

## Weekly Current Affairs 14th August to 19th August of 2023

## National News

**Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras To Be Established Across The Country**

The Railways Ministry is embarking on a significant endeavor aimed at establishing Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) at railway stations throughout the country. This initiative holds the primary objective of ensuring the availability of top-notch medicines to the public, all while maintaining an affordable price point. As part of this progressive initiative, the Ministry has meticulously curated a list of fifty railway stations that will serve as the launching grounds for the pilot project. This strategic selection aims to lay the groundwork for greater accessibility to Janaushadhi products for both passengers and visitors frequenting these bustling stations. The establishment of PMBJKs addresses the pressing healthcare requirements of passengers while fostering an improved overall experience.

**Dharmendra Pradhan launches DBT in NAPS to strengthen apprenticeship ecosystem**

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister for Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, inaugurated the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) in the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) to strengthen apprenticeship training and encouraging the involvement of both industries and young individuals. During the launch event, an approximate sum of Rs. 15 crores was disbursed to one lakh apprentices, signifying the official commencement of DBT in NAPS. Since its inception in 2016 until July 31, 2023, the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme has engaged a total of 25 lakh youths as apprentices. The scheme has witnessed remarkable progress, with around 2.6 lakh apprentices successfully completing their training in the fiscal year 2023-24. A notable achievement attributed to the Government of India's proactive efforts is the exponential growth in the number of active establishments participating in apprenticeship training. The count has surged from 6,755 in 2018-19 to an impressive 40,655 in 2023-24.



Bengali

MISSION

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Start Date: 1 Sept 2023

**NCERT Constitutes 19-Member Panel for Textbook Revision in India**

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), India's top advisory body for school education, has taken a significant step towards textbook revision. The council has formed a 19-member committee responsible for aligning school syllabi, textbooks, teaching materials, and learning resources with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). The committee's mandate covers Classes 3 to 12, and it also aims to ensure a seamless transition from Classes 1 and 2 to subsequent grades. The 19-member committee responsible for the revision of school textbooks and alignment with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) comprises experts from various domains. Each member brings their unique expertise to the table, collectively working towards enhancing the educational experience for students.

**Union Cabinet Approves PM-eBus Sewa Scheme: Boosting Electric Public Transportation**

In a significant move towards enhancing urban transportation and promoting electric mobility, the Union Cabinet has given its nod to the "PM-eBus Sewa" scheme. This initiative is aimed at expanding city bus operations by deploying 10,000 electric buses through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The PM-eBus Sewa scheme is projected to incur a total cost of Rs 57,613 crore. To facilitate its implementation, the Central government will provide financial support of Rs 20,000 crore. The scheme's scope extends over a period of 10 years.

**Operation Jericho: How Air Force Operations Quelled the Mizoram Insurgency of 1966**

The historical use of air power in Mizoram during the 1966 insurgency has recently gained attention due to its mention by Prime Minister Modi in response to a no-confidence motion. This article delves into the events surrounding the Mizoram insurgency of 1966, the government's response, the involvement of the Indian Air Force (IAF), and the aftermath of Operation Jericho. The 1960s witnessed a period of protests and insurgency in the Mizo Hills, now known as Mizoram. The Mizo National Front (MNF), seeking independence from India, spearheaded a separatist movement. The central government's decision to station additional Assam Rifles battalions in the region sparked outrage and led to the launch of 'Operation Jericho' by MNF. Operation Jericho aimed to seize control of Aizawl, resulting in its successful occupation in late February. Notably, this operation was characterized by meticulous planning and confidence rarely seen in the Indian subcontinent. Many armed volunteers were ex-servicemen or former Assam Regiment personnel dismissed for disciplinary issues. The rebels besieged the headquarters of 1 Assam Rifles, released

prisoners, looted arms and funds, and declared independence. Brigadier Rustom Zal Kabraji led ground operations to clear rebel-held positions. He commanded the 61 Mountain Brigade based in Agartala. Despite efforts to resupply the Assam Rifles battalion via helicopters, rebel resistance led to the shooting down of some supply missions. The ground operations faced formidable opposition, requiring several days to reach Aizawl.

### **India's First 3D-Printed Post Office Inaugurated In Bengaluru**

Bengaluru, often hailed as nation's tech capital, has welcomed the India's first 3D-printed post office. Located in Cambridge Layout near Ulsoor, this post office has set a new benchmark for efficiency, sustainability, and design. Inaugurating the post office, Ashwini Vaishnaw, the Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & Information Technology, commended Bengaluru's innovative spirit. The post office, encompassing an area of 1,021 square feet, was swiftly completed in just 43 days – a remarkable departure from the conventional construction period of around 10 months. Employing quick-setting materials and a specially engineered robotic arm extruder, the technique known as contour crafting was utilized to construct the building's intricate design. This method allowed for precise layering, resulting in a unique and visually captivating structure. This architectural marvel was brought to life through a collaboration between Larsen and Toubro, a prominent construction company, and technical guidance from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras. The project, originally slated for completion in September of the previous year, saw its culmination in May 2023 at a cost of Rs 23 lakh.

### **CWC Launches 'Floodwatch' To Provide Real-Time Flood Forecasts To Public**

The Chairman, Central Water Commission (CWC), Shri Kushvinder Vohra, has taken a groundbreaking step towards enhancing flood preparedness and response by unveiling the "FloodWatch" mobile application. This revolutionary app is designed to harness the power of mobile phones to disseminate real-time flood-related information and forecasts to the public, up to 7 days in advance. The app, which offers both readable and audio broadcasts, is available in two languages, English and Hindi, making it accessible to a wider audience. The core functionality of the "FloodWatch" app revolves around providing real-time flood monitoring. Users can conveniently access up-to-date flood situation reports from across the country. Drawing from near real-time river flow data from various reliable sources, the app empowers users with accurate and current flood-related information. One of the key features that set the "FloodWatch" app apart is its flood forecasting capabilities. Users can receive flood forecast for their nearest locations, enabling them to stay informed about potential flood threats. The app's Home Page offers easy access to flood advisories at the station closest to the user, simplifying the process of obtaining crucial information.

## **International News**

### **Anwarul Haq Kakar Sworn In As Pakistan's Caretaker Prime Minister**

Anwarul Haq Kakar, a prominent ethnic Pushtun leader with close ties to the influential military, has taken the oath as the country's caretaker prime minister. With this appointment, Kakar is entrusted with the responsibility of heading an impartial administration, supervising the forthcoming general elections, and addressing the economic hurdles confronting the country. Kakar is distinguished as the youngest interim Prime Minister in the history of Pakistan. In a modest ceremony held at the President House, President Arif Alvi administered the oath to Anwarul Haq Kakar. The event was attended by outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and several prominent leaders. This moment marked Kakar's elevation to the role of the 8th interim prime minister of Pakistan. Kakar formally resigned from the Senate and the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), solidifying his commitment to the neutrality demanded by his current position. The Senate chairman acknowledged Kakar's resignation in accordance with the provisions outlined in clause (1) of Article 64 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

### **Bubonic Plague Cases Detected in China's Inner Mongolia: Authorities Respond Swiftly**

China's Inner Mongolia region has reported two cases of bubonic plague, causing concerns amid previous infections and highlighting the need for vigilant containment efforts. The new cases involve close relatives of a previously infected individual. Bubonic plague is a highly infectious disease, primarily transmitted through rodents, and can be fatal if not treated promptly. The region's health authorities are taking proactive measures to prevent the further spread of the disease. Following a prior bubonic plague infection detected on August 7, China's northern region of Inner Mongolia has once again encountered two cases of the disease. These new cases involve the husband and daughter of the previous infected person, as confirmed by the local government's official statement.

### **India accounts for 35% of cargo handled by Murmansk port this year**

India's collaboration with Russia's Arctic region is on the rise, evidenced by its substantial contribution to cargo handled at Murmansk port. This strategic port, positioned about 2,000 km northwest of Moscow, serves as a key northern gateway for Russia, and in the first seven months of 2023, it handled a total of eight million tonnes of cargo. Notably, India's share accounted for 35% of this cargo, primarily consisting of coal destined for the eastern coast of India. India emerges as a significant player in the cargo operations of Murmansk port, responsible for 35% of the handled cargo. This impressive figure underscores India's economic and trade connections with the Arctic region. India's engagement extends to the Northern Sea Route (NSR), a crucial shipping pathway

connecting the Asia-Pacific region and western Eurasia. The NSR offers a shorter route than traditional alternatives, enhancing the efficiency and safety of maritime transport.

## State News

### In a First In India, Goa To Give Free IVF Treatment In Govt Hospital

In a significant stride towards accessible and affordable healthcare, Goa has emerged as the trailblazer among Indian states by introducing free In vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment. This groundbreaking initiative, coupled with assisted reproductive technology (ART) and intrauterine insemination (IUI), was officially inaugurated by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant at the Goa Medical College (GMC) in Bambolim. With this momentous development, Goa establishes itself as a trailblazer in healthcare services. Goa Medical College's super-speciality block is now equipped to offer IVF treatment, responding to the needs of the community with compassion and innovation. Approximately 100 hopeful parents have already registered with GMC, eager to avail the IVF facility. In India, the cost of IVF treatment has often been a significant deterrent for couples seeking fertility solutions. Depending on the hospital and the complexity of the IVF procedure, the expenses can range from Rs 70,000 to Rs 3 lakh per cycle. The financial burden often leaves many individuals and families grappling with limited options. The Goa government's decision to offer free IVF treatment directly addresses this pressing concern, easing the financial strain on couples and expanding access to reproductive healthcare.

## Economy News

### India's Per Capita Income Projected to Soar 7.5 Times by 2047, SBI Research Study Finds

India's journey towards becoming a developed economy by 2047 has gained momentum, with a recent study conducted by SBI Research economists projecting a remarkable increase in per capita income. The study suggests that India's per capita income is poised to surge by 7.5 times, from Rs 2 lakh (\$2,500) in FY23 to Rs 14.9 lakh (\$12,400) per annum by FY47. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized this objective, aiming to turn the vision of a developed India into a reality by 2047. The study by SBI Research underscores the immense growth potential in India's economy in the coming decades. This growth is attributed to several factors, including the country's transition from a lower-income group to an upper-income group economy and the positive impact of tax buoyancy. Notably, the formalization of the economy through initiatives like the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the UDYAM portal for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has played a pivotal role in enhancing income tax returns.

### Retail Inflation Surges to 15-Month High of 7.44% in July

In July, retail inflation in India experienced a significant upswing, reaching 7.44%, marking the highest rate since April 2022. This surge contrasts with the preceding four-month period of inflation below the central bank's 6% tolerance threshold. The increase is largely attributed to an 11.5% spike in food prices, making it the first time since September 2022 that the price rise has crossed the 7% mark. The primary driver of the July inflation surge was an impressive 11.5% increase in food prices, causing a ripple effect on the overall inflation rate. Notably, vegetable prices surged by a staggering 37.3%, while cereals and pulses became over 13% more expensive. Consequently, urban consumers saw their food bills rise by over 12.3%, while rural consumers experienced an 11% increase in food inflation. On the whole, rural residents faced a slightly higher overall inflation rate of 7.63% for the same period. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 2.9% from the previous month, reflecting the swift inflationary pressures. The month-on-month increase in food prices was notable as well, with a 6.7% upsurge. These figures surpassed the expectations of most economists.

### Crisil Forecasts 6% GDP Growth for India in FY24

Crisil, a prominent rating agency, anticipates India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth to reach 6% in the fiscal year 2024. This projection is lower than the 7% estimated by the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) for the fiscal year 2023. Crisil offers an optimistic medium-term outlook for the Indian economy. The agency foresees the economy maintaining an average growth rate of 6.8% over the next five fiscal years. This projection is driven by factors such as increased capital investment and productivity enhancements.

## Business News

### Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP): Empowering Employees and Driving Growth

In today's competitive business landscape, attracting and retaining top talent has become a strategic priority for organizations. As a result, companies are constantly seeking innovative ways to motivate and engage their employees. One such method that has gained significant popularity is the Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP). An ESOP is a powerful tool that not only rewards employees but also aligns their interests with the company's success. An Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP) is a compensation scheme that grants employees the option to purchase company shares at a predetermined price within a specified time frame. These options are typically tied to the company's performance and are aimed at fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among employees. ESOPs are commonly used by startups, established firms, and even publicly traded companies to incentivize employees and foster a culture of shared success.

**NPCI Launches UPI Chalega 3.0 Campaign to Drive UPI Adoption and Safety Awareness**

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has introduced the third edition of its UPI Safety Awareness Campaign named “UPI Chalega.” Collaborating with key stakeholders in the payments ecosystem, the campaign aims to emphasize the ease, safety, and swiftness of using the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for transactions. The “UPI Chalega” campaign is geared towards promoting UPI as a trustworthy, efficient, and real-time payment method for a diverse range of transactions. It also sheds light on innovative features like UPI LITE, designed for swift low-value transactions, UPI AUTOPAY, facilitating secure recurring payments across UPI applications, and UPI Interoperability, which ensures seamless money transfers between all UPI-enabled apps. This isn’t the first time the UPI Chalega campaign has been launched. In 2020, it was initiated under the guidance of the Financial Literacy Advisory Committee (FLAC). The success of the first and second editions played a pivotal role in expanding UPI’s reach, fostering awareness about its safety measures, and enhancing its usability for diverse transactions, firmly establishing it as a preferred choice for digital payments.

**Viacom18 Completes Merger Of JioCinema and Voot OTT Platforms**

Viacom18, a prominent player in the Indian media and entertainment industry, has made significant strides in merging its two Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, JioCinema and Voot. The integration process has reached an advanced stage, with technology backends fully aligned and a majority of Voot Select subscribers smoothly transitioning to JioCinema. The merger has led to the dissolution of Voot as a standalone platform, both in terms of functionality and visibility. A simple Google search for Voot redirects users to the JioCinema website, consolidating Viacom18’s OTT presence under a single brand. Voot Select’s loyal subscribers are being offered a seamless onboarding process onto the JioCinema platform. This thoughtful approach ensures that existing subscribers can continue to enjoy their favorite content without disruptions, while also benefiting from the enhanced offerings and features available on JioCinema.

**Wipro Launches Center Of Excellence On Generative AI at IIT Delhi**

Wipro Limited has announced the establishment of a groundbreaking Center of Excellence (CoE) on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in partnership with the esteemed Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. This collaboration manifests Wipro’s commitment to drive continuous innovation in emerging technologies, solidifying its position as a frontrunner in the tech industry. The CoE’s launch resonates as a significant milestone within Wipro’s larger strategic vision, the Wipro ai360 ecosystem, which earmarks a staggering \$1 billion investment toward catalyzing AI-led innovation.

**OpenAI’s first acquisition is an AI design company**

OpenAI has successfully acquired Global Illumination, an ingenious startup based in New York, which harnesses the power of AI to craft innovative creative tools, digital experiences, and robust infrastructure. The acquisition signals OpenAI’s commitment to amplify its capabilities and revolutionize the AI landscape. Founded in the year 2021 by the dynamic trio of Thomas Dimson, Taylor Gordon, and Joey Flynn, Global Illumination has swiftly carved a niche for itself in the tech realm. The startup’s illustrious portfolio boasts a dazzling array of products crafted for tech titans including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Google, Pixar, and Riot Games. The endorsement of venture capital heavyweights such as Paradigm, Benchmark, and Slow further underscores the startup’s profound potential.

**Agreement News**

**MakeMyTrip And Ministry Of Tourism To Launch Traveller’s Map of India Microsite**

Travel company MakeMyTrip has announced a collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism to introduce over 600 unique and unconventional travel destinations. The company has introduced a specialized microsite named ‘Traveller’s Map of India’ to facilitate this initiative. This digital platform enables travelers to engage interactively and unearth hidden tourism treasures within India, tailored to their preferences. The creation of this meticulously crafted microsite aligns seamlessly with the Government of India’s forward-looking ‘DekhoApnaDesh’ program. The ‘Traveller’s Map of India’ resonates with the sentiments of every Indian explorer. This endeavor will grant every individual the authority to advocate for the nation’s cultural, historical, natural, and geographical wonders. Minister of Tourism, Kishan Reddy, extended a warm welcome to MakeMyTrip’s venture, applauding their efforts to showcase the variety of destinations within India and encourage domestic tourism.

**Trinidad And Tobago Inks Pact For Sharing Indian Technology Stack**

India and Trinidad and Tobago have recently entered into a significant partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to share the renowned INDIA STACK technology. This collection of open APIs and digital public goods, pioneered by India, is designed to enhance identity, data, and payment services on a large scale. This move reflects India’s commitment to aiding the digital transformation of nations through collaboration and technology sharing. INDIA STACK is an innovative assortment of technologies that encompass open APIs and digital public goods. Originating from India’s own successful experiences, this collection is tailored to facilitate identity verification, data management, and payment services. Its proven effectiveness in serving India’s massive population of over 1.4 billion makes it a suitable solution for nations seeking to enhance their own government digital services.

**AICTE and Jio Institute FDP on Artificial Intelligence & Data Science**

The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has taken a significant step towards advancing the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Science (DS) within the realm of education. Partnering with the renowned Jio Institute, AICTE has unveiled a comprehensive faculty development programme aimed at equipping academic leaders and senior faculty members with an in-depth understanding of AI and DS. With the programme set to commence on August 21, 2023, this collaboration holds the potential to reshape the educational landscape in India and beyond. At the forefront of this innovative initiative is the Jio Institute, acclaimed for its pioneering efforts in AI and DS (Data Science) education. The institute will serve as the host for a five-day residential faculty development programme that promises to immerse participants in the intricacies of AI and DS. Through an intensive curriculum and hands-on experiences, the programme aspires to empower educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to leverage AI for immersive and effective learning.

**Appointment News**

**Kamlesh Varshney, Amarjeet Singh appointed SEBI whole-time members**

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Kamlesh Varshney and Amarjeet Singh as SEBI Whole-Time Members. While Varshney, a 1990-batch officer of the Indian Revenue Service, is a joint secretary at the revenue department in the Finance Ministry, Singh is an executive director at the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Both Varshney and Singh have been appointed for three years from the date of assumption of charge or until further orders, whichever is earlier, according to an order issued by the Secretariat of the ACC. At SEBI, Varshney and Singh will fill in the vacancies created by the retirement of S K Mohanty and Ananta Barua.



**Parminder Chopra appointed as CMD of Power Finance Corporation (PFC)**

Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has appointed Parminder Chopra as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD); she becomes the first woman to lead India's largest NBFC. Chopra assumed the top job at the power sector lender with effect from August 14, 2023. She earlier held additional charge as CMD from June 1, and was Director (Finance) from July 1, 2020. She also played a key role in the successful implementation of a Rs 1.12 lakh crore Liquidity Infusion Scheme (LIS) for the power distribution sector, which was rolled out as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

**Banking News**

**RBI Introduces UDGAM Portal: Your Guide to Reclaiming Unclaimed Deposits**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has unveiled a groundbreaking solution for individuals seeking their unclaimed deposits. Named the UDGAM (Unclaimed Deposits – Gateway to Access Information) portal, this centralized web platform is designed to simplify the process of locating unclaimed deposits across various banks. Here's a comprehensive breakdown of the key features and steps involved. The RBI's UDGAM portal serves as a user-friendly tool for individuals to track down their unclaimed deposits seamlessly, consolidating information from multiple banks into a single accessible location. With the growing prevalence of unclaimed deposits, RBI has been proactively promoting awareness campaigns to educate the public about this issue. Through UDGAM, RBI aims to empower citizens to identify their unclaimed deposits and engage with their respective banks to initiate claims.

**Axis Bank partners with RBI Innovation Hub to launch Kisan Credit cards**

In a significant partnership, Axis Bank has joined forces with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), to introduce two groundbreaking lending products. These products are powered by the Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit (PTPFC), a pioneering initiative launched by RBIH.

**Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) for Agricultural Growth:**  
Digital Agricultural Financing: Axis Bank is set to revolutionize agricultural financing by launching the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) through the PTPFC platform.

**Initial Rollout:** As a pilot project, the KCC will be initially offered in Madhya Pradesh, catering to the agricultural community in the region.

**Limit and Accessibility:** Eligible customers will be able to access KCCs with a credit limit of up to Rs 1.6 lakh, empowering them to invest in their agricultural endeavors.

Streamlined Application Process: The entire application process for KCC will be conducted digitally, eliminating the need for customers to submit physical documents.

## Science & Technology News

### India's first Solar Mission Aditya L1 to be launched soon

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is launching its first solar mission, Aditya-L1, to study the Sun. The mission will be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrange point 1 (L1), which is about 1.5 million kilometers from Earth. From this vantage point, Aditya-L1 will be able to study the Sun's atmosphere, magnetic fields, and space weather impacts.

### 'Pibot,' the humanoid robot that can safely pilot an airplane

The Korea Advanced Institute of Science & Technology (KAIST) is making groundbreaking advancements in aviation with the development of "Pibot," a humanoid robot designed to fly aircraft using its own dexterity and advanced AI capabilities. Pibot's ability to manipulate flight instruments, understand complex manuals, and react quickly to emergency situations showcases its potential to transform aviation and other industries. Pibot represents a groundbreaking innovation with the objective of enabling autonomous flight in existing aircraft without requiring any cockpit modifications. Through emulating human pilot actions and choices, Pibot envisions a revolutionary phase of automated aviation. Pibot boasts state-of-the-art robotic arms and fingers integrated with cutting-edge high-precision control mechanisms. This enables Pibot to adeptly handle flight instruments and oversee cockpit switches, even when faced with challenging conditions such as intense vibrations.

### Agnikul Cosmos Begins Integration of its First Satellite Rocket

Chennai-based Agnikul Cosmos has commenced the integration process of its groundbreaking launch vehicle, Agnibaan SOrTeD (Sub-Orbital Technological Demonstrator), with its private launchpad situated at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. While the exact launch date remains undisclosed, the recent event marks a pivotal milestone in Agnikul Cosmos's pursuit of space innovation. The Agnilet engine, a marvel of innovation, is an entirely 3D-printed, single-piece, 6 kN semi-cryogenic engine. This innovative propulsion system marks a departure from conventional rocket engines and showcases Agnikul Cosmos's commitment to pushing the boundaries of space technology. Unlike traditional sounding rockets that follow guide rails during launch, the Agnibaan SOrTeD will ascend vertically and meticulously follow a predetermined trajectory. Throughout its flight, the launch vehicle will execute a precisely choreographed sequence of maneuvers, a series of events meticulously configured to validate key technologies pivotal to the success of the company's upcoming orbital flights.

## Schemes and Committees News

### PM Vishwakarma Scheme: Benefits and Eligibility

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent announcement of the Vishwakarma Yojana in his Independence Day address has paved the way for a new scheme. The Vishwakarma Yojana is a visionary initiative by the Indian government designed to extend financial assistance to individuals engaged in traditional crafts and skills. This scheme seeks to provide a strong support system to artisans, enabling them to flourish in their crafts while also contributing to the preservation of India's rich cultural heritage. Focused at bolstering the livelihood prospects of traditional artisans and craftspeople. Following this announcement, the Union Cabinet swiftly approved the scheme, demonstrating its commitment to promoting and preserving traditional skills and crafts. Under the umbrella of the Vishwakarma Yojana, a dedicated allocation of Rs 13,000 crore has been earmarked to empower artisans across the country. The scheme offers subsidized loans of up to Rs 2 lakh to craftsmen, aiming to alleviate financial constraints that might impede their artistic pursuits.

### DGCA forms panel to suggest ways to ensure gender equality

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in India has taken a proactive step towards promoting gender equality within the nation's aviation sector. On August 10, 2023, the DGCA established a four-member committee composed of senior officers to devise strategies and recommendations aimed at achieving gender parity in the industry. The committee's objective is to propose actionable measures that the DGCA can implement to foster gender equality in the aviation sector. The committee is tasked with formulating norms and guidelines that will facilitate gender equality within the aviation sector. These norms will subsequently be shared with aviation stakeholders, encouraging them to adopt and integrate these practices into their operations. The intention is to create a more inclusive and balanced work environment.

### Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) In News

The Ministry of Education has introduced the Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA), a central scheme aimed at enhancing access, equity, and excellence in higher education across States and Union Territories. However, the requirement for implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and adopting certain academic criteria to avail funds has sparked controversy, making the scheme seem exclusivist. The PM-USHA scheme aims to provide financial support to States for improving their higher education

systems. As per the guidelines released in June, States and Union Territories must sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Department of Higher Education, committing to implement NEP 2020 and adopt guidelines for the National Credit Framework and Choice Based Credit System for Four Year Undergraduate Programme. These conditions serve as prerequisites for accessing the ₹12,926.10 crore allocated between 2023-24 and 2025-26, despite the requirement for 40% funding contribution from State governments.

### **'Lakhpati Didi' Scheme: Govt Planning Skill Training For 2 Crore Women**

In a significant move to empower women and foster economic growth, the Indian government has announced the 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme, aiming to provide skill training to two crore women across the nation. The scheme, previously implemented in select states, now seeks to expand its reach and impact on a national scale. During his recent Independence Day address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined his ambitious vision of cultivating two crore 'lakhpati didis' (women millionaires) in rural areas. Drawing attention to the vital roles played by women such as 'bank-wali didi' (banking sisters), 'Anganwadi didi' (childcare sisters), and 'dawai-wali didi' (medical sisters), he underscored the need to elevate women's economic standing. The 'Lakhpati Didi' scheme is designed to empower women by equipping them with essential skills that pave the way for the establishment of micro-enterprises. A senior official shared that the scheme's core objective is to train two crore women, thereby encouraging them to initiate and manage small-scale businesses effectively.

### **Cabinet Approves ₹14,903 Crore Extension of Digital India Project: Its Objectives and Allocations**

In a significant development, the cabinet has given its nod to the extension of the Digital India project, allocating a substantial budget of ₹14,903 crore. Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced this decision, highlighting that the extended initiative will build upon the achievements of its previous iteration. Under the ambit of this extended Digital India project, several crucial objectives have been outlined, each aimed at bolstering India's technological capabilities:

IT Professional Upskilling, IT Training, Expansion of Supercomputing Infrastructure, Digital Empowerment for Enterprises, Information Security Training, Cyber Awareness for Students, Enhancement of Cyber Forensics, Strengthening National Knowledge Network, AI Center of Excellence, Cyber Security Advancements, Startup Support in Tier 2 and 3 Cities.

### **Maharashtra Government Launches Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme to Connect Tribal Villages with Main Roads**

The Maharashtra government has taken a significant step towards enhancing connectivity and improving the lives of tribal communities in the state. The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme aims to link all tribal villages in 17 districts of Maharashtra with main roads, effectively addressing the challenges faced by these communities in accessing essential services. The project, estimated at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore, will involve the construction of approximately 6,838 kilometers of roads. The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme has been initiated by the Maharashtra government to connect tribal villages with primary roads, promoting better accessibility and improved living conditions. The scheme is an outcome of the Budget Session announcement by Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Devendra Fadnavis, focusing on the establishment of perennial roads to connect tribal padas (hamlets).

## **Summits & Conference News**

### **Traditional Medicine Global Summit To Be Held In Gandhinagar On Aug 17, 18**

The first WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit is set to unfold on August 17 and 18, 2023, in the city of Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India. This event will intertwine with the G20 health ministerial meeting, creating a dynamic platform aimed at galvanizing both political commitment and evidence-based actions in the realm of traditional medicine. This age-old practice serves as the initial recourse for millions across the globe, catering to their diverse health and well-being requisites. The Global Summit will be jointly orchestrated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Government of India, which presently holds the esteemed presidency of the G20 for the year 2023. As an inclusive stage, the Summit will convene an array of stakeholders encompassing traditional medicine practitioners, users, communities, national policymakers, international organizations, academia, private sector representatives, and civil society entities. Together, they will share pearls of wisdom, groundbreaking evidence, transformative data, and pioneering innovations that underscore the indispensable role of traditional medicine in both health and sustainable development.

## **Awards & Honors News**

### **President Droupadi Murmu approves 76 Gallantry awards**

President Smt Droupadi Murmu has given her approval for 76 Gallantry awards to members of the Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces on the occasion of Independence Day 2023. Among these honors are four Kirti Chakra awards (awarded posthumously), 11 Shaurya Chakra awards

(including five posthumous), two Bar to Sena Medals (Gallantry), 52 Sena Medals (Gallantry), three Nao Sena Medals (Gallantry), and four Vayu Sena Medals (Gallantry). Additionally, the President has sanctioned 30 Mention-in-Despatches awards to Army personnel, including a posthumous award for Army dog Madhu, and one for an Air Force member. These recognitions acknowledge their significant contributions in various military operations, such as Operation Rakshak, Operation Snow Leopard, Operation Casualty Evacuation, Operation Mount Chomo, Operation Pangsau Pass, Operation Meghdoot, Operation Orchid, Operation Kalisham Valley, Rescue Operation, and Operation Evacuation.

### Important Dates News

#### 77th Indian Independence Day 2023: Date, Celebrations, Theme and History

India celebrating their 77th Independence Day on August 15, 2023. The theme for this year's celebration is "Nation First, Always First". This theme is in line with the government's focus on national unity and development. The day begins with the hoisting of the national flag at the Red Fort in Delhi by the Prime Minister. This followed by a military parade and a cultural program. There will also be flag hoisting ceremonies and cultural programs all over the country. The 77th Independence Day is a significant milestone for India. It is a time to reflect on the country's journey since independence and to recommit to the values of freedom, democracy, and equality. It is also a time to celebrate the diversity and unity of the Indian nation.

#### Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Death Anniversary

As the nation observed the solemn occasion of the death anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on 16th August, leaders from various political backgrounds and affiliations converged at the 'Sadaiv Atal' memorial in Delhi. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Praful Patel, Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister, Anupriya Patel and HAM's Jitan Ram also paid tribute to the Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his 5th death anniversary. Former PM Atal Bihari's foster daughter Namita Kaur Bhattacharya pays floral tribute at 'Saidav Atal' on his death anniversary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accompanied by President Droupadi Murmu, paid his respects at the memorial. PM Modi's tribute extended beyond the physical act, he tweeted on X, "I join the 140 crore people of India in paying homage to the remarkable Atal Ji on his Punya Tithi. India benefitted greatly from his leadership. He played a pivotal role in boosting our nation's progress and in taking it to the 21st century in a wide range of sectors."

#### Parsi New Year 2023: Date, History and Significance

The Parsi New Year, also referred to as Navroz or Nowruz, is a joyous occasion celebrated between July and August, this year Parsi New Year marked on 16th August. Rooted in the Persian words 'Nav and 'Roz', which means 'new day', this cherished festival has a rich history spanning over 3,000 years. While the global celebration of Navroz aligns with the Spring Equinox on March 21, the Parsi community in India follows the Shahenshahi calendar. This unique calendar doesn't consider leap years, resulting in a shift of celebration by 200 days from the original date. The festival roots are linked to Zoroastrianism, which is among the world's oldest beliefs in one god. It started more than 3,500 years ago in ancient Iran when a wise person named Prophet Zarathustra shared this faith. The happiness of Zoroastrianism lasted until 1,400 years ago when a religion called Islam started spreading in the 7th century. Because of this change, many Zoroastrianism left their homes in Iran and went to India and Pakistan. In these new places, a group called Parsis formed and found safety. The celebration's origin story harks back to the legendary king Jamshed, who saved the world from a catastrophic winter that threatened annihilation.

#### World Photography Day 2023: Date, Celebration, Significance and History

World Photography Day, observed annually on August 19, marks the celebration of photography's rich history and its role as both an art form and a scientific achievement. This day commemorates the invention of the daguerreotype, an early photographic process developed by Louis Daguerre in 1837, which paved the way for modern photography. World Photography Day highlights photography as a legitimate form of art, encouraging photographers to experiment with different techniques, compositions and styles. It encourages people to appreciate the power of photography in telling stories, capturing emotions and preserving memories. It is a day to discuss the technical aspects of photography, advancements in equipment and the evolution of photographic techniques when photographers and enthusiasts often share their favourite photos, stories behind the images and insights into their creative process.

### Sports News

#### Neymar Jr Quits PSG To Sign For Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal

Brazil forward Neymar Jr has signed for Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal from Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), the clubs announced, joining Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema. Neymar, 31, scored 118 goals in 173 matches for PSG in six injury-plagued seasons. He won five Ligue 1 titles and three French Cups, but was on the losing side as PSG were beaten by Bayern Munich in the 2020 Champions League final. Neymar joined PSG from Barcelona in 2017 for a world record fee of 222 million euros



(\$242 million), a few weeks before they recruited Kylian Mbappe. The Brazilian scored 118 goals in 173 matches for PSG, winning five Ligue 1 titles and three French Cups, but his time at PSG was blighted by a catalogue of injuries. Although he helped the club to the 2020 Champions League final, which they lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich, he was sidelined for key games. Last month Al-Hilal made a 300-million-euro bid for Mbappe, though the striker reportedly refused to meet with officials from the team.

**India gets first-ever night street racing circuit in Chennai**

The Tamil Nadu government and Racing Promotions Private Limited (RRPL) have launched a new street circuit in Chennai. The 3.5km track will be located around the Island Grounds and will be the first-ever street circuit in India and South Asia to host a night race. The track will have elevation changes and 19 corners, including multiple chicanes. It will also offer stunning views of the Marina Beach Road and the Bay of Bengal. The event is scheduled to be held on December 9-10 and will feature the F4 Indian Championship and the Indian Racing League. The SDAT will be investing Rs 42 crore to host the event. The launch of the new street circuit is a major boost for motorsport in India. It will help to raise the profile of the sport and attract more fans and sponsors. It is also expected to boost tourism in Chennai. The event is expected to be a major success and will be a landmark moment for motorsport in India.

**Dutee Chand gets four-year ban for failing dope test**

Indian sprinter Dutee Chand, renowned as India's fastest female athlete and holder of the national 100m record, has been handed a significant blow with a four-year ban following her failure in an out-of-competition dope test. The test revealed the presence of selective androgen receptor modulators (SARMs), leading to the decision to suspend her from competitive sports. Chand's remarkable athletic career has now been marred by this doping incident. Chand's ban, which commences from January 3, 2023, stems from her failed out-of-competition dope test for SARMs, which occurred on December 5, 2022. As a consequence of her violation, all competitive outcomes she achieved from the date of sample collection will be annulled. This includes the forfeiture of any medals, points, and prizes she earned during this period. The verdict, delivered by the National Anti Doping Agency (NADA), found Chand in breach of "article 2.1 and 2.2 of the NADA," resulting in a four-year ineligibility period under "article 10.2.1.1 of the NADA ADR 2021."

**Wahab Riaz Announces Retirement From International Cricket**

Pakistan fast bowler Wahab Riaz has announced his retirement from international cricket, bringing an end to a 15-year career. The 38-year-old made his international debut in 2008 and went on to play 27 Tests, 91 ODIs and 36 T20Is,

taking 237 wickets in total. Riaz was a key member of the Pakistan team that reached the semi-finals of the 2011 Cricket World Cup, where he took five wickets against India. He was also a regular in the ODI and T20I teams, and was known for his fiery bowling and aggressive approach. However, Riaz's Test career was less successful. He struggled to find consistency with his line and length, and was often guilty of bowling too many loose deliveries. He retired from Test cricket in 2019.

**Obituaries News**

**Former defence research body chief VS Arunachalam passes away**

V S Arunachalam, a prominent scientist and instrumental figure in India's nuclear program, has died at the age of 87. He was known for his leadership roles at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), he played a crucial role in shaping India's defense capabilities. V S Arunachalam was a prominent scientist who played a key role in India's nuclear program and defense capabilities. He held leadership positions at several prestigious institutions, including the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), the National Aeronautical Laboratory, and the Defence Metallurgical Research Laboratory. Arunachalam was born in 1934 in the Madras Presidency (now Tamil Nadu). He graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, with a degree in metallurgical engineering. He then went on to earn a doctorate in metallurgy from the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

**Eminent scientist Padma Shri MRS Rao passes away at 75**

Padma Shri awardee and former President of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), Prof. M.R. Satyanarayana Rao passed away at his residence in Tata Nagar in Bengaluru on August 13 night. He was 75. Born in Mysuru, Prof Rao obtained his undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from Bangalore University. He got his PhD from the Indian Institute of Science and did his Postdoctoral Research at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA.

**British 'chat show king' Michael Parkinson passes away at 88**

Michael Parkinson, the seasoned British chat show host renowned for his conversations with notable personalities, has passed away at the age of 88. His family said that he peacefully departed at his residence after a brief period of illness. Hailing from the coalmining village of Cudworth in northern England, Michael Parkinson took his initial steps into the professional world after leaving school at the age of 16. He ventured into the realm of journalism, starting his journey at local newspapers and eventually establishing himself at esteemed publications such as the Manchester

Guardian and the Daily Express. Beginning in June 1971, television presenter Michael Parkinson hosted his talk show named 'Parkinson' captivating viewers with his distinctive interview approach, characterized by his amiable charm. The show enjoyed a prosperous run until 1982, later making a comeback in 1998, further solidifying Parkinson's status as a true chat show maestro. Parkinson's contributions to the world of media and entertainment were duly recognized when he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in 2008. The honor bestowed upon him was a testament to his enduring influence on British culture. In 2005, he assumed the role of president for the Sports Journalists' Association of Great Britain.

## Defence News

### India inducts new Heron Mark-2 drones

The Indian Air Force has inducted its latest Heron Mark 2 drones, which have strike capability and can carry out surveillance along the borders with both China and Pakistan in a single sortie itself. The four new Heron Mark-2 drones, which can be equipped with long-range missiles and other weapons systems, have been deployed at a forward air base in the northern sector. The induction of the Heron Mark-2 is a major boost for the IAF's surveillance capabilities. The drone will be used for a variety of missions, including intelligence gathering, border patrol, and counter-insurgency operations. It will also be used to support the IAF's combat aircraft, providing them with real-time imagery and targeting data.

### INS Kulish Participates In Celebration Of 77th Independence Day in Singapore

In a notable display of maritime cooperation, the guided missile corvette INS Kulish made its presence felt during Singapore's 77th Independence Day festivities. As part of its ongoing engagement in the multinational SEACAT 2023 exercise, the crew and officers of INS Kulish celebrated the occasion at the High Commission of India in Singapore. Currently embarked on a four-day tour, INS Kulish is participating in the multinational SEACAT 2023 exercise. Hailing from the Andaman and Nicobar Command's Port Blair, the corvette's primary mission is to contribute to the Harbour Phase of SEACAT 2023. This initiative aims to bolster interoperability and collective action on various maritime security challenges. The exercise, which commenced on August 14 and is scheduled until August 17, will transition to the sea phase, continuing until August 25.

### IAF To Hold Multi-National Exercise 'Tarang Shakti' Next Year

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is gearing up to host a colossal multilateral military exercise, 'Tarang Shakti', which was originally slated for October but has been rescheduled to the middle of 2024. The decision to push the exercise to next year

comes as several participating air forces expressed their inability to join the wargame if held in the current year. 'Tarang Shakti' is set to draw the involvement of some prominent air forces, including those of France, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, and Japan. These nations will contribute their aerial assets such as fighter jets, military transport aircraft, and mid-air refuelers to the exercise. Additionally, six other countries have been invited to participate as observers, further emphasizing the exercise's significance on the global stage.

### Govt of India launched 'Meri Maati Mera Desh Campaign'

To commemorate 75 years of Independence, various Air Force Stations in and around Delhi celebrated the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) from 09 to 15 August 2023. The events were organized under the aegis of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh Campaign', launched by the Government of India as a continuation for celebration of AKAM. One of the key activities of the campaign was the development of an Amrit Vatika (Amrit Garden) in each station by planting 75 saplings of indigenous species. This was done to replenish mother earth as 'Vasudha Vandhan' (reforestation). The saplings were planted by the personnel of the stations, school children, residents of the localities, and panchayat members.

### Government clears Rs 20000 cr deal to build five warships

In a significant development aimed at enhancing the operational capabilities of the Indian Navy, the Central Government has granted its final approval for a pivotal project to construct five fleet support ships. These vessels, designed to serve as vital logistical lifelines, will play a crucial role in replenishing warships with essential supplies including fuel, food, and ammunition during missions. The responsibility for constructing these crucial fleet support ships has been entrusted to the Visakhapatnam-based Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), a flagship enterprise under the defense ministry. By opting for indigenous construction, the Indian Navy is not only reinforcing its operational capabilities but also contributing significantly to the government's vision of self-reliance. This decision aligns with the broader goal of reducing dependence on foreign imports and bolstering domestic industries.

### President Murmu launches INS Vindhyagiri

In a significant stride towards bolstering India's maritime prowess, President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the latest addition to the Indian Navy's fleet, INS Vindhyagiri. The launch event was held at the Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE). Following the launch of INS Vindhyagiri, the vessel will join its sister ships, INS Himgiri and INS Dunagiri, at the Outfitting Jetty at GRSE. The vessel derives its name from the mighty Vindhya mountain range, symbolizing strength, determination, and unwavering resolve.

## Miscellaneous News

**Why Island of Katchatheevu in news?**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his speech in the Parliament during the No Confidence debate on August 10, mentioned the island of Katchatheevu. Hitting out at Rahul Gandhi for his now expunged Bharat Mata remarks, PM Modi said it was the Indira Gandhi government which gave away Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in 1974. Katchatheevu is an uninhabited off-shore island in the Palk Strait. The island is located between Neduntheevu, Sri Lanka and Rameswaram, India. It was formed due to volcanic eruptions in the 14th century. The 285-acre land was jointly administered by India and Sri Lanka during British rule. The Raja of Ramnad (present-day Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu) owned Katchatheevu island and later became part of the Madras Presidency. In 1921, both Sri Lanka and India claimed this piece of land for fishing and the dispute remained unsettled. After Indian independence, the country initiated to resolve the pre-independence territory dispute between Ceylon and the British. Today, the uninhabited island is administered by Sri Lanka.

**One District One Product 'ODOP Wall' Launched**

In a significant stride towards showcasing the rich heritage of Indian craftsmanship and fostering self-reliance, the One District One Product (ODOP) program has joined hands with the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) to launch the captivating and innovative 'ODOP Wall'. This initiative not only celebrates India's artistic diversity but also amplifies the voices of rural artisans and women entrepreneurs, providing them with a platform to showcase their exceptional skills and craftsmanship to the world. The 'ODOP Wall' launch event marked a significant step towards the realization of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision to exhibit the unparalleled uniqueness of Indian crafts to the world. This collaboration between the ODOP program and DAY-NRLM aims to highlight the exceptional craftsmanship and cultural significance embedded within the products that originate from various districts across India.

**NBRI launches lotus variety which blooms in all seasons**

In a momentous celebration, the CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI) launched an extraordinary variety of the national flower, Lotus, named 'Namoh 108'. This unique flower boasts an astonishing 108 petals and was dedicated to the nation on the eve of Independence Day, underscoring its significance in the cultural and religious tapestry of India. The unveiling took place during the NBRI's week-long festival 'One Week One Lab Programme' in

Lucknow, with CSIR Director General N Kalaiselvi leading the ceremony. The 'Namoh 108' lotus variety has been meticulously developed by NBRI scientists, who brought the original plant from Manipur for comprehensive research. It became the first Lotus variety to have its entire genome sequenced, ensuring its longevity and protection from potential extinction. Unlike its counterparts, the 'Namoh 108' lotus variety has exhibited exceptional resilience to varying weather conditions, showcasing its ability to bloom magnificently from March to December.

**The G20 Film Festival kicked off with the screening of "Pather Panchali"**

The first G20 film festival, organized by the Ministry of External Affairs and India International Centre, commenced in Delhi with the screening of the renowned drama film "Pather Panchali" by Satyajit Ray. The distinguished veteran actor Victor Banerjee and G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant graced the festival's grand opening, symbolizing a significant stride towards nurturing cross-cultural comprehension through the medium of cinema. The festival unfolded against the backdrop of the Indian classic, "Pather Panchali", directed by the visionary Satyajit Ray in 1955. This cinematic masterpiece, celebrated for its emotional depth and timeless relevance, set the stage for a cinematic extravaganza that will span 17 days, culminating on September 3rd. The captivating journey will encompass 15 more exceptional films that have left an indelible mark on the global cinematic landscape. Bound together by the worldwide language of film, the festival stands as a tribute to the potency of narrative and its capacity to foster ties that surpass boundaries. The G20 Film Festival seeks to honor and display the dynamic and cooperative alliance that exists among the G20 and invited nations in the realm of cinema.

Bengali

MISSION

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Start Date: 1 Sept 2023