

Weekly Current Affairs PDF January 07 to January 13, 2024

Current Affairs PDF- January 13, 2024

INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Government Approves 1-Year Extension for RBI Deputy Governor Michael Patra

- GOI announced the extension of the tenure of Michael Debabrata Patra as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for an additional year.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Indian Army to Observe 2024 as the Year of Technology Absorption

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

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

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.

RANKING

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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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).

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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.

SPORTS

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.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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."

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

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.

RANKING

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).

BOOKS & AUTHOR

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

- Union Minister Bhupendra 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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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.

NATIONAL

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).

SPORTS

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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Tshering Tobgay Re-Elected as Bhutan's Prime Minister

- Bhutanese voters re-elected Tshering Tobgay for a second term as Prime Minister.
- Tshering Tobgay, a former Prime Minister who previously held office from 2013 to 2018, has promised to strengthen ties with India.
- Tobgay, head of the People's Democratic Party, served as the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly from March 2008 to April 2013. He co-founded the party, the first registered political party in Bhutan.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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'.

SUMMIT'S & MOU's

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.

RANKING

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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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

- 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

- 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.

NATIONAL

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

- 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

- 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.

OBITURY

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

- 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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Aruna Nayar, from the Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS), assumes the role of Secretary of the Railway Board

- Aruna Nayar, a senior officer from the Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS) with a 1987 batch, and an empanelled IRMS officer at level-16, has assumed the position of Secretary of the Railway Board. Her appointment took effect from January 6, 2023. Previously, she held roles as Additional Member (Staff) in the Railway Board since May 2023 and served as the Principal Executive Director (Staff) at the Railway Board from February 2022 to May 2023.
- Nayar has vast experience in various capacities in Railways and worked as Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO) in Eastern Railway, Dy. CPO, Metro Railway/Kolkata, PCPO in Southern Railway and in other capacities in Railway Recruitment Board (Chennai), Railway Divisions of Chennai & Palghat and Golden Rock Workshop & Division at Tiruchirapalli. Nayar had also worked as Director (Personnel) of Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & IT under Central Staffing Scheme from 2005 to 2009.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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

- 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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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

- 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.

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INTERNATIONAL

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

- 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.

NATIONAL

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

- 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.

- 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.

OBITURY

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

- Franz Beckenbauer, one of only three men to 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's 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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Indra Mani Pandey has officially taken on the position of Secretary General of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

- Indra Mani Pandey, a seasoned diplomat and a 1990-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, has assumed the role of the new Secretary General of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- Pandey assumed charge as the 4th Secretary General of BIMSTEC at its secretariat in Dhaka.
- He replaced Tenzin Lekfel of Bhutan.
- His tenure in this prestigious post will be for three years.
- This marks the first time an Indian official has held the key post of Secretary General in the BIMSTEC regional grouping.

About Indra Mani Pandey :

- Pandey is a 1990-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer.
- He was serving as India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva before assuming the new assignment.

About BIMSTEC :

Established : 6 June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.

Headquarters : Dhaka, Bangladesh.

BIMSTEC is an international organization of South Asia and Southeast Asian countries. Its members are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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

- 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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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

- 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 decrease 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.

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INTERNATIONAL

Kyrgyzstan designates the snow leopard as its national symbol.

- 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.

- 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.

NATIONAL

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

- 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.

- 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.

OBITUARY

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

- 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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

The Emir of Kuwait appoints Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah as the Prime Minister of Kuwait.

- Kuwait's new emir Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah appointed Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah as the country's prime minister (PM) of Kuwait.
- He succeeds Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah.

About Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah :

- Sheikh Mohammed Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah is a Kuwaiti politician, economist, and diplomat.
- In 1993 he was appointed as the ambassador of Kuwait to the United States, serving until 14 February 2001, at which point he became the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- He held the position of Minister of Finance from January 2003 until July 2003.

- On 11 February 2006, he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, continuing also as the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

About Kuwait :

- Emir : Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
- Prime Minister : Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah
- Capital : Kuwait City
- Currency : Kuwaiti dinar

IMPORTANT DAYS

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

- 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.

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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

- 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.

- 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

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INTERNATIONAL

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

- 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.

NATIONAL

The Ministry of Education initiates the PRERANA program

- 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.

- 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.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

SEBI appoints G Ram Mohan Rao as Executive Director for a 3-year term.

- SEBI appoints G Ram Mohan Rao as Executive Director for three years. Rao, with over 25 years at SEBI, will oversee investigation and internal inspection.
- Extensive background includes leadership roles in inspections, litigation, recovery, and investor awareness.
- Previously served as Regional Director for the Eastern Regional Office, showcasing versatile leadership.
- Educational background includes engineering, MBA, and Law degrees, with certification as a fraud examiner.
- Rao emphasizes investor protection, urging entities to safeguard clients and encouraging reporting mechanisms.

IMPORTANT DAYS

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

- 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.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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

- '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

- 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).

BANKING AND ECONOMY

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

- 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.