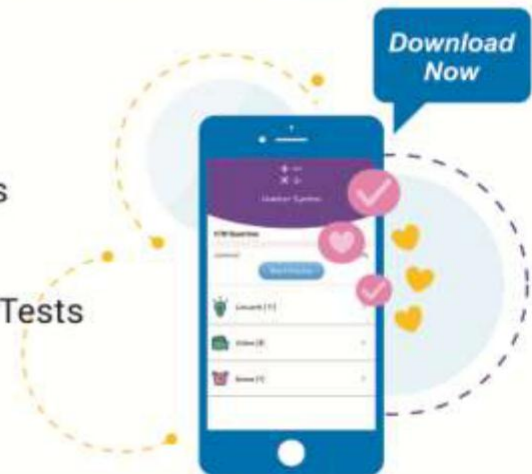
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