

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Contents</i>	<i>Page No.</i>
1.	National	2
2.	International	14
3.	Science & Technology	20
4.	Awards & Recognition	21
5.	Books & Authors	25
6.	Important Days	25
7.	Obituaries	30
8.	Ranks & Reports	31
9.	Sports	32
10.	Summits and MoUs	37
11.	Banking And Economy	38

NATIONAL

Paramilitary Forces Embrace 'Sandes App' for Secure Official Commute

- 'Sandes App' stems from the prevalent use of WhatsApp for internal communication within paramilitary forces.
- To enhance functionality and efficiency, the 'Sandes App' has been seamlessly integrated with NIC email, DigiLocker, and e-office.

Government to Market FCI Rice as Bharat Brand

- India is contemplating a strategic move—selling rice under the 'Bharat' brand, a proposal that is currently under consideration.

About Food Corporation of India (FCI):

Founded: 14 January 1965

Headquarters: New Delhi

Founder: Government of India

Women Make Up About 49% of Ayushman Cards: Health Ministry

- Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri — Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) has emerged as a beacon of hope in India's healthcare landscape, particularly for women.
- Data released by the Health Ministry reveals a significant contribution by women to the scheme's success, with approximately 49% of the total Ayushman cards.

Uttar Pradesh to Implement Green Hydrogen Policy to Promote Clean Energy

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to implement the state's Green Hydrogen Policy-2023.

Surat Hosts 12th Divya Kala Mela 2023

- The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, organised a distinctive event.
- The event, titled 'Divya Kala Mela,' took place in Surat, Gujarat, spanning from December 29, 2023, to January 7, 2024.

India-UAE Joint Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' Kicks Off In Rajasthan

- Military exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' is set to mark a significant milestone in the partnership between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Scheduled to take place in Rajasthan from January 2 to January 15.
- The inaugural India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise held in September 2008 at the Al-Dhafra base in Abu Dhabi.

Prime Minister Modi inaugurates initiatives valued at Rs 20,000 crore in Tamil Nadu.

Source: NDTV

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a slew of development projects worth over Rs 20,000 crore in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu.
- These projects includes a new terminal building at Tiruchirappalli International Airport, developed at a cost of over Rs 1100 crore. The state-of-the-art terminal aims to serve more than 4.4 million passengers annually, significantly enhancing the region's air connectivity.
- The projects encompass various sectors, including rail connectivity, roads, oil and gas, and shipping, and are poised to contribute significantly to the state's progress. These projects are instrumental in fostering progress, creating employment opportunities for thousands, and enhancing travel facilities.

- The Prime Minister highlighted that these projects are not only integral to strengthening Tamil Nadu's infrastructure but also instrumental in fostering progress, creating employment opportunities for thousands, and enhancing travel facilities. He extended his congratulations to the people of the state for their dedication and perseverance in the pursuit of development.

Household Financial Savings And Liabilities In India: RBI's Assessment.

Source: Mint

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its latest Financial Stability Report (FSR), revealing insights into the state of household financial savings and liabilities in the fiscal year 2022-23 (FY23).
- Despite a decline in gross household financial savings to 10.9% of GDP, the report emphasizes a limited risk of defaults by households, attributing it to the manageable exposure to higher mortgage payments and floating interest rates.
- The FSR notes a significant increase in household financial liabilities, rising from 3.8% of GDP in FY22 to 5.8% in FY23.
- This surge, driven by increased borrowings for physical asset creation, primarily in mortgages and vehicles, contrasts with a marginal moderation in financial assets to 10.9% in FY23 from 11.1% in FY22.

Rajasthan Seeks Integration Of Chiranjeevi Scheme With Ayushman Bharat.

Source: Mint

- The newly elected BJP government in Rajasthan is making strides to merge its state health insurance scheme, Chiranjeevi, with the central Ayushman Bharat programme.
- This move, pending approval from the union health ministry, aims to create a unified initiative called the Ayushman Bharat Mukhyamantri Chiranjeevi Health Insurance Scheme.
- Officials reveal that the integrated scheme will maintain Chiranjeevi's existing benefits, providing a substantial ₹25 lakh insurance cover applicable to both private and government hospitals.
- The Chiranjeevi scheme, initially introduced by former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot of the Congress party, currently offers significantly higher coverage compared to Ayushman Bharat's ₹5 lakh.

Tamil Nadu Fast Reactor Plant Inaugurated by Prime Minister with an investment of Rs 400 crore

Source: Narendra Modi

- Dedicating it to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the Demonstration Fast Reactor Fuel Reprocessing Plant (DFRP) at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam, with a cost of Rs 400 crore.
- The DFRP boasts a unique design, crafted entirely by Indian scientists. This facility is capable of reprocessing both carbide and oxide fuels discharged from fast reactors, setting it apart as the only one of its kind globally.
- This facility is a significant step towards advancing India's nuclear capabilities, designed to reprocess fuel from Prototype Fast Breeder Reactors (PFBR).
- The fast reactor power generation company, Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI), based in Kalpakkam, is at the forefront of this initiative.

Ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, agreements worth \$86 billion are signed by the Gujarat government

Source: The Economic Times

- In preparation for the upcoming biennial Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, the Indian state of Gujarat has sealed preliminary investment deals totaling 7.17 trillion Indian rupees (\$86.07 billion) with 58 companies spanning sectors like energy, oil and gas, and chemicals.
- With NTPC and Torrent Power leading the charge, these strategic investments signal a robust push by Gujarat to attract both foreign and domestic investors. This move is pivotal as Prime Minister Modi aims to bolster investment in the country ahead of the national elections, where he seeks a third term.

2024 will witness the retirement of 68 Rajya Sabha members, a list that includes prominent figures such as Manmohan Singh and Jaya Bachchan.

Source: NDTV

- Anticipating a transformative year ahead, the political scenario in India is set for a notable transformation with the retirement of 68 Rajya Sabha members, including nine Union ministers. This development adds fervor to the competition for sought-after six-year terms in the Upper House of Parliament.
- In April, a total of 57 leaders, a prominent among them being former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and several incumbent ministers, will complete their tenures.
- Uttar Pradesh will witness the highest number of vacancies, with 10 seats up for grabs, followed by Maharashtra and Bihar with six each.
- Other states in the fray include Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Gujarat, Odisha, Telangana, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Chhattisgarh.

Emerging as a trailblazer, Punjab has become the inaugural state to comprehensively map all sites prone to accidents.

Source: India Today

- Paving the way for safety measures, Punjab emerges as the pioneer in India by intricately mapping all 784 accident-prone areas through the innovative Mappls App, an advanced navigation system crafted by MapMyIndia.
- In a strategic move, the Punjab Police has teamed up with MapMyIndia to integrate real-time traffic updates and alerts into the Mappls App. This collaboration aims to provide citizens with crucial information about black and blind spots, ensuring a safer driving experience.
- This initiative aligns with the preparations for the launch of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's flagship project, the 'Sadak Suraksha Force.' The comprehensive mapping of accident black spots is a crucial component of this visionary project, aiming to create a robust system for ensuring road safety across the state.

Attaining international recognition, the Ayodhya Airport undergoes a name change to 'Maharishi Valmiki International Airport.'

Source: The Indian Express

- The Union Cabinet has greenlit the declaration of Ayodhya Airport as an international airport, with the proposed name "Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham." This decision, emphasizing the historical and cultural significance of the region, signifies a notable step forward in the airport's recognition and status.
- According to the government's press release, elevating Ayodhya Airport to international status is crucial for realizing the city's economic potential. Furthermore, it acknowledges Ayodhya's significance as a global pilgrimage site, with the international status expected to attract foreign pilgrims and tourists.
- The airport's development will occur in phases. In its initial phase, the airport will have the capacity to handle 10 lakh (1 million) passengers annually. After the second phase of development, Maharishi Valmiki International Airport is expected to cater to a staggering 60 lakh (6 million) commuters annually.

Commencing a new phase, the Assam Government launches 'Gunotsav 2024.'

Source: BNN Breaking

- The Assam government is gearing up for the fifth edition of 'Gunotsav 2024,' a comprehensive state-wide assessment aimed at evaluating the performance of approximately 40 lakh students across government schools.
- The initiative, slated to run from January 3 to February 8, 2024, is poised to play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of education and improving learning outcomes in the state.

- 'Gunotsav' emphasizes active participation from all stakeholders, including teachers, students, administrators, and local communities. This holistic engagement is expected to foster accountability and contribute to an overall enhancement of the quality of education in Assam.

The Ministry of Education initiates the PRERANA program

Source: NDTV

- A transformative educational venture aimed at enhancing leadership qualities among students in classes IX to XII.
- Rooted in Indian values and NEP 2020, Prerana aims to empower students with leadership qualities.
- The week-long residential program in Vadnagar, Gujarat, focuses on nine core values, including courage, hard work, compassion, diversity, and innovation.
- Developed by IIT Gandhi Nagar, the curriculum promotes holistic development and embraces India's cultural heritage.
- Engaging activities include yoga, thematic workshops, historical site visits, and interactions with inspiring personalities.
- Students can register on the official portal for a chance to become empowered changemakers after the transformative experience.

India, USAID MoU for Indian Railways' net-zero emission by 2030.

Source: Business Standard

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approves the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- The collaboration aims to assist Indian Railways in achieving 'net zero carbon emission' by the target year of 2030.
- The MoU, signed in June of the preceding year, focuses on utility modernization, advanced energy solutions, regional energy integration, private sector engagement, and training in technology areas like renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- The collaboration seeks to reduce Indian Railways' dependence on imported fuels like diesel and coal, promoting a robust energy efficiency policy aligned with global sustainability practices.
- Long-term energy planning is a key aspect, guiding Indian Railways toward adopting cleaner energy methods with a focus on technical support and planning for clean energy procurement.
- Collaborative initiatives include hosting events, conferences, and capacity-building programs to promote knowledge sharing and innovation in clean energy technologies.
- USAID/India's role is pivotal in supporting international development, contributing to economic growth, agriculture, trade, clean energy, global health, democracy, humanitarian aid, climate change, and conflict management.

West Bengal attains Geographical Indication (GI) tags for distinct products, bolstering local economies.

Source: Telegraph India

- West Bengal secures Geographical Indication (GI) tags for cultural and agricultural heritage, a significant achievement under the National GI Drive Mission.
- Recognition of Sunderbans Honey – 'Mouban': The coveted GI tag has been granted to Sunderbans honey, locally known as 'Mouban,' collected by the 'Mouli' community.
- Black Nunia Rice – 'Prince of Rice': Hailing from Jalpaiguri district, Black Nunia rice, known as the 'Prince of Rice,' has earned its GI tag. This indigenous rice variety adds to the agricultural richness of the state.
- Distinctive Sarees – Tangail, Gorod, and Kadiyal: West Bengal Forest Development Corporation Limited (WBFDC) applied for the GI tag for Tangail, Gorod, and Kadiyal sarees, reflecting the rich textile

heritage of the region. Mirzapur in Murshidabad district is renowned for producing exclusive Kadiyal sarees.

Tamil Nadu unveils its vision for a \$1 trillion economy in GIM 2024.

Source: The Hindu

- Chief Minister MK Stalin announces Tamil Nadu's aspiration for a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 at the Global Investors Meet in Chennai on January 7.
- It strategically aims for \$3.8-4.3 trillion in investments to attract FDI and boost local expansion. The goal is holistic growth, ensuring prosperity across all regions with a focus on climate consciousness and sustainability in all initiatives.
- Priorities include human capital growth, innovation through industry-academia partnerships, fostering an industry-friendly climate, advocating transparent governance, and developing sustainable infrastructure.

ONGC initiates the inaugural oil production in the Krishna-Godavari deep-water block.

Source: The Times of India

- On January 7, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), a prominent energy exploration and production company in India, reached a noteworthy milestone by initiating the first oil production from the deep-water KG-DWN 98/2 Block.
- Located in the Krishna Godavari (KG) basin off the Bay of Bengal on the Kakinada coast, this development marks a crucial step forward in India's energy landscape.
- The anticipated peak production from the 98/2 field is remarkable, with expectations set at around 45,000 barrels of oil per day and over 10 Million Metric Standard Cubic Metres per Day (MMSCMD) of gas.
- As the project advances, ONGC is actively working towards the final phase of the 98/2 block, with efforts underway to commence the production of the remaining oil and natural gas by mid-2024.

The government plans to invest ₹60,000 crores in the development of river cruise tourism and eco-friendly vessels.

Source: Hindustan Times

- Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal revealed a substantial government investment of Rs 60,000 crore by 2047 in the advancement of river cruise tourism and environmentally friendly vessels. This initiative is geared towards bolstering tourism, improving water transport infrastructure, and generating employment opportunities.
- Sonowal outlined the plan, stating that Rs.45,000 crore would be allocated to river cruise development, increasing passenger capacity from 2 lakh to 15 lakh by 2047. Additionally, the government plans to invest Rs.15,000 crore over the next decade in green transport, intending to develop 1,000 environmentally friendly vessels and ferries.

Ujjain introduces 'Prasadam,' India's first hygienic food street, showcasing a novel culinary experience.

Source: India Times

- Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated 'Prasadam,' India's inaugural healthy and hygienic food street, in a grand ceremony at Neelkanth Van, Mahakal Lok, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.
- Spanning an impressive 939 square meters, "Prasadam" stands as a symbol of holistic development. Positioned near the Mahakaleshwar Temple, it is designed not just as a food street but as a multifaceted destination contributing to various aspects of community life. The food street comprises 17 shops, each offering a unique culinary experience.
- "Prasadam" goes beyond offering a culinary delight. It provides an array of facilities, including a dedicated kids' play area, drinking water facility, CCTV surveillance, ample parking, public conveniences, and

spacious seating areas. These facilities are aimed at enhancing the overall experience for visitors and locals alike.

The Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) has introduced the 'Ugram' assault rifle, designed specifically for the Indian Army

Source: The Indian Express

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India, in a significant advancement, introduced 'Ugram,' an advanced 7.62 x 51 mm calibre assault rifle.
- 'Ugram,' meaning 'ferocious' in Sanskrit, aligns with the operational needs of India's armed forces, paramilitary, and state police units.
- The rifle, notable for its effective range of 500 meters and lightweight design of under four kilograms, was developed at the DRDO's Pune-based Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE).
- With a 20-round magazine capacity, Ugram offers versatility through its single and full-auto firing modes. Its design parallels the modern AK and AR type rifles, yet stands out with a distinctive rivet-free construction, enhancing its robustness and reliability in various combat scenarios.

Indian Navy gets first India-made long endurance Drishti 10 Starliner drone

- The Indian Navy has recently acquired its first indigenous medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) drone, the Drishti 10 Starliner unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV).
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is actively involved in developing a MALE UAV called Tapas.

New Republic Day Pact Allows States One Tableau Every Three Years

- Defence Ministry has proposed a rollover plan to give every State and Union Territory (UT) an opportunity to showcase their tableaux within a three-year cycle.
- A three-year memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been proposed to facilitate the implementation of the rollover plan. As of now, 28 States have signed the draft agreement.
- States and UTs were approached in advance for their willingness to participate in the Republic Day Parade for the next three years (2024, 2025, and 2026).

Naveen Patnaik Inaugurates Malkangiri Airport in Odisha

- On January 9, Odisha's Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, inaugurated the Malkangiri airport in Odisha.
- Ensuring the smooth operationalization of Malkangiri airport, the authorities at Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar extended technical support.

ANUBHAV Awards Scheme 2024

- The ANUBHAV Awards Scheme, initiated by the Department of Pension and Pensioners Welfare (DoPPW).
- Launched in 2015 under the guidance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

Fresh Oil Discovery in Krishna-Godavari Basin by ONGC

- The discovery, led by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), is located near Kakinada's coastline in the Bay of Bengal.

About ONGC:

Headquarters: Vasant Kunj, New Delhi

Founded: 14 August 1956

Key people: Arun Kumar Singh (Chairman& CEO)

PM Modi Inaugurates India's Longest Sea Bridge – Atal Setu

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), colloquially known as Atal Setu, India's longest sea bridge spanning 21.8 km.
- This monumental infrastructure, dedicated to the late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was initiated with the laying of its foundation stone in December 2016.

Ganga Sagar Mela 2024: India's Second Largest Fair

- The Ganga Sagar Mela stands as a testament to the vibrant cultural and spiritual tapestry of India.
- Held annually in Sagardwip, West Bengal, this magnificent fair has earned the distinction of being the second most popular mela in the country, surpassed only by the revered Kumbh Mela.
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International Camel Festival Kicked Off in Bikaner, Rajasthan

- Bikaji ki Tekri became the hub of creativity with competitions organized by the Tourism Department.
- Three-day International Camel Festival kicked off with great fervor in the culturally rich district of Bikaner, Rajasthan.

Delhi LG Kicks off 2-Day Global 'Patang Utsav' At Baansera

- Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena inaugurated the much-anticipated 'Patang Utsav' at Baansera.
- The city's first bamboo-theme park located at Sarai Kale Khan on the scenic banks of the Yamuna River.

Defense Minister Sanctions Insurance Scheme for BRO Workers

- India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, has recently approved a groundbreaking scheme aimed at providing insurance cover to casual workers employed by the Border Roads Organisation.

Maharashtra's Pench Tiger Reserve Achieves Milestone as India's First Dark Sky Park

- Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has made history by securing recognition as India's inaugural Dark Sky Park, marking its position as the fifth in Asia.

PM Modi Releases First Instalment of PM-JANMAN Scheme for Pucca Homes

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to release ₹540 crore, the inaugural tranche of funding, for pucca homes under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) on January 15.
- The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) was launched on November 15, 2023.

CM Stalin to inaugurate state of the Madurai jallikattu stadium

- The newly-built jallikattu arena is all set to be inaugurated by CM MK Stalin on January 23 or 24, Commercial Taxes and Registration Minister P Moorthy said.
- The jallikattu event commenced in the Alanganallur and Avaniyapuram in Madurai.

Maiden national highway steel slag road on NH- 66 Mumbai-Goa inaugurated

- Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member (S&T), NITI AAYOG inaugurated India's First National Highway Steel Slag Road section on NH- 66 Mumbai-Goa National Highway.
- Dr Saraswat said that the Steel Slag Road Technology, developed by CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI) is transforming the waste of steel industries into wealth and is helping the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

Ex-Ayutthaya: India-Thailand First Naval Exercise Connects to Ayodhya

- Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) joined forces for the maiden bilateral exercise named 'Ex-Ayutthaya' in December 2023.
- Ex-Ayutthaya, held in December 2023, symbolizes the invincible spirit and cultural ties between Ayodhya (India) and Ayutthaya (Thailand).

India to Host Year-long 'Ramayan' Festival from Delhi

- India is set to launch a year-long festival, seeking global connections through the celebration of Ramayan.
- The festival is scheduled to commence from Delhi's historic Purana Qila (Old Fort) on January 18 and will traverse various cities such as Lucknow, Ayodhya, and Varanasi.

Bull-Taming Festival 'Jallikattu' Starts In Tamil Nadu

- Tamil Nadu commenced the Jallikattu competition in Avaniyapuram, Madurai district.
- Jallikattu is a highlight of the Pongal harvest festival held in the second week of January.
- After prolonged protests by the people of Tamil Nadu against the ban, the Supreme Court delivered a significant verdict in May 2023.

Ministry of Home Affairs Revokes FCRA Registration of Centre for Policy Research

- The Ministry of Home Affairs in India has revoked the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020, registration of the Centre for Policy Research (CPR) in New Delhi.
- Established in 1973, CPR is a prominent policy think-tank.

India records its first-ever confirmed sighting of a rare Tibetan Brown Bear**Source: Telegraph India**

- India's wildlife conservation, the first-ever confirmed sighting of the rare Tibetan Brown Bear (scientific name: *Ursus arctos pruinosus*) was recorded in the high altitudes of North Sikkim.
- The Tibetan Brown Bear is accorded the highest protection status under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar inaugurates 12th General Assembly of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace**Source: News on AIR**

- Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has said that the world today faces challenges like climate change, conflict, terrorism and poverty.
- He was speaking after inaugurating the 12th General Assembly of the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace in New Delhi today.

Mamata Banerjee Opens 47th Kolkata Book Fair, Featuring the UK as the Theme Country

- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the 47th International Kolkata Book Fair on January 18.

Tallest Ambedkar Statue to Be Unveiled Today In Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

- The Andhra Pradesh government is set to unveil the world's tallest statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the esteemed architect of the Indian Constitution.
- The colossal structure, named the 'Statue of Social Justice,' stands at an impressive height of 206 feet.

Moh-Juj Fights: A Cultural Resurgence in Assam

- Moh-Juj, the traditional buffalo fights, have made a comeback in Assam.
- This revival, held during the Magh Bihu festival in mid-January 2024.
- The tradition of Moh-Juj was suspended in 2015 following the Supreme Court's ban on similar events like Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu.

Assam Govt Unveils Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan

- Assam government recently launched a financial assistance scheme, the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA), with the aim of empowering rural women entrepreneurs.
- In the inaugural phase of the MMUA, each eligible applicant will receive a grant of ₹10,000 in the first year.

PM Launches Khelo India Youth Games 2023 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

- The 13th edition of the Khelo India Youth Games was inaugurated with great enthusiasm by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- Prime Minister Modi mentioned India's preparations for the Paris Olympics in the current year and the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

Defence Minister Unveils 35 BRO Projects in Border Regions

- The Defence Minister inaugurated 35 crucial projects, comprising 29 bridges and six roads, strategically positioned across seven states and union territories.

LIC Introduces Jeevan Dhara II Deferred Annuity Plan

- Unveiled by LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty, the new Jeevan Dhara II plan offers a non-participating, individual savings, deferred annuity option.

Gole Mela Festival Commenced At Jagannath Temple, Udhampur

- The beautiful town of Udhampur witnessed a glorious spectacle today as the sacred precincts of the Jagannath Temple came alive with the vibrant celebrations of the much-anticipated 'Gole Mela.'

The Prime Minister has kickstarted eight AMRUT projects valued at Rs. 2,000 crores in the city of Solapur, Maharashtra.

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, marked a historic day in Solapur, Maharashtra, by laying the foundation stone for 8 AMRUT projects and dedicating over 90,000 completed houses under PMAY-Urban.
- The event also witnessed the distribution of PM-SVANIDHI benefits to 10,000 beneficiaries, showcasing the government's commitment to inclusive development.
- The inauguration of 15,000 houses in the Raynagar Housing Society, Solapur, is particularly noteworthy, benefitting handloom workers, vendors, power loom workers, rag pickers, Bidi workers, drivers, and others.

Himachal Pradesh introduces 'My School-My Pride,' an initiative aimed at transforming education in the state

- In a progressive move aligning with the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, the state of Himachal Pradesh has unveiled the ambitious 'My School-My Pride' campaign under the 'Apna Vidyalay' programme.
- This initiative is set to revolutionize the quality of education in government schools, providing a holistic approach to student growth and development.
Under the 'Apna Vidyalay' programme, stakeholders are not only encouraged to contribute their time and expertise but also make monetary contributions for infrastructure development, sponsor events, provide scholarships, and support the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) programme.

The solar-powered "Surya Tilak" for Ram Lalla has been introduced at the Ayodhya Ram Temple

- The Ayodhya Ram Temple, a site of immense religious significance in India, is set to introduce a groundbreaking feature – a solar-powered "Surya Tilak" for the deity Ram Lalla.

- The “Surya Tilak” is an ingenious system designed to adorn the forehead of Lord Ram’s idol with sunlight in the form of a ‘Tilak’ (a traditional Hindu mark worn on the forehead). This unique feature is planned exclusively for the annual Ram Navami celebration, marking Lord Ram’s birth.
- Developed by a team from the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), led by Odia scientist Saroj Kumar Panigrahi, the project involves no electricity, battery, iron, or steel. It is a manually operated system made of brass, ensuring the traditional ethos of the temple is maintained.

G. Kishan Reddy, the Union Minister, has inaugurated five new galleries at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad

- In a momentous event, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, G. Kishan Reddy, inaugurated five new galleries at the renowned Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad.
- 1) Indian Sculpture Gallery: Featuring nearly 40 artifacts, some dating back to the 2nd Century B.C., including a fragment from Bharhut with a lotus medallion and the Kakatiya period’s ‘Anantsayana Vishnu.’
- 2) Bidriware Gallery: Showcasing 300 unique objects, including exquisite ‘huqqa’ bases and ewers.
- 3) Lamp and Chandelier Gallery: Displaying 180 antique objects from around the globe.
- 4) European Bronze Gallery: Housing over 100 bronze statues.
- 5) European Marble Gallery: Featuring 50 outstanding marble sculptures.

The 'Anuvadini' app, introduced by the central government, facilitates multilingual education

- The central government has taken a noteworthy step to encourage multilingualism in education by launching the 'Anuvadini' app, a platform driven by Artificial Intelligence.
- The initiative aims to make study materials for all school and higher education courses available in digital form, specifically in Indian languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- This step aligns with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasizing the importance of studying in one’s mother tongue.

The University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), and the Department of School Education have been instructed to ensure the availability of study materials in regional languages.

Haryana secures the top position in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team category, while Maharashtra excels in Rhythmic Gymnastics at the Khelo India Games

Source: Times of India

- In Khelo India games today, Haryana won the gold medal and Rajasthan silver in the 10m air pistol mixed team event. Tamil Nadu clinched bronze.
- In the rhythmic gymnastics Hoop event, Maharashtra's Kimaya Karle and Sanyukta Kale took first and second places, while Muskan Rana from J&K took the third place. In the rhythmic gymnastics Ball event, Sanyukta Kale took the first place, Muskan Rana took the second place and Life Adlakha from Haryana took third place. In the Club event of the same sport, Muskan Rana ended up at the top of the podium. Parina Madanpotra from Maharashtra stood second and Life Adlakha from Haryana came third.

CCI grants approval for JSW to acquire a stake of up to 38% in MG Motor India

Source: Business Today

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has given its approval for Sajjan Jindal-promoted JSW Group's proposed acquisition of up to 38 per cent stake in MG Motor India.
- "The Acquirer is a newly incorporated entity and is not engaged in any activities as on date. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of JSW International Tradecorp Pte. Limited and belongs to JSW Group," the CCI stated.

"The Target is a company incorporated in India, engaged in the automobile original equipment manufacturing business and after sale services. The Target is primarily engaged in the manufacture and sale of passenger cars (including electronic vehicles) under the Target's brand 'MG'," it further said.

President Droupadi Murmu inaugurates Kaushal Bhawan, marking a significant step towards empowering skills

- In a historic moment, President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Kaushal Bhawan, emphasizing India's steadfast commitment to empowering its youth through skill development.
- Under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), the Bhawan is set to catalyze the realization of aspirations and nurture the nation's young talent, steering India toward a more skilled future.
- Kaushal Bhawan, equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, provides an ideal environment for ideation, collaboration, and execution of groundbreaking skill development initiatives.

Andhra Pradesh embarks on a comprehensive caste census, following Bihar as the second state to undertake such an initiative

- The government of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh has launched a comprehensive caste census, making it the second state in the country, after Bihar, to undertake such an extensive enumeration of castes.
- Launched with the aid of a specially designed phone app, this ambitious census aims to enumerate all castes in the state and is expected to be completed within the next 20 days to one month.
- The cornerstone of this census initiative is a dedicated phone app developed by the government, enabling a more efficient and streamlined data collection process. The app offers more than 700 caste options for the public to choose from, with a notable inclusion being the 'No caste' option.

Odisha is preparing to establish the globe's premier 'Black Tiger Safari'

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has unveiled plans for the establishment of the world's first 'black tiger safari' near the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj.

About Odisha:

Capital: – Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister: – Naveen Patnaik

Governor: – Raghubar Das

India and Oman's IT Cooperation MoU got the cabinet nod

- The Union Cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the MoU between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India and the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology of Oman.
- The MoU, inked on December 15 last year, aims to foster collaboration and cooperation in the field of Information Technology (IT).

The 63rd session of the Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) convened in Bhopal

- The 63rd assembly of the Central Geological Programming Board (CGPB) convened in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, under the leadership of Shri V.L. Kantha Rao, Secretary of the Ministry of Mines.

Nirmala Sitharaman is set to become the second Finance Minister to present six consecutive Union Budgets

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is poised to make history as she prepares to deliver her sixth consecutive Budget, comprising five annual Budgets and one interim Budget.

The RBI grants approval for LIC to acquire a stake of up to 9.99% in HDFC Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India has granted permission to Life Insurance Corp. of India to acquire up to 9.99 percent of HDFC Bank, as disclosed by the country's largest private lender to stock exchanges on January 25.
- LIC owns a 5.19 percent stake in the bank, according to the lender's shareholding pattern as of December 31.

About RBI :

- Established : 1 April 1935
- Headquarters : Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
- Governor : Shaktikanta Das

Bank of Baroda plans to issue Rs 5,000 crore worth of 10-year infrastructure bonds

- On January 24, state-owned Bank of Baroda issued infrastructure bonds worth Rs 5,000 crore with a maturity of 10 years, as reported by sources familiar with the matter.
- The bonds have a base issue of Rs 1,000 crore, with retain oversubscription of Rs 4,000 crore as greenshoe option.

M Modi announces major infrastructure projects in Bulandshahr, UP

Source: TET

- Prime Minister Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects worth over Rs 19,100 crores in Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh. The diverse projects spanned crucial sectors such as rail, road, oil and gas, and urban development.

Nitish Kumar takes oath as Bihar CM for a record 9th time with BJP's backing

Source: Business Standard

Amidst anticipation for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Nitish Kumar, the leader of Janata Dal-United (JDU), assumed office as Bihar's Chief Minister for an unprecedented ninth term. This move marked a departure from the 'Mahagathbandhan' alliance, as Kumar garnered backing from the BJP.

On the 75th Republic Day, THDC India Limited inaugurated India's largest Green Hydrogen Pilot Project

- On the 75th Republic Day, THDC India Limited (THDCIL), a prominent Power Sector PSU, proudly unveiled India's Largest Electrolyser End Fuel Cell-based Green Hydrogen Pilot Project at its office complex in Rishikesh.
- The initiative aligns with the "National Green Hydrogen Mission," showcasing THDCIL's commitment to sustainable energy practices. The pilot project, utilizing a 1MW Rooftop Solar Plant, will produce 50KG of Green Hydrogen daily.

The Fourth National Chilika Birds Festival was hosted in Odisha

- The National Chilika Birds Festival, a significant event in Odisha's calendar, began with splendor on January 26. The festival was inaugurated by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.
- Hosted against the breathtaking backdrop of Chilika Lake, this festival brings together birders and enthusiasts from across India to celebrate the State of India's Birds.

Himanta Biswa Sarma unveils inaugural volume of 'Political History of Assam (1947-1971)'

- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma released the first volume of 'Political History of Assam (1947-1971)', marking a significant step in documenting the state's political journey.

Recipients of the Republic Day Parade Awards 2024 announced

- Among the Three Services: The Sikh Regiment Contingent was declared the best marching contingent, showcasing their discipline and precision.
- Among CAPF/Other Auxiliary Forces: The Delhi Police Women Marching Contingent received the award, highlighting the increasing role of women in security forces.

INTERNATIONAL

China's Groundbreaking Voyage: Mengxiang Sets Sail for Earth's Mantle Exploration

- China has introduced its groundbreaking ocean drilling vessel, Mengxiang, signifying a pivotal moment in scientific exploration.
- Weighing an impressive 33,000 tonnes and stretching 179 meters (590 feet), Mengxiang is a colossal ship with exceptional capabilities.

About China:

Capital: Beijing

President: Xi Jinping

Felix Tshisekedi Named President of the Democratic Republic of Congo

- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is once again in the spotlight as President Felix Tshisekedi secures victory in the highly contested December 20 election.

BRICS group to double in 2024 after Saudi, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia join ranks

- BRICS, the group of emerging-market nations comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is poised to undergo a significant expansion on January 1.
- Representatives from the new invitees participated in a recent BRICS sherpa meeting in Durban, South Africa, indicating their acceptance of the invitation.
- The five countries are set to send officials to the next sherpa meeting in Moscow on January 30.
- The term "BRIC" was coined in 2001 to highlight robust economic growth in Brazil, Russia, India, and China.

In January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is set to disburse a \$700 million bailout installment to Pakistan.

Source: The Week

- Cash-strapped Pakistan is poised to receive a crucial \$700 million bailout tranche from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the Executive Board meeting on January 11.
- The disbursement, under the existing \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), is expected to provide much-needed financial support to Pakistan's struggling economy.
- The IMF Executive Board is scheduled to discuss Pakistan's case on January 11, potentially granting final approval for the release of the \$700 million tranche. The current SBA, initiated in 2019, is set to conclude in April 2024, with approximately \$1.8 billion remaining undisbursed.
- Despite earlier expectations for the Executive Board's approval in December, the decision has been deferred to January 11, as a Staff-Level Agreement between the IMF staff and Pakistani authorities awaits the Board's approval. The potential approval holds significance for Pakistan's economy, providing crucial financial support.
- Discussions between the IMF staff and Pakistani authorities continue regarding policies aimed at bolstering macroeconomic stability in the upcoming year. The IMF noted progress over the FY23 budget, but the latest economic projections for Pakistan reveal a challenging outlook for 2024. The report added that the IMF predicts a contraction of 0.5% in the real GDP for the year and a significant increase in the Consumer Price Index, suggesting heightened inflationary pressures.

After 52 years on the throne, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark is set to abdicate

Source: Telegraph India

- On the 14th of January, during her New Year's speech, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark disclosed her choice to step down from the throne after a remarkable 52 years of reign. This significant announcement

coincides with the anniversary of her accession to the throne at the age of 31, succeeding her father, King Frederik IX, who passed away.

- Queen Margrethe II's legacy is one of resilience, adventure, and unwavering dedication to her role as a monarch. Her decision to abdicate the throne adds a new chapter to Denmark's royal history, making way for her son, Crown Prince Frederik, to assume the responsibilities of the monarchy.

FIH Hockey5s World Cup Qualifiers scheduled to be hosted by Oman

Source: The Quint

- Oman is set to unveil its latest sports marvel—a cutting-edge complex designed to host the FIH Hockey5s World Cup qualifiers, scheduled just ahead of the Summer 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.
- Promising to deliver an exhilarating spectacle, the FIH Hockey5s World Cup qualifiers will draw in eight international teams competing for the opportunity to clinch three coveted tickets to the forthcoming Olympics.
- The newly constructed stadium boasts a remarkable capacity, accommodating over 5,000 spectators during the tournament. Built in adherence to the latest standards and designs approved by the International Hockey Federation, the stadium promises an unparalleled viewing experience for fans and players alike.

Former Indian Navy personnel in Qatar given 60 days to appeal against prison terms

Source: The Financial Express

- The Ministry of External Affairs has disclosed that the eight incarcerated former Indian Navy personnel in Qatar have been granted a 60-day window to file appeals against the diverse prison terms imposed by a Qatari court last week. This decision follows the commutation of their earlier death sentences.
- The Court of Appeal in Qatar on December 28 commuted the death sentence handed down to the Indians in October and sentenced them to prison for varying durations, weeks after their family members filed an appeal against the earlier order by another court.
- External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the legal team of the Indian nationals received a copy of the court order that he described as a "confidential document".
- "On December 28, the Court of Appeal had given a judgement. Thereafter, we issued a press release giving details (and) telling that the death penalty has been reduced. Now, we have the judgement order, which is a confidential document," he said.

During the 7th Nepal-India Joint Commission Meeting, Nepal and India finalize an agreement

Source: The Economic Times

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Nepalese counterpart N P Saud inaugurate three cross-border transmission lines.
- A bilateral agreement is signed for Nepal to export 10,000 MW of power to India over the next 10 years. The agreement, signed at the 7th Nepal-India Joint Commission Meeting, reinforces the commitment to a long-term energy partnership.
- Discussions cover various aspects of bilateral ties, including trade, economic relations, connectivity projects, defence, security cooperation, and more. A Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in renewable energy is signed, emphasizing a joint commitment to sustainable energy solutions.
- Nepal's Prime Minister hails the power export agreement as a breakthrough in the nation's power sector, ensuring energy security and sustainable development.
- External Affairs Minister Jaishankar highlights the comprehensive nature of discussions, covering land, rail, and air connectivity, defence, agriculture, power, water resources, disaster management, tourism, civil aviation, and cultural exchange.

Kyrgyzstan designates the snow leopard as its national symbol.

Source: Down to Earth

- Kyrgyzstan, in Central Asia, designates the snow leopard as its national symbol, showcasing a deep dedication to conservation and ecological harmony.
- President Zhaparov has directed the Cabinet of Ministers to actively recognize the snow leopard as a national symbol and take measures to protect its population and the ecosystems it inhabits.
- President Sadyr Zhaparov, through a signed decree, emphasized the snow leopard's role not only as a symbol of natural wealth and cultural prosperity but also as a vital indicator of the stability and health of the mountain ecosystems that cover a substantial portion of the global territory.

Sheikh Hasina secures her fifth term in the 2024 Bangladesh Election despite opposition boycott.

Source: Hindustan Times

- In a momentous turn of events, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been re-elected for a fifth term, marking a significant milestone in the country's political landscape. According to the Election Commission and reports from various TV stations, the Awami League secured 216 seats out of 299 in the parliamentary election.
- The ruling Awami League, under Hasina's leadership, has triumphed once again, securing more than half of the parliamentary seats. This victory reaffirms Sheikh Hasina's position as the world's longest-serving female head of government.

'India has always been a first responder to various crises,' says Maldives' tourism industry amid row over ministers' remarks

Source: Business Today

- According to official data, more than 2 lakh Indians have visited the Maldives annually in the last three years, marking the highest influx from any country post-Covid pandemic.
- The Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI) issued a statement on Monday, expressing strong condemnation for the derogatory comments made by some Deputy Ministers on social media platforms, as the India-Maldives row intensified amid concerns related to Lakshadweep.
- "The Maldives Association of Tourism Industry strongly condemns the derogatory comments made by some Deputy Ministers on social media platforms, directed towards the Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Narendra Modi as well as the people of India. India is one of our closest neighbours and allies. India has always been a first responder to various crises throughout our history and we are immensely grateful to the close relationship that the Government as well as people of India have maintained with us," said MATI in a statement.
- Over 2 lakh Indians visited Maldives annually in the last three years, the highest from any country post-COVID 19 pandemic, according to the official data, reported PTI, amid calls from several quarters to boycott the island nation as a travel destination following a diplomatic row between the two nations.
- According to the Maldives Tourism Ministry statistics, over 17 lakh tourists visited the island nation in 2023, out of which more than 2,09,198 visitors were Indians followed by Russians (2,09,146) and China (1,87,118).
- The number of Indian visitors was more than 2.4 lakh in 2022 while over 2.11 lakh Indians flew to the Maldives in 2021. The Maldives was also one of the few countries open for international tourists during the pandemic and nearly 63,000 Indians visited that country during that period.

At the age of 34, Gabriel Attal has become the youngest-ever Prime Minister of France.

Source: The Economic Times

- In a noteworthy political maneuver, French President Emmanuel Macron has appointed Gabriel Attal as the new Prime Minister of France.
- At 34 years old, Attal not only becomes the youngest prime minister in the country's history but also the first openly gay official to hold this prestigious position.

- Attal's appointment comes in the midst of a cabinet reshuffle initiated by Macron to breathe new life into his government. With the departure of outgoing Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, Attal is expected to play a crucial role in shaping the direction of the administration.

The United States has designated several countries, including China, North Korea, and Pakistan, for violations of religious freedom

Source: The Hindu

- Under the leadership of Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the United States has designated several nations as 'Countries of Particular Concern,' citing severe violations of religious freedom.
- This decision aligns with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, emphasizing the commitment to advancing freedom of religion globally.
- China, North Korea, Pakistan, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Myanmar have been labeled as 'Countries of Particular Concern.'
- Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Comoros, and Vietnam are placed on the 'Special Watch List' for tolerating severe religious freedom violations.

South Korea Bans Trade of Dog Meat in New Law

- South Korea's parliament made history by passing a groundbreaking bill that bans the eating and selling of dog meat.
- Eating dog meat in South Korea was once considered a way to improve stamina, particularly during the humid Korean summer.
- Support for the ban has grown significantly under the leadership of President Yoon Suk Yeol.

US and UK Launch Airstrikes on Yemen's Huthi Rebels over Red Sea Attacks

- In response to the Iran-backed Huthi rebels' escalating assaults on shipping in the Red Sea, the United States and Britain carried out airstrikes using fighter jets and Tomahawk missiles.
- The Huthis, attributing their actions to Israel's Gaza Strip bombardment, launched drones and missiles towards Israel.

Shanghai's NDB Commits \$500 Million Loan for Gujarat's Infrastructure Development

- The Shanghai-based New Development Bank (NDB) inked an agreement during the Vibrant Gujarat Summit, pledging a substantial \$500 million loan to the Gujarat government.
- This financial infusion is earmarked for the Mukhayamantri Gram Sadak Yojana.

Security Agreement Signed Between Ukraine & Britain in Kyiv

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed an unprecedented security agreement between their nations in Kyiv.
- The signed security accord is poised to remain in effect until Ukraine becomes a member of NATO.

Maldives asks India to withdraw troops by March 15

- Maldives president Mohamed Muizzu asked India to withdraw its military personnel from his country by March 15.
- As per government figures, there are 88 Indian military personnel in the Maldives.

Taiwan Elects Pro-Sovereignty William Lai in Historic Election, Further Straining China Ties

- Taiwanese voters have chosen William Lai Ching-te, a pro-sovereignty candidate from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), as their president.
- Lai, the current vice president, secured an unprecedented third consecutive term for the DPP by defeating his conservative rival, Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (KMT), by over 900,000 votes.

Reformist Arevalo Sworn in as Guatemala President

- Bernardo Arévalo was officially sworn in as the President of Guatemala on January 15, 2024.

About Guatemala:

Capital: Guatemala City

Currency: Guatemalan Quetzal

Government: Unitary presidential republic

Official language: Spanish

UNDP and the EU have earmarked over \$420,000 for initiatives addressing deforestation, enhancing food security, and combating climate change in Papua New Guinea.

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) have allocated grants totaling over US\$420,000 (approximately 1.6 million PGK) to support initiatives aimed at combating deforestation, improving food and nutrition security, and adapting to the impacts of climate change.
- The official handover of these grants took place during a workshop held at the Takeanda Museum in Wabag, Enga Province, on 17 January 2024. These grants are set to benefit communities across six districts in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea.

Solar power stations have been officially inaugurated at Egyptian World Heritage sites

- In a ceremony at the Manial Palace, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, represented by the Supreme Council for Antiquities (SCA), in collaboration with the Industrial Modernization Center and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Egypt, officially inaugurated solar power stations at five renowned Egyptian world heritage sites and museums.

This initiative is part of the Egypt PV project, a groundbreaking effort aimed at fostering the market for rooftop small-scale photovoltaic (PV) systems in Egypt. Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the European Union, the project operates under the auspices of the UNDP in partnership with Egypt's COP27 Presidency.

Canada's Oakville, Brampton declare Jan 22 as 'Ayodhya Ram Mandir Day'

- The towns of Oakville and Brampton in Canada's Ontario declared January 22, 2024 as 'Ayodhya Ram Mandir Day' to celebrate the grand opening of the temple in Ayodhya. The mayors of Brampton, Patrick Brown and Oakville, Rob Burton, said the inauguration of the temple in Ayodhya "holds immense cultural, religious, and historical significance for Hindus worldwide, signifying the culmination of a centuries-old dream".

Cabo Verde has been granted certification by the World Health Organization (WHO) for achieving a malaria-free status

- In a recent announcement, the World Health Organization (WHO) has officially certified Cabo Verde as a malaria-free country.
- This accomplishment positions Cabo Verde alongside Mauritius and Algeria as the third nation in the WHO African region to achieve malaria-free status.
- Cabo Verde's certification adds to the list of 43 countries and 1 territory globally that have been recognized as 'malaria-free' by the WHO. Notable instances in the South East Asian region include the Maldives (2015) and Sri Lanka (2016), while India awaits such certification.

Sweden set to become NATO member as Turkey approves its membership bid

Source: ThePrint

- The Turkish parliament voted Tuesday to approve Sweden's NATO membership bid, bringing the Nordic country one step closer to joining the military alliance after months of delays.
- Of the 346 members of parliament who voted, 287 were in favor of Sweden's accession and 55 voted to reject it. Four others abstained from voting.

- The vote was the second step of Turkey's ratification process after the parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission approved the bid last month. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan can now sign the protocol into law.
- The outcome on Tuesday cleared a significant hurdle for the Nordic country's accession into the military alliance, with Hungary now set to be the only member state that has not yet ratified Sweden's accession.

The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved an IT cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Oman

- The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given the green light for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Oman in the field of Information Technology (IT).
- The MoU, inked on December 15, 2023, between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India and Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, aims to foster comprehensive collaboration through mutual support, technology sharing, information exchange, and investments in IT.

Saudi Arabia is set to inaugurate its inaugural alcohol store, exclusively catering to diplomats

- Saudi Arabia will open its first alcohol store in the capital Riyadh which will serve exclusively non-Muslim diplomats.
- Customers will have to register via a mobile app, get a clearance code from the foreign ministry, and respect monthly quotas with their purchases.

About Saudi Arabia:

- Capital- Riyadh
- Currency- Saudi riyal
- Prime minister- Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud

Maersk unveils the largest ship globally powered by methanol

- Maersk, a leader in the maritime industry, takes a significant step towards sustainability with the introduction of the Ane Maersk. This groundbreaking container vessel is powered by green methanol sourced from green hydrogen, marking a monumental stride towards environmental stewardship.

Alabama carries out the inaugural nitrogen gas execution in the United States

- In a groundbreaking turn of events, Kenneth Smith, a convicted murderer, has become the first person in the United States to be executed by nitrogen gas.
- The execution, which took place in Alabama, introduces a new method intended to be the most painless and humane alternative to the previously predominant lethal injection.

Krutrim, founded by Ola's founder, emerges as India's first AI unicorn

- Krutrim, an AI startup founded by Ola's Bhavish Aggarwal, announces a funding round that values the company at \$1 billion.
- The startup, founded last year, is the fastest to become a unicorn in India, it claimed in a press statement.
- It's also the first Indian AI startup to become a unicorn, it stated.

Macron concludes India visit, seals key deals

Source: Hindustan Times

- French President Emmanuel Macron concluded his two-day visit to India, participating as the chief guest in the 75th Republic Day celebrations.

Iran successfully sends three satellites into orbit

- Iran has declared the prosperous deployment of three satellites into space utilizing a rocket that has encountered numerous obstacles in the past. This milestone signifies the most recent progression in a program that Western nations allege is bolstering Tehran's ballistic missile capabilities.

Qatar bolsters energy ties with Bangladesh through a 15-year gas supply deal

- Qatar Energy and Excelerate Energy finalize a significant 15-year LNG Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) to provide LNG to Bangladesh.
- The SPA outlines Excelerate's procurement of up to one million tons per annum (MTPA) of LNG from QatarEnergy, with deliveries commencing from January 2026 to floating storage and regasification units in Bangladesh.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO Launches XPoSat: India's First X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) marked the beginning of 2024 with a significant milestone, launching its first mission of the year. On January 1, ISRO successfully lifted off the XPoSat (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) along with 10 other satellites from the Sriharikota spaceport, using the reliable PSLV-C58 rocket.
- The agency underscores the significance of XPoSat as its first dedicated scientific satellite designed to undertake research in this specialized domain.

Joint Exercise 'Sahyog Kaijin' Between Indian and Japanese Coast Guards

- The Indian and Japanese Coast Guards have recently conducted a successful joint exercise named 'Sahyog Kaijin' off the coast of Chennai.
- This exercise is a part of the ongoing collaboration between the two countries under the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed in 2006.

DRDO Achieves Success in Akash-NG Missile Flight Test

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved a significant milestone with the successful flight test of the New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG) missile.
- The test, conducted at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.

I-STEM to Launch 'Samavesha' At IISc Bengaluru to Enhance Research Collaboration

- The inauguration ceremony of 'Samavesha' is scheduled to take place at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru.
- One of the pivotal aspects of the project is the establishment of an online portal that will connect researchers and industries with scientific institutes.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University's Vice Chancellor Prof B R Kamboj honoured with M S Swaminathan Award

Source: News on AIR

- Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University's Vice Chancellor Prof. B.R. Kamboj has been honoured with the prestigious M.S. Swaminathan Award in recognition of his contributions as a scientist and extension specialist in the field of agronomy. Thawar Chand Gehlot, the Governor of Karnataka, presented him this award. The award ceremony took place at the International Conference on 'One Health One World,' held at Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia Agricultural University at Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh.
- A special committee, constituted for the M.S. Swaminathan Award, selected Prof. B.R. Kamboj for his excellent achievements in the field of education, research, technology development and extension in agricultural science.
- Vice Chancellor, Prof. B.R. Kamboj is well aware of the common problems, needs and socio-economical conditions of the farmers. The agricultural recommendations put forth by Prof. Kamboj, stemming from his research work and collaborative extension activities with university scientists, have consistently proven to be highly advantageous for farmers.
- Prof Kamboj has published about 300 research papers and articles in national and international journals, books and technical magazines.

Awards Season Guide 2024: Every Date You Need for the Golden Globes, Oscars, GRAMMYs and More!

Source: The Economic Times

- With the advent of the new year, we are on the brink of a whole new awards season, characterized by chic red carpet ensembles, moving (and sometimes heartbreaking) speeches, and endeavors at comedic sketches by hosts and presenters that will span from uproarious and unforgettable to remarkably cringe-worthy.
- The awards season landscape has finally gotten back on track following several years of pandemic-related delays and changes, and then the now-settled WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes, which many worried would shake up the awards show calendar once again.
- Music awards shows -- including the GRAMMY Awards and the Billboard Music Awards -- were less impacted by the strikes, and are scheduled to go on as planned. Meanwhile, some film and TV-based awards that were postponed have been rescheduled, including the Oscars and Golden Globes.
- Below, ET has your handy calendar that will be continuously updated with all the key dates and details as we learn more about what's to come from the Golden Globes, SAG Awards, GRAMMYs, BAFTA Awards and more.

Stepping into a pivotal role, Shashi Singh has been named the newly appointed President of AIRIA (All India Rubber Industries Association).

Source: The Hindu BusinessLine

- Undergoing a noteworthy shift in leadership dynamics, the All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the premier representative body for India's rubber industry, has recently declared a substantial change in its leadership.
- Shashi Singh has been elected as the new President, succeeding Ramesh Kejriwal. This transition marks a new era for AIRIA, with Singh set to advance the association's mission and goals.
- Alongside Singh, Zafar Ahmed, the Managing Director of New India Rubber Works Pvt Ltd, has been elected as the senior vice-president for 2023-24. In addition, Indra Parekh takes on the role of vice

president. This new leadership team is expected to bring a blend of experience, insight, and fresh perspectives to AIRIA.

Taking the helm, Sanjiv Aggarwal assumes the role of CEO and MD of NIIFL (National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited).

Source: The Economic Times

- The National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL) has welcomed Sanjiv Aggarwal as its new Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director.
- Aggarwal, formerly a partner at the UK-based private equity firm Actis, brings a wealth of experience in energy investments, particularly in the Asian market, including India.
- Sanjiv Aggarwal's impressive track record includes successful stints at renowned financial institutions such as Citigroup and ANZ Investment Bank. Notably, his tenure at Actis saw remarkable accomplishments, including the sale of the Indian renewable energy platform Sprng Energy to Shell Plc for an enterprise value of \$1.55 billion in April 2022.

Assuming a significant role, Senior IAS Officer Vikas Sheel is appointed as the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank.

Source: Times Now

- Demonstrating India's active participation on the global stage, seven proficient civil servants have been appointed to key positions overseas. Among them, Mr. Vikas Sheel, an adept bureaucrat, now assumes the role of Executive Director at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila. This appointment underscores India's dedication to contributing to international development initiatives.
- Vikas Sheel, a 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is now the Executive Director at ADB. He brings valuable experience from his current role as Additional Secretary and Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission, contributing to India's representation at this prestigious institution.
- Smita Sarangi has been appointed as Adviser to the Executive Director at ADB in Manila, Philippines. Her expertise will play a vital role in India's collaboration with ADB on important development initiatives.

Indian Missions in Vancouver, New York & Nicosia receive One District One Product Award

Source: DD News

- 'One District One Product' is among the several initiatives of the Government of India in line with Prime Minister Modi's vision of "Aatma Nirbhar Bharat", a self-reliant India. The idea is to select, brand, and promote One Product from each District of the country, harnessing traditional strengths and technology for holistic development.
- The prestigious ODOP Awards were conferred upon Indian Districts, States and Indian Missions abroad by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Commerce and Industry Minister Mr. Piyush Goyal on January 3 as part of the 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Utsav'. The Awards aim to recognize and honor those who have demonstrated exceptional accomplishments in furthering economic development through the ODOP approach.
- Consulate General of India in New York was among the three Indian Missions to receive the prestigious ODOP Award 2023. It was declared the runners-up in the category of India's Foreign Missions for its contribution in promoting ODOP items in the world.

Jain University and Odisha Mining Corporation excel in National Sports Awards

Source: DD News

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports discloses awardees for 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' 2023, recognizing outstanding contributions to sports promotion and development. They will be honored by President Droupadi Murmu on January 9 at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- The 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' is conferred upon corporate entities in both the private and public sectors, Sports Control Boards, NGOs, and sports bodies at the State and National levels that have played a visible role in promoting sports.

- Applications for the awards were invited online, allowing sportspersons, coaches, and entities to self-apply through a dedicated online portal.
- The 'Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar' is one of the six core awards that constitute India's National Sports Awards, along with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award (Khel Ratna), Arjuna Award, Dronacharya Award, Major Dhyan Chand Award, and the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Trophy (MAKA Trophy).

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023: Indore and Surat Share Cleanest City Title

- In a prestigious ceremony hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), the Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 witnessed President Droupadi Murmu conferring accolades to 13 distinguished awardees across various cleanliness categories.
- Indore, for the remarkable seventh consecutive time, secured the cleanest city title.

Savita Kanswal Posthumously Honored With Tenzing Norgay Award

- President Draupadi Murmu posthumously conferred the prestigious Tenzing Norgay National Adventure Award upon Savita Kanswal.
- The award, presented to her father Radheshyam Kanswal, is a testament to Savita's exceptional achievements in the field of mountaineering.
- Savita Kanswal made history by becoming the first Indian woman mountaineer to conquer both Mount Everest (8848 m) and Mount Makalu (8485 m) within an astonishing span of 16 days.

NICMAR Hyderabad Achieves Platinum Certification under IGBC Green Campus Rating

- The National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR), located in Hyderabad, has recently been awarded the prestigious Platinum certification by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) under its Green Campus Rating program.

Deepa Bhandare Makes History as First Female to Receive VSI Award

- Deepa Bhandare, associated with Shri Datta Cooperative Sugar Factory (SSK) in Shirol taluka of Kolhapur, emerged as a trailblazer as she clinched the prestigious Best Environment Officer Award at the ceremony.
- The award, conferred by VSI Chairman Sharad Pawar, marks a historic moment as Bhandare becomes the only woman in the long and illustrious history of Maharashtra's sugar industry to receive this accolade.

REC Limited Wins ICAI Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting FY 2022-23

Source: PSU Connect

- REC Limited, a prominent Maharatna Public Sector Unit and a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) under the Ministry of Power, has been honored with the prestigious 'Plaque' at the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting.
Established in 1969, REC Limited is a premier NBFC focused on Power Sector Financing and Development throughout India.

Gianni Infantino Honored With Sports Personality Award in Dubai

- In a glittering ceremony at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Creative Sports Awards, FIFA President Gianni Infantino was bestowed with the prestigious International Sports Personality of the Year award.
- The event, inspired by the love of sport exhibited by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, has been recognizing outstanding achievements in the realm of sports since its inception in 2009.
- The UAE boasts a rich legacy of organizing FIFA tournaments, having held eight events in the last 21 years.

Assam Govt to Honor Ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi with 'Assam Baibhav' Award

- Former Chief Justice of India and current Rajya Sabha MP, Ranjan Gogoi, is set to be honored with the prestigious 'Assam Baibhav' award, the highest civilian award in Assam.
- This announcement was made by the Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, who highlighted Gogoi's significant contributions to the field of justice and jurisprudence.
- After retiring as Chief Justice, Ranjan Gogoi was nominated as a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha.

Skyways Air Services wins Best Cargo Services Award at Wings India Awards

- Skyways Air Services Pvt Ltd has been recognized for its outstanding cargo services at the prestigious Wings India Awards held in Hyderabad.
- The GMR Group was recognized as the Best Aviation Service Provider, and Indian Oil Skytanking Pvt Ltd for fuel services.

Saudi Arabia's Joy Awards: Nelly Karim, Karim Abdel-Aziz, Eva Longoria, Anthony Hopkins among winners

- The grand ceremony for the 2024 Joy Awards took place on Saturday in Riyadh, featuring the most renowned names from the Arab world and the international scene.
- Organized by Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority in cooperation with MBC Group, the Joy Awards is one of the largest award ceremonies in the Middle East.
- The awards were handed to nominated female and male celebrities across various genres and categories, covering the film, television, sports, fashion, and social media segments.

Inaugural BRICS-CCI Annual Recognition Awards 2024 celebrate excellence, innovation, collaboration

- The first edition of the BRICS-CCI Annual Recognition Awards 2024 (BARA) was held here on Friday, celebrating the unleashing of the power of the BRICS bloc and honouring achievements in various fields.
- Hosted by the BRICS Chamber of Commerce & Industry, India Chapter, at Le Meridian hotel here, the inaugural ceremony had former President Ram Nath Kovind, as chief guest, sharing insightful perspectives that resonated with the collective vision for expanding the BRICS bloc.
- "The awards being presented today recognise not only excellence but also responsible business practice. This approach is in line with our commitment to sustainable development and the well-being of future generations," he said.

In the BCCI Awards 2023, Shubman Gill and Ravi Shastri are set to be recognized and honored

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is gearing up to recognize outstanding contributions to Indian cricket at the upcoming NAMAN Awards ceremony in Hyderabad.
- This prestigious event, held for the first time since 2019, celebrates the achievements of Indian cricketers in the preceding year.
- Shubman Gill is slated to receive the Cricketer of the Year award, acknowledging his extraordinary performance in 2023. Gill played 48 matches during the year, amassing an impressive 2,154 runs.
- Ravi Shastri, a former all-rounder and head coach of the Indian cricket team, will be honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Shastri's illustrious career includes representing India in 80 Tests and 150 One Day Internationals (ODIs), scoring over 3,000 runs in both formats and taking 280 wickets.

2024 Padma awards

- Former Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu, actors Chiranjeevi and Vyjayanthimala Bali, and Bharatanatyam dancer Padma Subrahmanyam will be conferred with Padma Vibhushan, the country's

second highest civilian award, the Central government announced on the eve of Republic Day. Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of Sulabh International, will be conferred with the award posthumously.

Tableau showcasing 'India: Mother of Democracy' claims top position at Republic Day Parade 2024

- The Republic Day Parade 2024 featured a winning tableau on the theme 'India: Mother of Democracy,' securing the first spot and captivating the audience.
- Presented by the Ministry of Culture, the tableau highlighted India's rich democratic heritage, emphasizing its longstanding tradition of democratic values and practices.

BOOK & AUTHOR

Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav launched a book titled 'Modi: Energising a Green Future'

- Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, heading the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), has recently unveiled an insightful book titled "Modi: Energising A Green Future".
- Book is published by Pentagon Press in collaboration with the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation.

The book "An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy" released

- The book "An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy," authored by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.
- Sudha and Narayana Murthy are the co-founders of Infosys.

"Conversations with Aurangzeb": A Novel by Charu Nivedita

- "Conversations with Aurangzeb" is a novel by Tamil literary icon Charu Nivedita, translated into English by Nandini Krishnan.

IMPORTANT DAYS

DRDO Celebrates Its 66th Foundation Day

- India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) commemorated its 66th Foundation Day on January 1, 2024.
- The celebrations commenced with paying floral tributes to former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the "Missile Man of India," and Dr. VS Arunachalam, the former DRDO chief.
- DRDO Chairman Dr. Samir V Kamat addressed the DRDO fraternity.

Global Family Day 2024: 1 January

- Global Family Day, celebrated annually on January 1, marks a universal commitment to peace, unity, and the shared values of humanity.
- The theme for 2024, "Embracing Diversity, Strengthening Families".
- By 1999, Global Family Day was established as a day dedicated to peace-building strategies.

International Mind-Body Wellness Day 2024

Source: Hindustan Times

- International Mind-Body Wellness Day, observed annually on January 3, is a global celebration dedicated to fostering the harmonious coexistence of physical and mental health.
- This occasion serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of our mind, body, and spirit, emphasizing the importance of holistic well-being.

- International Mind-Body Wellness Day urges people worldwide to prioritize self-care, mindfulness practices, and healthy lifestyle choices. In the midst of our fast-paced modern lives, this observance serves as a call to pause and actively engage in behaviors that promote holistic well-being.

2024 Marks the Celebration of World Braille Day

Source: News18

- World Braille Day, annually observed on January 4, is a profound tribute to Louis Braille, the visionary mind behind the transformative braille system.
- Born in 1809 in France, Louis faced the adversity of losing his sight in childhood. However, his resilience and determination led to the creation of one of history's most revolutionary systems.
- World Braille Day aims to raise awareness about the challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments, advocating for their rights and societal integration.
- It serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of empathy and compassion towards those navigating a world without sight.

Marking National Birds Day 2024, we rejoice in the splendor of avian beauty while emphasizing the importance of conservation efforts

Source: Business Standard

- Explore the world's most beautiful and unique birds, each possessing its own charm, on National Birds Day celebrated annually on January 5.
- The day aims to raise awareness about bird conservation and the critical need to protect their habitats, given the challenges they face from illegal pet trade, diseases, and habitat loss.
- Founded in 2002 by the Avian Welfare Coalition, National Bird Day recognizes birds as vital components of ecosystems, acting as living links to the past and indicators of environmental health.
- Many bird species are endangered or protected due to habitat loss and illegal pet trade, emphasizing the urgency of creating a sustainable relationship with these essential animals.

Observing the World Day of War Orphans in 2024

Source: ETV Bharat

- Marking January 6, 2024, the global community will come together to observe the World Day of War Orphans. This day remains dedicated to shedding light on the challenges and requirements of the most vulnerable victims of conflict—the children.
- This day comes amidst ongoing global conflicts, serving as a poignant reminder of the deep and lasting impact war has on the lives of innocent children.
- This year, World Day of War Orphans is marked with two powerful themes: “Orphan Lives Matter” and “Standing Up for War-Affected Children.” These themes are a clarion call for global attention and action to support and protect war-affected children.

Mahayana New Year, celebrated on January 7, marks a significant Buddhist observance.

Source: World History Encyclopaedia

- January 7 marks the celebration of Mahayana New Year for Buddhists globally. Mahayana, a significant branch of Buddhism, is predominantly observed in Northeast Asia, encompassing Tibet, Taiwan, Mongolia, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Unique customs and traditions characterize the practice of Mahayana Buddhism in each of these regions, contributing to the rich tapestry of Buddhist philosophy and ideology.

ANC observes Foundation Day on January 8, 2024, marking its establishment in 1912.

Source: India Today

- The African National Congress (ANC) celebrates its Foundation Day on January 8, recalling its establishment in 1912. This day signifies the ANC's enduring commitment to uniting African people and championing their rights and freedoms.
- The ANC, initially founded as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) in Bloemfontein, symbolizes a landmark event in Africa's struggle against centuries of exploitation and humiliation. Formed in a time of rapid change, with the discovery of diamonds and gold in South Africa, the SANNC aimed to counter oppressive laws and taxes designed to dispossess Africans of their land. The notorious 1913 Land Act, which severely restricted African land rights, catalyzed the SANNC's activism.
- Since the transition to democracy in April 1994, the ANC has been the governing party of South Africa. Its journey from an organization fighting for basic rights to leading the nation signifies a monumental shift in the country's political landscape.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, also referred to as NRI Day, is annually observed on the 9th of January

Source: News18

- NRI Day 2024, also recognized as Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2024, is observed on the 9th of January 2024.
- It was in 2000 when the Indian government decided to recognize the NRI community on January 9th by observing Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.
- Mahatma Gandhi returned to India on January 9, 1915, from South Africa, which gives the ninth of January its significance as NRI Day.
- Despite being formally established in 2000, this day wasn't actually observed until 2003.

More information about the background of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is provided here:

- The idea for NRI Day originated with Indian lawyer, diplomat, and author L.M. Singhvi.
- The day was then formally declared on January 9, 2002, by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the country's then-prime minister.
- On 9th January 2006, the concept of OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) was introduced on Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

World Hindi Day is observed on January 10th each year to promote and celebrate the Hindi language globally

Source: The Economic Times

- World Hindi Day 2024 is observed on the 10th of January 2024.
- The inaugural World Hindi Conference, or Vishva Hindi Sammelan, was held in Nagpur, Maharashtra, in 1975, which is when World Hindi Day first became a thing.
- This day was dedicated to honouring both the Hindi language and the many authors who have contributed to its literature.
- Every year, Vishva Hindi Divas is observed to honour the Conference's anniversary.
- On January 10, Hindi-speaking people around the world celebrate World Hindi Day.
- Many public and private organizations in India hold celebrations for the day, and people who speak Hindi abroad also commemorate it with equal fervor.

National Human Trafficking Awareness Day 2024: Date, History and Significance

- National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, observed annually on January 11.
- In 2007, the United States Senate declared January 11 as National Human Trafficking Awareness Day. President Barack Obama further dedicated the entire month of January 2010.

DPIIT organises Startup India Innovation Week 2024 from 10th-18th January 2024

- The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is set to orchestrate the Startup India Innovation Week 2024, spanning from January 10th to January 18th.
- January 11th, 2024, at the Tenth Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- Speaker: Secretary, DPIIT, Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh.
- Theme: 'Startups Unlocking Infinite Potential'.

National Youth Day 2024: 12th January

- The Government of India, in 1984, declared January 12 as National Youth Day.
- This day commemorates the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
- He is best known for his stirring speech at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago.
- The theme for National Youth Day 2024 is "Viksit Yuva-Viksit Bharat."

Indian Army to Observe 2024 as the Year of Technology Absorption

- The Indian Army has declared 2024 as the "Year of Technology Absorption."

FCI (Food Corporation of India) Marks Its 60th Anniversary

- FCI marks its 60th anniversary, with Union Minister Piyush Goyal praising India's food self-sufficiency as a remarkable achievement in human history.

Pongal 2024: 15-18 January

- It begins on January 15, lasting until January 18. The festival is dedicated to the Sun God, Lord Surya.
- The Pongal festival, also known as Bhogi Pongal, is a vibrant and auspicious harvesting festival widely celebrated in India. This four-day festival holds immense significance in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Indian Army Day 2024: 15th January

- Indian Army Day is a special day celebrated on January 15 every year.
- It marks the anniversary of the Indian Army getting its first Indian chief in 1949.
- This chief was General K.M. Cariappa, who took over from the British.
- The theme for Indian Army Day in 2024 is "In Service of the Nation."
- In 2024, the main celebration will be in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

National Startup Day 2024, Date, History and Quotes

- In a significant declaration in 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proclaimed January 16 as National Startup Day.
- National Startup Day was officially announced on January 15, 2022, with the inaugural observance taking place that same year.
- Theme "Startups Unlocking Infinite Potential."

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti 2024: 17 January

- Guru Gobind Singh Jayanti, also known as Prakash Utsav, is a significant Sikh festival commemorating the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth and last Sikh Guru.
- At the age of nine, in 1676, Guru Gobind Singh was declared the tenth Guru of Sikhs.
- One of his most notable achievements was founding the Khalsa Panth in 1699.

Parakram Diwas 2024

- On January 23rd, 2024, Parakram Diwas commemorates the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, a key figure in India's quest for independence.

- This day is celebrated to honour his indomitable spirit and invaluable contribution to India's independence. This year nation observe the 127th edition of Parakram Diwas 2024.
- Parakram Diwas 2024 is a national event celebrated annually in India since 2021. It commemorates Netaji's birth anniversary and is a tribute to his brave legacy. The day serves as a reminder of the courage and determination of one of India's most revered freedom fighters.

International Day of Education: 24th January

Source: National Day Calendar

- International Day of Education 2024 is observed on the 24th January 2024
- The International Day of Education was declared by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 as a way to honor education and to think about how crucial learning is to progress and peace.
- Each of us has a responsibility to advance high-quality education.
- Institutions are not the only ones that can impart knowledge.
- Access to education, which most of us probably take for granted, can help many people escape poverty and open the door to a bright future.

14th National Voters Day 2024

- National Voters' Day is celebrated annually on January 25 to commemorate the foundation day of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in 1950. It's a day dedicated to strengthening the democratic process by encouraging voter participation and emphasizing the importance of every vote in shaping the nation's future.
- National Voters Day 2024 Theme: Making Every Vote Count: No Voter to be Left Behind. This theme emphasizes the importance of inclusive and accessible elections, ensuring that every eligible voter has the opportunity to exercise their franchise. It underscores the ECI's commitment to reaching out to every corner of the country, bridging the gap between eligible voters and the electoral process.

26th January 2024 marked the celebration of Republic Day in India

- Republic Day 2024 is observed on the 26th January 2024.
- The day honours the promulgation of the Indian Constitution on January 26, 1950.

International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

- January 27th marks a solemn occasion recognised globally as the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.
- This day serves as a poignant reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust and the enduring need to fight against hatred, bigotry, and racism in all its forms.

28 January- Birth Anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai

- Lala Lajpat Rai was born on 28 January, 1865 in Punjab. He was a prominent nationalist leader who played an important role in India's struggle for freedom. He also earned the title of 'Punjab Kesari' or 'the Lion of Punjab'. He initiated the foundation of the Punjab National Bank. He died on 17 November 1928, due to serious injuries. The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Hisar, Haryana is named after Lala Lajpat Rai.

29 January- Indian Newspaper Day

Source: X.com

- A day set aside to honour the beginning of newspapers in India is known as Indian Newspaper Day. This day is intended to raise awareness of Indian newspapers. Indian Newspaper Day, which is observed on January 29th each year, is today. However, there is no theme to observe this important occasion.

January 30 is observed as Martyrs' Day or Shaheed Diwas

- Martyrs' Day, also known as Shaheed Diwas, is observed in India on January 30 annually. The day is dedicated to pay homage to the courageous soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their motherland. It also marks the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. In 1949, Godse, a Hindu nationalist, was sentenced to death.

International Zebra Day commemorated in 2024

- International Zebra Day, observed annually on January 31, is a significant event dedicated to raising awareness about the conservation of zebras.

OBITUARIES

Renowned academician and Padma Bhushan awardee, Professor Ved Prakash Nanda, has passed away.

Source: TIP

- Professor Ved Prakash Nanda, a luminary in the Indian diaspora, recently passed away, leaving behind a legacy of profound contributions to literature, education, and international law.
- Born in 1934 in Gujranwala, British India, his journey transcended borders as his family migrated to India after the partition in 1947.
- Prof. Nanda's remarkable career, including being awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2018, reflects his dedication to academia, international law, and fostering global understanding.

Four-time FIFA World Cup champion Mario Zagallo from Brazil has passed away

Source: Deccan Herald

- Mario Zagallo, who won two World Cups as a player, one as a coach and another as an assistant coach for Brazil, has passed away at the age of 92.

About Mario Zagallo :

- Zagallo began his career as a striker with Rio's America and later also played for Flamengo and Botafogo, one of the few Brazilian clubs which rivalled Pele's Santos in the 1960s.
- He holds the record for World Cup titles in general with four titles in total.

He also holds the record for World Cup finals with six participations.

He was the first person to win the FIFA World Cup as both a manager and as a player, winning the competition in 1958 and 1962 as a player, in 1970 as manager., and in 1994 as assistant manager.

- Zagallo also coached Brazil in 1974 (finishing fourth) and in 1998 (finishing as runners-up) and was a technical assistant in 2006.

Franz Beckenbauer, the legendary German footballer and World Cup-winning captain, has passed away at the age of 78

Source: The Times of India

- Franz Beckenbauer, one of only three men two have won the FIFA World Cup as a player and as a manager, has died at the age of 78.
- Born in Giesling, Munich, in September 1945, Franz Beckenbauer journey with football began in Bayern's youth squad, making his debut as a left-winger in 1964. Despite Bayern's earlier struggles, Beckenbauer's versatility and leadership saw them rise, winning their first Bundesliga title in 1968-69.
- Beckenbauer's international career started at 20, marking the beginning of a golden era for West Germany. He led the team to victory in the 1972 European Championship and the 1974 World Cup, earning him the Ballon d'Or in 1972 and 1976. His impact extended beyond position norms, showcasing exceptional ball control and vision.

Ustad Rashid Khan, the maestro of Indian classical music, has passed away at 55

Source: The Print

- The Indian classical music community mourns the loss of Ustad Rashid Khan, a stalwart of the Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana. Passing away at the age of 55 due to complications from prostate cancer, he leaves behind a legacy marked by profound beauty and innovative musical spirit.
- Born in Uttar Pradesh's Badayun, Rashid Khan's musical lineage ran deep. His initial training came from his maternal grand-uncle, Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan, laying the foundation for his exquisite vocal skills. Following his debut, Rashid Khan's ascent was meteoric.
- He graced the prestigious ITC concert in Delhi at 12 and joined the ITC Sangeet Research Academy in Calcutta at just 14, immersing himself further in the rich tapestry of Hindustani classical music. This dedication translated into mastery, with his renditions of Vilambit Khayal earning him widespread acclaim.

Renowned Urdu Poet Munawwar Rana Passes Away At 71

- Munawwar Rana, a celebrated Urdu poet, passed away at the age of 71.
- He was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2014 for his poetry book 'Shahdaba'.

Malayalam Music Director K J Joy Passes Away

- Malayalam music director K J Joy has passed away at the age of 77.

Classical Singer Prabha Atre Passes Away at 91

- The Indian classical music fraternity Dr. Prabha Atre, a classical vocalist and a luminary of the Kirana Gharana has passed away.

RANKS & REPORTS

Six Nations Top Global Passport Ranking, With Access to 194 Destinations

- France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain share the top spot in the quarterly ranking of the world's most powerful passports. Enjoying visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to an impressive 194 destinations, this marks a historic high since the inception of the Henley Passport Index 19 years ago.
- Japan and Singapore, holding the top position for the past five years, now see a triumphant rise for Europe. Finland and Sweden, tied with South Korea, secure the second spot.

Global Economic Resilience amid Dark Outlook: World Bank Report

- World Growth: Estimated at 2.6% (2023), 2.4% (2024), and 2.7% (2025).
- US: 2.5% (2023), 1.6% (2024), 1.7% (2025).
- China: 5.2% (2023), 4.5% (2024), 4.3% (2025).
- India: Anticipated to maintain the fastest growth, ascending from 6.3% (2023-24) to 6.5% (2025-26).

Hyderabad Ranks 9th Cleanest; Siddipet Tops In South India

- Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana, achieved a significant milestone by securing the ninth position in cleanliness among cities with a population exceeding one lakh in the Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023.
- Siddipet, a city in Telangana, proudly clinched the national award for being the cleanest city in south India within the 50,000-1 lakh population category.

US Leads 2024 Military Rankings, India Fourth, Bhutan Ranks Lowest

- The Global Firepower's Military Strength Rankings for 2024 offer a comprehensive assessment of military capabilities worldwide. The rankings, encompassing 145 countries, take into account more than 60 factors.

India Emerges as a Global Leader in Trust: Edelman Trust Barometer 2024

- The nation secures the 4th spot for media trust and the 5th position for trust in the government.
- In Edelman Trust Barometer 2024, India emerges as a global frontrunner in trust, topping the charts in confidence in businesses and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

TCS ranked second most valuable IT brand in global list**Source: Business Today**

- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) rated the second most valuable IT services brand in the world, according to the 2024 Global 500 IT Services Ranking by Brand Finance.

About Tata Consultancy Services:

Founders: J. R. D. Tata, Faquir Chand Kohli

CEO: K. Krithivasan (1 Jun 2023–)

Headquarters: Mumbai

Founded: 1 April 1968

SPORTS**Indian Teenager Anahat Singh Bags Girls' U-19 2023 Scottish Junior Open Title at Edinburgh**

- Anahat Singh, a rising star in Indian squash, secured victory in the girls' under-19 category at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh.

Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports achieve commendable positions in the global on-time performance rankings.**Source: The Times of India**

- In a recent on-time performance review conducted by aviation analytics firm Cirium, Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports have emerged as global leaders in punctuality, securing the second and third ranks, respectively.
- With over 84 per cent on-time departures, these airports have showcased their commitment to efficiency and reliability in air travel.
- IndiGo, which stood fourth among Asia Pacific airlines with over 82 per cent on-time arrivals, plays a crucial role in contributing to the punctuality at these airports. Approximately half of all flights at Bengaluru and 65 per cent in Hyderabad are operated by IndiGo.
- The Circum report stated that a flight is considered punctual if it departs or arrives with a difference of 15 minutes from the scheduled time. The Kempegowda International Airport has achieved 84.08 % punctuality rate in the year 2023, making it one of the most punctual airports in the world. However, Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport beat Bengaluru airport with a slightly higher punctuality rate stands at 84.42%.
- Meanwhile, America's Minneapolis' St Paul International Airport topped the list of most airports across the globe with a punctuality rate of 84.44%
- In 2022, Bengaluru airport was ranked 20th position in the list, and it hints that the most flights arrived and departed on-time this year.

In the Barcelona event, a new 5 km world record is established by Beatrice Chebet**Source: BBC**

- Concluding her remarkable year with a spectacular showcase of athletic prowess, Kenya's Beatrice Chebet shattered the world record for the women's 5 km marathon at the Cursa dels Nassos in Barcelona.
- Clocking an astounding 14:13, Chebet outpaced her competitors and bettered the previous record by six seconds, setting the stage for a memorable achievement.
- The final showdown was between Beatrice Chebet and Ejegayehu Taye, the former record holder. In a thrilling sprint, Chebet surged ahead in the last 500m, securing her victory with a clear lead.

Rohit Sharma rates Cape Town win as 'one of India's best Test match victories'

Source: Hindustan Times

- Bestowing high praise, India's captain Rohit Sharma has acclaimed the nation's historic Test triumph at Newlands in Cape Town, labeling it as "one of the most exceptional victories" in the annals of India's cricketing history.
- With their backs against the wall after experiencing a crushing defeat in the opening Test of the series at the SuperSport Park in Centurion, Rohit and his men scripted a praiseworthy comeback and turned the tables to defeat South Africa by seven wickets on a pacer-friendly surface in the New Year's Test at the Newlands.
- "It'll be one of our best Test match victories," Rohit told the reporters after India's triumph in the shortest Test ever played (in terms of balls bowled).
- "Having not won here in Cape Town [before], obviously this puts it right up there with all the victories that we've had. It's very hard to compare the Test matches that you play because every Test match has its own importance and own relevance. The Test match that we won at The Gabba as well. The last test match that was lost by Australia in Brisbane was in 1988, I think. Nearly after 23, 24 years (32 years), we won the Test match there. It kind of became like their fortress. They never lose a test match there," Rohit said.
- "And the way we won that Test match as well was quite important. From where we came, we were 1-nil down, we won in Melbourne and then we drew the Test match in Sydney and then won in Brisbane. So you can't really rank the Test matches, but this has to be right up there because we had not won here. That shows how important a venue this is for us to come here and perform. I give a lot of credit to our team to put up a performance like that and win the game," the India captain said.

Yuki Bhambri and Robin Haase face defeat in the semifinals of the Brisbane International, signaling an end to their campaign in the tournament.

Source: Hindustan Times

- Yuki Bhambri-Robin Haase lost in their semi-final match, at the Brisbane International.
- Yuki Bhambri and his partner Robin Haase faced a setback in the Brisbane International ATP Tour tournament semifinals on Saturday. The Indo-Dutch pair, seeded eighth, experienced a close match against the second-seeded duo of Lloyd Glasspool (England) and Jean-Julien Rojer (Netherlands), ultimately losing 3-6, 7-6, 9-11. The fiercely contested match lasted for one hour and 40 minutes.
- The Bhambri-Haase duo had beaten the American pair of Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow in straight sets -- 7-6 (5), 7-6 (6) -- in the quarterfinals.
- Last year, the 31-year-old Bhambri from New Delhi won his maiden ATP title at the Mallorca Championships doubles competition, partnering with South African Lloyd Harris.

Divyakriti Singh Becomes 1st Indian Woman Arjuna Awardee for Equestrian Sports

- Divyakriti Singh, has been conferred with the prestigious Arjuna Award, making her the first woman from Rajasthan to achieve this honour. The award was presented in a grand ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu.

Rhythm Sangwan Clinches 16th Olympic Quota for 2024 Paris Games

- The Asian Shooting Championships 2024 in Jakarta, Indonesia, Rhythm Sangwan secured a bronze medal in the women's 25m pistol event, obtaining a Paris 2024 Olympic quota for India.
- During the intense 25m pistol final, Rhythm Sangwan showcased her skills, scoring 28 out of 45 to claim the bronze.

9th Asian Winter Games, set to illuminate the winter sports landscape in 2025

- This grand reveal, hosted in the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, China, marks a significant milestone as the Games draw closer.
- The heart and soul of the Games are personified in its mascots, “Binbin” and “Nini”, two charming Siberian tiger cubs.

Aman Sherawat Secures 57kg Gold In 2024 Zagreb Open singles

- India's young wrestling sensation, Aman Sehrawat, set the stage on fire at the Zagreb Open 2024 by winning a gold medal in the 57 kg category of the men's singles event.
- As Sehrawat is often regarded as India's next big wrestling sensation.

Real Madrid Wins against Barcelona in Spanish Super Cup

- Real Madrid played against Barcelona and won 4-1. This big game was part of the Spanish Super Cup final and happened on January 14, 2024.
- It took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Rohit sharma first men's player with 150 t20 appearances and 100 win

- Rohit Sharma has created history with his appearance in the second match against Afghanistan as he became the first men's cricketer to play 150 T20Is on Sunday.
- Rohit also has hit the most sixes in T20Is with 182 to his name.

Indian President Launches 5th Meghalaya Games

- On January 15, 2024, the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, inaugurated the 5th Edition of the Meghalaya Games in Tura, Meghalaya.

ICC Players of the Month for December 2023

- Players of the Month for December 2023 for Men's Pat Cummins (Australia).
- Players of the Month for December 2023 for Women's Deepti Sharma (India).

About ICC:

Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Founded: 15 June 1909

CEO: Geoff Allardice

Chairman: Greg Barclay

Sue Redfern: ICC's First Female Neutral Umpire in Bilateral Series

Source: ICC Cricket

- Sue Redfern from England is set to become the first ICC-appointed female neutral umpire to officiate in a bilateral series.
- This historic moment is scheduled to take place during the upcoming WT20I between Australia and South Africa.

About ICC:

Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Founded: 15 June 1909

CEO: Geoff Allardice

Chairman: Greg Barclay

Asian Shooting Championship 2024

Source: BNN Breaking

- Yogesh Singh showcased exceptional marksmanship in the men's 25m centre fire pistol competition, claiming the individual gold medal with a score of 573.

- In the shotgun qualifiers held in Kuwait City, Lakshay demonstrated his prowess by securing the bronze medal. He shot a commendable 33 in the six-man final, finishing fourth in the qualification round with a score of 119.

Carlos Sainz's Historic Victory in Dakar Rally 2024

- Carlos Sainz, at the age of 61, has made history by winning the Dakar Rally for the fourth time.
- His latest victory in the 2024 rally marks him as the oldest winner of this gruelling race.
- Sainz, also known as 'El Matador'

Tata Group Secures IPL Title Sponsorship for Next 5 Years

Tata Sons Private Limited has successfully utilized its Right to Match card, retaining the prestigious title sponsorship of the Indian Premier League (IPL) for the upcoming five seasons, spanning 2024 to 2028.

Asian championship: India wins bronze in mixed skeet

- Young Raiza Dhillon, who secured a Paris Olympics quota for India, teamed up with Gurjoat Khangura to secure a bronze in the skeet mixed team event, marking her third medal at the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun competition held on Sunday. In the second bronze medal match, the Indian duo outshot the local favorites Abdullah Alrashidi and Eman Al Shama, finishing with a score of 41-39.

The complete medal tally for the 2024 Khelo India Youth Games

- The Khelo India Youth Games 2024 has kicked off in Tamil Nadu, showcasing the nation's young sporting talent in a celebration of skill, determination, and sportsmanship.
- With over 5,600 athletes nationwide, this sixth edition of KIYG promises to be a spectacular event, running from January 19 to 31. Hosted in four vibrant cities – Chennai, Madurai, Trichy, and Coimbatore – the games are a testament to India's commitment to nurturing sports at the grassroots level.
- This year's KIYG witnesses the participation of athletes from all 36 States and Union Territories of India, reflecting the diverse and widespread engagement in sports across the nation. Tamil Nadu, as the host, boasts the largest contingent with 559 athletes, setting the stage for an exciting competition.

For 2023, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has revealed the Men's and Women's T20 International Teams of the Year

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) has revealed the T20I Teams of the Year for both Men and Women in 2023, acknowledging outstanding performances in the shortest format of the game. The selection showcases individuals who have demonstrated excellence either as batsmen, bowlers, or all-rounders over the course of the calendar year.
- The Men's T20I Team of the Year 2023 is a blend of emerging stars and established talents from across the globe. It features players from India, England, the West Indies, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Ireland.
- The Women's T20I Team of the Year 2023 also features a mix of established and emerging players from various cricketing nations. The team is characterized by its blend of youthful exuberance and experienced campaigners. The presence of players from non-traditional cricketing nations like Uganda is a testament to the growing global reach of T20 cricket.

In the Khelo India Youth Games hosted in Chennai, gymnast Aaryan Davande from Maharashtra clinched the gold medal in the boys' artistic all-round category

Source: News18

- In the Khelo India Youth Games 2023, defending champions Maharashtra opened their gold medal account when gymnast Aaryan Davande clinched the Boys Artistic All-Round crown at the SDAT Aquatics complex in Chennai.
- Davande accumulated a total of 73 points to beat Uttar Pradesh's Pranav Mishra. Harshit of UP clinched the bronze in the event.

- Girls team from Tamilnadu won the gold medal, Rajasthan bagged silver and Maharashtra got Bronze in Cycling team sprint event.
- In the 500-metre trial girls category, J. Srimathi won gold, Vimla from Rajasthan bagged silver and R. Tamilarasi from Tamilnadu got the bronze medal.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announces the winners for the 2023 ICC Awards, recognizing outstanding performances in international cricket

- The ICC Awards 2023, organized by the International Cricket Council, represents the pinnacle of recognition for international cricket players.
- Bas de Leede was named as the ICC Men's Associate Cricketer of the Year 2023 for his remarkable all-round run in the year. He was the standout player for the Netherlands at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 Qualifier and the World Cup in India.
- Queentor Abel made Kenya proud by winning the ICC Women's Associate Cricketer of the Year for 2023. She picked 30 T20I wickets at an unreal average of 7.36, and scored 476 T20I runs at 34.

Nikita Kumari from Rajasthan clinches gold in discus throw at the Khelo India Youth Games

- In the Khelo India youth games, Nikita Kumari of Rajasthan won the gold in the discus throw event.
- She was followed by Riddhi from Haryana winning the silver while Bhakti Gawade from Maharashtra won the bronze.

Virat Kohli secures the ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year Award for 2023

- Indian cricket icon Virat Kohli was honored as the ICC men's ODI Cricketer of the Year for 2023, recognizing his stellar performance in the format, notably his remarkable display during the World Cup held in his home country.
- This is the fourth such award for Kohli, who was the second most prolific run-scorer in ODIs last year behind compatriot Shubman Gill.

Rohan Bopanna, the oldest Grand Slam winner, claimed victory at the 2024 Australian Open

- India's tennis ace Rohan Bopanna, alongside his Australian partner Matthew Ebden, secured the Grand Slam title at the Australian Open 2024 by defeating Italy's Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori in the men's doubles final at Melbourne Park.
- The 43-year-old Rohan Bopanna, who recently became World No. 1 in the ATP men's doubles rankings is now the oldest grand slam winner.

The Netherlands clinched the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup

Source: Hockey India

- India finished as runner-up at the inaugural edition of the FIH Hockey 5s Women's World Cup after a 7-2 loss to the Netherlands in the final in Muscat.
- India tried to make a comeback and scored twice – Jyoti Chhatri (20th minute) and Rutaja Dadaso Pisal (23rd minute) – but could not catch the Dutch team which added one more goal courtesy of Kalse before the full-time hooter.

Tanmay Agarwal's exceptional triple century made history in the Ranji Trophy

Source: The Economic Times

- Hyderabad's Tanmay Agarwal scored an unbeaten 323 off just 160 balls against Arunachal Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy Plate Group game. His innings included 33 fours and 21 sixes, showcasing his aggressive batting style.

Naorem Roshibina Devi was honored as the Female Wushu Athlete of the Year

- Naorem Roshibina Devi, the pride of Manipur, has clinched the prestigious title of International Wushu Federation Female Athlete of the Year, solidifying her place as a powerhouse in the world of wushu.
- Roshibina's triumphs at the Asian Games in 2018 and 2022 have been pivotal moments in her career, showcasing her dominance in the sport. Her silver and bronze medals in the sanda category have earned her widespread recognition and admiration.

Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra clinches U.S Intercontinental Title

- Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra secured victory at the NBA's intercontinental super featherweight championship in the US, defeating American Gerardo Esquivel in Toppenish City, Washington.
- Notably, Jangra transitioned from the 75kg weight class to compete in the intercontinental super featherweight division, showcasing exceptional skills and strategic brilliance.

Sonam Maskar secures silver in women's air rifle event in Cairo, Egypt

- Sonam Maskar impressively debuted at the Cairo Shooting World Cup, securing the women's air rifle silver medal, narrowly losing to Germany's Anna Janssen by just 0.9 points.
- Nancy Mandhotra, joining Maskar in the final, displayed excellent form during the qualification round but missed out on a medal by a slim margin of 0.2 points, highlighting the intense competition.

SUMMITS AND MOUS

Wardwizard Foods Inks MoU with Gujarat govt to Expand Operations

- Wardwizard Foods and Beverages Limited recently witnessed a significant surge in its shares, rising by 9.98 per cent, following the company's collaboration with the government of Gujarat.

About Gujarat:

Capital: Gandhinagar

Chief Minister: Bhupendrabhai Patel

Governor: Acharya Devvrat

PM Modi to Ignite Youth Potential at 27th National Youth Festival in Nashik

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 27th National Youth Festival in Nashik, Maharashtra, on January 12th, 2024.
- This year's theme, "MYBharat-ViksitBharat@2047 – By the Youth, For the Youth".

Maldives and China Sign 20 Agreements for Diverse Cooperation

- Chinese President Xi Jinping and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu recently held significant talks, culminating in the signing of 20 key agreements.

India Secures Lithium Blocks in Argentina to address ₹24,000 Crore Import Dependency

- The deal finalized between Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) and Catamarca Minera Y Energética Sociedad Del Estado (CAMYEN), an Argentine state-owned mining and energy company.
- India is also set to establish an offshore office for KABIL in Catamarca, Argentina.
- Argentina, holding 21% of the world's lithium reserves concentrated in the Lithium.

Switzerland to Host Ukraine Peace Summit on Zelenskiy's Request

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has secured Switzerland's agreement to host a global peace summit aimed at resolving the conflict sparked by Russia's incursion into Ukraine on Feb.

Maharashtra inked MoUs worth Rs 3.53 lakh crore at WEF in Davos: CM Eknath Shinde**Source:** NDTV Profit

- Maharashtra government has inked memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with an investment potential of Rs 88,420 crore over the last two days at the World Economic Forum currently underway in Davos.

About Maharashtra:

Chief Minister: Eknath Shinde

Founded: 1 May 1960

Governor: Ramesh Bais

Capital: Mumbai

BANKING & ECONOMY**Core Sector Output Growth Hits Six-Month Low at 7.8% in November**

- In November, the production growth of eight crucial infrastructure sectors hit a six-month low at 7.8%, primarily attributed to declines in the crude oil and cement sectors.

Tata Power Secures Rajasthan Transmission Project

- Tata Power has emerged victorious in the bid for the Bikaner-III Neemrana-II Transmission project, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) established by PFC Consulting, a subsidiary of Power Finance Corporation.

About Rajasthan:

Capital: Jaipur (Executive Branch)

Chief Minister: Bhajan Lal Sharma

Governor: Kalraj Mishra

AIIB Takes Lead in Rs 2.5k Crore Funding for Mahindra-OTPP's Green InvIT

- Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is set to spearhead a fundraising round worth Rs 2,500 crore for the Sustainable Energy Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) supported by the Mahindra Group.

About Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank:

Headquarters: Beijing, China

Formation: 16 January 2016

Membership: 109 member states

FinMin allows 30th tranche of electoral bonds

- The Indian government has granted approval for the release of the 30th tranche of electoral bonds, set to go on sale from January 2 to January 11, 2024.
- The inaugural sale of electoral bonds took place in March 2018.

Despite a year-on-year increase, India's gross GST revenue experiences a three-month low in December.**Source:** The Economic times

- India GST revenue: India's Goods and Services tax revenue continued to rise on an annual basis, but it dropped to a three month low in December.
- India's GST collections rose 10.28 percent to reach Rs 1.65 lakh crore in December, the Finance Ministry announced today. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up was nearly Rs 1.50 lakh crore in December 2022. The December 2023 collections are, however, lower than Rs 1.68 lakh crore collected in November and even down from Rs 1.72 lakh crore mopped up in October, which was the second-highest collection ever since the GST rollout.

- "During the month, the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 13% higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year," the finance ministry said in a statement.
- The average gross monthly GST collection in the FY 2023-24 now stands at Rs. 1.66 lakh crore and is 11% per cent more than that in the same period in the previous financial year," the finance ministry said in a statement.
- "The remarkable growth in GST collections over the past few months is not only on account of the underlying strong economic factors, but also due to the efforts of the tax authorities in deploying tools to compare data sets to determine short payment and evasion," MS Mani, partner, Deloitte said.
- "The growing emphasis on audits led by specific information available on various databases, not only on the GST portal, has led to a significant increase in compliance across sectors and states," Mani added.

India Ratings Upgrades PNB Housing Finance's NCD Ratings to IND AA+ with a Stable Outlook

Source: Business Standard

- Upgrading PNB Housing Finance Limited's non-convertible debentures (NCDs), India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has revised the rating to 'IND AA+' from 'IND AA' while maintaining a stable outlook.
- PNBHF is a major housing finance player with an AUM of INR 674 billion, focusing on retail loans and boasting over three decades of operational experience.
- PNBHF has diverse funding sources, including deposits, banking lines, and external commercial borrowings, ensuring flexibility and stability in its resource profile. The company's focus on a low-ticket, granular mortgage portfolio has contributed to improved profitability, with a return on assets of 2.2% in 1H FY24.

December Witnesses Festival Demand Slowdown as PMI Manufacturing Records an 18-Month Low at 54.9

Source: The Hindu BusinessLine

- The HSBC India Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing dropped to an 18-month low of 54.9 in December, down from 56 in November, signaling a slowdown.
- Despite this, the sector remains in expansion mode, marking 30 consecutive months with the index above 50, indicative of growth. The decline was attributed to a weaker rise in new orders and output.
- The manufacturing sector continued to expand in December, albeit at a softer pace, maintaining growth momentum despite a decline. New business gains, favorable market conditions, fairs, and expositions contributed to a sharp increase in manufacturing during December.

Propelled by record Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) acquisitions, Indian equities surge to unprecedented heights in the month of December

Source: Zee Business

- Setting a historic milestone, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPI) recorded monumental monthly acquisitions of Indian equities, surging to 661.35 billion rupees (\$8 billion) in December, as per data from the National Securities Depository.
- This surge catapulted India's Nifty 50 and Sensex benchmarks to fresh record highs. The first half of December alone witnessed a record fortnightly purchase of shares worth 427.33 billion rupees, attributed to lower U.S. bond yields and expectations of Federal Reserve interest rate cuts.
- Faster-than-expected quarterly GDP growth prompted the Reserve Bank of India to revise upwards its fiscal 2024 growth forecast. State election results signaled policy continuity in 2024, adding to the positive sentiment.

Committing substantial resources, REC (Rural Electrification Corporation) invests Rs. 35,000 crore in multi-modal projects, collaborating with Rail Vikas Nigam for a comprehensive five-year initiative.

Source: Business Standard

- In a strategic move, REC Limited, a distinguished Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise founded in 1969 under the Ministry of Power, has inked a recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL).
- This collaboration aims to provide financial support of up to Rs. 35,000 Crores for a range of Infrastructure Projects over the next 5 years, showcasing the commitment of both entities to drive essential developments in the sector.
- The infrastructure projects set to benefit from this collaboration span various domains, including multi-modal logistics hubs, rail infrastructure, roads, ports, and metro projects.

Propelling forward with a strategic vision, India outlines its proposal for a 'Bharat Park' Trade Zone in the UAE

Source: Indian Retailer

- The Indian government is strategically laying the groundwork for 'Bharat Park,' a specialized trade zone within the UAE. This envisioned zone will incorporate showrooms and warehouses, providing a prominent platform to exhibit and store Indian-manufactured goods, catering to a global audience.
- Addressing the future of the textile industry, Goyal underscores the prominence of Man Made Fibre Textiles due to challenges in meeting the increasing demand for cotton.
- He encourages industry players to leverage free trade agreements with Japan, Australia, UAE, and South Korea, expressing concern over underutilization.

The National Statistical Office (NSO) data reveals that India's GDP growth projection for the fiscal year 2023-24 stands at 7.3%

Source: Mint

- The inaugural advance estimates from the National Statistical Office (NSO) foresee a sturdy growth of 7.3% for India's GDP in the fiscal year 2023-24. This initial projection reflects a promising outlook for the country's economic trajectory in the upcoming financial year.
- This surpasses the 7.2% growth recorded in the previous financial year. Notably, the construction sector is expected to lead with double-digit growth at 10.7%.
- Real GDP at Constant Prices in FY24 is projected to reach ₹171.79 lakh crore, compared to the provisional estimate of ₹160.06 lakh crore for FY23.

India's foreign exchange reserves witness a surge, reaching \$623.2 billion

Source: The Financial Express

- In the week ending December 29, India's foreign exchange reserves experienced a substantial increase, rising by \$2.759 billion and reaching a total of \$623.2 billion, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), a major contributor to reserves, grew by \$1.869 billion, reaching \$551.615 billion. FCAs are influenced by fluctuations in the value of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen.
- Gold reserves recorded a significant rise of \$853 million, totaling \$48.328 billion, contributing to the overall strength of India's reserve portfolio.
- Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) increased by \$38 million, reaching \$18.365 billion, while India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) experienced a marginal decrease, down by \$2 million to \$4.892 billion.

RBI implements safeguards for individual investors in case of issuer default on short-term financial instruments.

Source: Business Today

- RBI ensures minimal losses for individual investors in case of issuer defaults on short-term financial instruments, effective April 01, 2024.

Key Highlights :

- **Individual Investor Limits :** Individual investors' investment in short-term Commercial Papers (CPs) and Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) is now capped at 25% of the issue size. Previously, there were no specific limits for individual investors' investments in such instruments.
- **Applicability of the Rule :** The 25% limit applies to the total subscription by all individuals, including Hindu Undivided Families (HUF), in any primary issuance of CPs or NCDs.
- **Information Disclosure by Issuers :** Moreover, issuers of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) and commercial papers (CPs) are required to provide information on any payment default via a variety of means.

Paytm collaborates with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam to enable mobile payments citywide.**Source: BNN Breaking**

- One97 Communications, the owner of Paytm, signs an MoU with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam to introduce mobile payments using Paytm's QR code, Soundbox, and card machines for Nagar Nigam facilities.
- This is aimed at providing seamless mobile payment services during the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in the city.
- With this, the company will enable mobile payments at various departments in collaboration with Ayodhya Nagar Nigam.
- Through this MoU, the company will also deploy Paytm card machines at cash collection centres under State Nagar Nigam departments.
- This MoU was signed in presence of Girish Pati Tripathi, Mayor, Ayodhya Nagar Nigam.

About Paytm :

- Founded : August 2010
- Headquarters : Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India
- Founder & CEO : Vijay Shekhar Sharma

Narayana Health has received approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to launch its health insurance business.**Source: Business Standard**

- Narayana Health has obtained approval from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to enter the health insurance business in the country.
- The company operates one of the largest hospital chains, known by the brand name Narayana Hospital.
- With this approval, the count of Standalone Health Insurance Companies (SAHI) will increase from 5 to 6.
- This marks the fifth registration granted by IRDAI in approximately one year, encompassing Life, Non-life, and Health segments.
- IRDAI has set a goal of achieving 'Insurance for All' by 2047, with a particular focus on improving the penetration of non-life insurance companies, which currently stands at 1 percent.
- India's overall insurance penetration is expected to increase to 4 percent in the financial year 2022-23 from the previous level of 4.2 percent in 2021-22.

About IRDAI :**Established :** 1999**Headquarters :** Hyderabad, Telangana**Chairman :** Debasish Panda

The IRDAI is a statutory body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Government of India (GoI) and is tasked with regulating and licensing the insurance and reinsurance industries in India.

IndusInd Bank has introduced the 'Samman RuPay Credit Card' specifically designed for government employees

Source: Mint

- IndusInd Bank has partnered with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to unveil the 'Samman RuPay Credit Card,' a UPI-enabled card crafted exclusively for government sector employees.
- The Samman RuPay Credit Card combines traditional credit card advantages with advanced UPI features, streamlining financial transactions.
- Benefits include cashback on various expenditures, complimentary movie tickets, no cash advance charges, and surcharge waivers for IRCTC and fuel transactions.
- The card not only offers financial incentives but also aims to simplify and enrich the day-to-day transactional experience for government employees. Users can link RuPay credit cards to UPI IDs, facilitating secure and convenient payment transactions.

NPCI Launches UPI-PayNow Linkage for Cross-Border Remittances between India and Singapore

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has introduced the UPI-PayNow linkage, facilitating direct remittances between India and Singapore.
- This collaboration, a result of close coordination between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

Government Reduces Windfall Tax on Crude Oil amid Global Economic Concerns

- In response to the evolving dynamics of the global oil market, the Indian government has decided to slash the windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil, effective January 16.
- Indian government slashes windfall tax on domestically-produced crude oil from Rs 2,300 to Rs 1,700 per tonne.

RBI Releases Draft Norms for fintech Self-Regulatory Organisations

- RBI has unveiled a draft framework for the establishment and recognition of self-regulatory organizations (SROs) in the fintech sector.
- SRO-FT should be set up as a not-for-profit company under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.

L&T Secures 'Mega Order' for Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Electrification Project

Source: Mint

- L&T Construction's railways strategic business group has clinched a significant contract valued between ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 crore for a pivotal segment of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.
- The 'mega' order, received from a Japanese agency overseeing the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project (MAHSR).

Foxconn and HCL Group Forge Partnership for Chip Packaging Unit in India

Source: The Economic Times

- Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn, a long-time Apple Inc. partner, is diversifying from China and joining forces with HCL Group to establish a chip packaging and testing facility in India.
- Foxconn's subsidiary, Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development, will invest \$37.2 million for a 40% stake, with the remaining held by HCL.

ICICI Bank Canada Launches 'Money2India (Canada)' Mobile Banking App

- ICICI Bank Canada, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ICICI Bank Limited, has introduced its latest mobile banking app, 'Money2India (Canada)'.

Apple Surpasses Samsung as Top Smartphone Maker for the First Time Since 2010

- Apple Inc.'s iPhone has outpaced Samsung Electronics Co. devices, securing the title of the best-selling smartphone series in 2023.
- This marks the first time since 2010 that Samsung has conceded the top spot in the smartphone market.

SEBI Chairperson Launches CDSL's Multi-Lingual Initiatives for Investor Ease

- In celebration of its silver jubilee year, Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL), Asia's first listed depository, took a significant step towards inclusivity and accessibility in the capital market landscape.
- SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch launched two groundbreaking multi-lingual initiatives at the silver jubilee function held on January 17.

LIC has unveiled the Jeevan Dhara II Deferred Annuity Plan

- Unveiled by LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty, the new Jeevan Dhara II plan offers a non-participating, individual savings, deferred annuity option.
- Jeevan Dhara II offers life cover during the deferment period, enhancing the financial security of policyholders. The plan provides higher annuity rates as policyholders age, ensuring a secure and stable income stream in later years.

Praveen Achuthan Kutty has been granted approval by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to serve as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of DCB Bank

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted approval for the appointment of Praveen Achuthan Kutty as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DCB Bank.
- The official confirmation came on January 16, signaling a tenure of three years starting from April 29, 2024, as outlined in the regulatory filing.
- Praveen Achuthan Kutty brings a wealth of experience, boasting over 32 years in Retail and SME banking. Having been an integral part of DCB Bank's leadership for the past 16 years, Kutty currently oversees Retail, SME, and Agri Banking.

YES BANK has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first Indian bank to join RXIL's ITFS (Invoice Trading and Financing System) platform

- In a historic development, YES BANK has achieved the distinction of being the first Indian bank to conduct an export finance transaction on RXIL Global IFSC Limited's International Trade Financing Services Platform (ITFS). This partnership signifies a major advancement in digitalization and cross-border business initiatives for YES BANK.
- The platform, registered under the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA), offers a digital avenue for arranging credit through Factoring, Forfaiting, and other trade financing services at competitive rates with swift processing. This historic transaction is the first of its kind on the ITFS platform in conjunction with any bank in India.

Indian Bank is in the process of setting up an operations support subsidiary, emphasizing cost optimization as a key focus area

Source: Business Standard

- Chennai-based Indian Bank is in the process of establishing an operations support subsidiary to offer value-added services while optimizing costs, particularly for operations in non-metropolitan areas.
- Two large public sector banks -State Bank of India (SBI) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) have already formed such units for servicing customers in rural and semi-urban areas.

About Indian Bank:

Established: 15 August 1907

Headquarters: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

MD & CEO: Shanti Lal Jain

Tagline : Your Own Bank

The Direct Tax-to-GDP ratio reached a 23-year high in FY23, as reported by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) released data, revealing that the direct tax-to-GDP ratio for the fiscal year 2022-23 (FY23) reached a remarkable 23-year high, standing at 6.11%.
- Direct tax collections witnessed a robust year-on-year growth of 17.8%, totaling Rs.16.6 trillion in FY23. Notably, corporate tax collections reached Rs.8.26 trillion, marking a 16% increase, while income tax collections stood at Rs.8.33 trillion, reflecting a significant 19.6% YoY growth.
- The total number of income tax returns filed in FY23 rose to 77.82 million, compared to 73.05 million in FY22, indicating an upward trend in tax compliance.

SBI Life Insurance launched two new products

- SBI Life Insurance, one of the most trusted private life insurers in the country, launched two products—'SBI Life - Saral Swadhan Supreme' and 'SBI Life - Smart Swadhan Supreme',.
- These products aim not only to provide life cover but also to offer the return of premiums at maturity.

Bank of Baroda's subsidiary has been rebranded as 'BOBCARD Limited'

- Bank of Baroda's card subsidiary, 'BOB Financial Solutions Limited', has undergone a rebranding to 'BOBCARD Limited', accompanied by the tagline "Credit Reimagined".
- The NBFC has also unveiled a new logo called 'Baroda Sun', which comprises dual 'B' letterforms that hold the rays of the rising sun.

ICRA upgrades its bank credit growth forecast for FY24 to 15% from 13%.

- ICRA has upgraded its forecast for bank credit growth in the current fiscal year (FY24) to 14.9-15.3%, up from the previous estimate of 12.8-13.0%, citing robust demand in the retail segment and from non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).
- Anil Gupta, Senior Vice President at ICRA, said the retail credit and bank lending to NBFCs have been strong in the nine months ended December 2023, which has led to the revision.

Zomato Payments approved as online payment aggregator by RBI

Source: The Economic Times

- Zomato Payments, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zomato Limited, has received the certificate of authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as an online payment aggregator.
- In an exchange filing, the food delivery platform stated the central bank has allowed it to carry out the business as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments with effect from January 24, 2024.

Union Budget 2024

- On February 1, 2024, Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister, is scheduled to present her sixth budget. This Union Budget marks the 15th interim budget.

Finance Ministry releases 'Indian Economy – A Review' report in lieu of Economic Survey

- In 2024, India will not have the usual Economic Survey traditionally presented before the Union Budget. Instead, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present an interim budget, known as a vote-on-account, on February 1, 2024.
- The reason for not presenting the Economic Survey this year is the election context. 2024 is an election year in India, and presenting the Economic Survey could lead to politicization due to the potential change in government after the elections. This could disrupt the regular Budget process.

