



02 February 2024

National and International News

<p>Committee on Population Growth and Demographic Changes</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the formation of a high-power committee. Committee's focus: Address challenges arising from "fast population growth and demographic changes." <p>Key Points:</p> <p>Mandate of the Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee tasked with making comprehensive recommendations aligned with the goal of Viksit Bharat (developed India). <p>Lack of Reliable Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee's announcement follows the indefinite postponement of the Census, leading to a lack of reliable data on population growth. Despite limited statistics, security concerns in border areas are being highlighted based on perceived demographic changes.
<p>Budget Allocation for MGNREGS (Financial Year 2024-25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ₹86,000 crore allocated for MGNREGS in the financial year 2024-25. Represents a ₹26,000 crore increase compared to the 2023-24 Budget estimates. Despite the increase, the net gain for the rural employment scheme may be zero or negative. <p>Insufficient Allocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet the employment needs, activists argue that ₹3 lakh crore is essential. The allocated budget of ₹86,000 crore is significantly short, considering outstanding dues and additional work requirements. Raises concerns about jeopardizing the guaranteed right to work under MGNREGS and constitutes a violation of this fundamental entitlement.
<p>Boosting Research and Innovation in India</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's interim Budget speech announces a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore. The funds will be available at minimal or nil



	<p>interest rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at encouraging private sector investment in research and development in sunrise sectors. <p>National Research Foundation Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DST allocates ₹2,000 crore in 2024-25 towards the National Research Foundation. <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bill aims to establish the National Research Foundation (NRF) to seed, grow, and promote Research and Development (R&D) across India's educational and research institutions. • The bill aims to establish the National Research Foundation (NRF) to seed, grow, and promote Research and Development (R&D) across India's educational and research institutions. • <p>National Quantum Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Quantum Mission, a much talked about scheme of the DST, has for the first time been provisioned ₹2,819 crore. <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Union Cabinet, chaired by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, approved the National Quantum Mission (NQM) on 19th April 2023. • The Mission objectives include developing intermediate-scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in 8 years in various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology.
<p>World Wetlands Day 2024</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Wetlands Day is observed annually on February 2 to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and their conservation. • This day marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran, an international treaty aimed at conserving and sustainably using wetlands around the world. • India is also the part of Ramsar Convention and is one of the most active players in the group. • Recently, the number of wetlands in India grew from 75 to 80. <p>Theme: The theme for World Wetlands Day changes each year to focus on different aspects of wetland conservation</p>



World Wetlands Day

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Wetlands and Human Wellbeing

and management. Likewise, the theme of World Wetlands Day 2024 is 'Wetlands and human wellbeing'.

Investment in Rail Infrastructure

- ₹2.55 lakh crore allocated for 2024-25, reflecting a 5.8% increase from the previous year's ₹2.41 lakh crore.

Economic Corridor Programs



- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Centre will implement **three major economic corridor programmes** — **energy, mineral, and cement corridor**, also being referred to as Energy Economic Corridor; port connectivity corridor aka Rail Sagar; and high-traffic density corridors, aka Amrit Chaturbhuj.

Key Points:

- **The National High-Speed Rail Corridor's bullet train project** receives a substantial increase in allocation, rising from ₹19,592 crore to ₹25,000 crore.
- Budget allocation for investment in public sector units and joint ventures decreased from ₹34,353 crore in 2023-24 to ₹31,107 crore in 2024-25.
- Overhauling 40,000 coaches over the next five years for an improved passenger experience, costing ₹15,200 crore.
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Kerala Regional News

<p>World Wetlands Day</p> <p style="text-align: center;">World Wetlands Day 2 February 2024</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Wetlands and Human Wellbeing</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually on February 2nd It aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for both people and the planet. It also commemorates the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971, an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The theme for 2024 is: “Wetlands and Human Wellbeing” It focuses on the interconnectedness between wetlands and various aspects of human wellbeing, including physical, mental and environmental health <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wetlands are ecosystems where water saturates the land for extended periods, creating unique habitats for diverse plants and animals. Examples include marshes, swamps, bogs, mangroves, and even rice paddies. <p>Did you Know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state of Tamil Nadu (14) has the most Ramsar sites in India, followed by the state of Uttar Pradesh with 10 sites. India currently has 80 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).
<p>Kannur farmer PB Aneesh to receive Karshakashree 2024 award today</p> 	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malayala Manorama's Karshakasree 2024 award for the best farmer in Kerala will be presented to PB Aneesh today Minister P Prasad will preside over the function, with PK Kunhalikutty, MLA, as the guest of honour. Malayala Manorama managing editor Jacob Mathew and Karshakasree editor-in-charge TK Sunilkumar will also address the function.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He practices mixed farming, integrating various crops, vegetables, and livestock for holistic income generation • Aneesh (42) hails from Tabore, near Udayagiri in Kannur • He is the 17th recipient of this biannual award. • The award comprises a purse of Rs 3,00,001, a certificate, and a gold medallion.
<p>CET bags patent for smart helmet technology</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (CET) in India has successfully obtained a patent for its groundbreaking smart helmet technology. • Three former students, Athira U.V., Athira Resmi N., and Athira A. of the 2016 Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE) batch, have been credited with the innovation. • This invention aims to significantly improve motorcycle rider safety by incorporating two key features: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alcohol Detection Unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded within the helmet is a sensor capable of detecting the presence of alcohol. • If the rider's breath exceeds a predetermined Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) limit, the system triggers several safety measures like Vehicle Immobilization and Alert Signals 2. RF-Based Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The helmet integrates an RF communication module that transmits a unique identification signal to nearby law enforcement devices.
<p>Record allocation of ₹2,744 crore for rail infra enhancement works in Kerala</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Union Budget 2024-25 allocated a historic ₹2,744 crore for railway infrastructure improvements in Kerala, marking a sevenfold increase over the average outlay of the previous government. • This significant investment prioritizes line doubling projects, with ₹1,072.5 crore earmarked for this purpose. • Specific allocations include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ₹105 crore for Ernakulam-Kumbalam (7.71 km) doubling. 2. ₹102.50 crore for Kumbalam-Turavur (15.59 km) doubling. 3. ₹500 crore for Turavur-Ambalappuzha (50 km) doubling.



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	<p>4. ₹365 crore for Thiruvananthapuram-Kanyakumari (86.56 km) doubling.</p> <p>5. ₹100 crore is dedicated to the Angamaly-Sabarimala Sabari rail project, with two alignments under consideration and the final route subject to feasibility analysis.</p>
<p>Ormathoni' to be launched on Feb 15</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ormathoni, meaning "remembering memories" in Malayalam, is a new initiative launched by the Kerala Social Security Mission in India. • It aims to create a dementia-friendly Kerala, providing comprehensive support to individuals with dementia and their caregivers. <p>Key Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish dementia clinics across Kerala, making diagnosis and treatment accessible. • Raise awareness about dementia and reduce stigma associated with the condition. • Provide training and support to caregivers. • Create dementia-friendly communities with inclusive infrastructure and services.

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