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HIGHLIGHTED POINTS

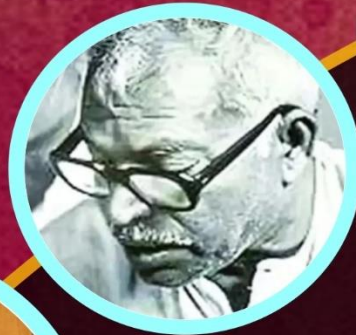
Bengali Writer Shirshendu Mukyopadhyaya Receives 2023 Kuvempu Award

Mamata Banerjee launches 'Yogyasree' for SC/ST students in West Bengal

Krutrim, Ola Founder's AI Start-Up Emerges As India's First AI

David Warner Retires from One-Day Cricket Ahead of Test Farewell

Kachchhi Kharek Gem from Kutch Receives GI Tag



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Monthly Current Affairs Magazine – January 2024

National News

Inauguration of India's First All-Girl Sainik School: A Milestone in Women Empowerment

Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** inaugurated the **first all-girl Sainik School in Vrindavan, Mathura district, Uttar Pradesh**. This groundbreaking event marks a significant advancement in women empowerment and educational reform in India. The Defence Minister hailed this initiative as a “golden moment in the history of women empowerment.”

The Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School, with a capacity of nearly 870 students, is part of a broader initiative to establish 100 new Sainik Schools across India in partnership with NGOs, private entities, and state governments. This initiative aligns with the objective of increasing educational opportunities for girls aspiring to join the armed forces.

Abu Dhabi's First Temple to be Inaugurated by PM Modi on 14 Feb Weeks after the consecration of the **Ram Mandir in Ayodhya**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** is set to inaugurate another significant temple on February 14 in **Abu Dhabi**. The **BAPS Hindu Mandir**, located in the capital's Abu Mureikha area, marks the first Hindu temple in the UAE and is anticipated to be one of the largest and most exquisite Hindu temples outside of India, as well as the largest in West Asia.

Anurag Thakur attends youth dialogue program on theme 'My Bharat Mera Yuva Bharat'

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur has inspired young people to play a key role in building a strong and prosperous India. He was addressing a youth dialogue program organized by Nehru Yuva Kendra on the theme 'My Bharat Mera Yuva Bharat' at Malala Auditorium in Diu. Thakur emphasized the importance of channeling the energy of the nation's youth towards nation-building. He urged them to actively contribute to realizing the dream of a developed India by 2047. He highlighted the crucial role of capable youth in shaping a strong India and emphasized the significance of sports in this endeavor.

Amit Shah Launches Tur Dal Procurement Portal for Farmers

In a significant move towards agricultural reform, Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah inaugurated a tur dal procurement portal, enabling farmers to register and sell their produce to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Limited (NCCF). The portal guarantees a minimum support price (MSP) or market price for the farmers. Minister Shah, during the launch, also highlighted

plans to extend this facility for urad, masoor, and maize farmers in the future. As part of the inauguration, Minister Shah conducted Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), transferring approximately Rs 68 lakh to 25 farmers as payment for their tur dal sales through the portal.

68 Rajya Sabha Members, Including Notables like Manmohan Singh and Jaya Bachchan, Set to Retire in 2024

In the upcoming year, the political landscape in India is poised for a significant shift as 68 Rajya Sabha members, nine of whom are Union ministers, face retirement, intensifying the race for coveted six-year terms in the Upper House of Parliament. The electoral battleground has already been set with contests declared for three seats in Delhi and one in Sikkim.

Ayodhya Airport Renamed As 'Maharishi Valmiki International Airport'; Gains International Status

The Union Cabinet recently gave its approval to declare Ayodhya Airport as an international airport, marking a significant development for the city. The airport will be named “Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham,” reflecting the historical and cultural significance of the region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed the government's commitment to connecting Ayodhya to the world through a tweet following the announcement. The decision aligns with the government's vision to position Ayodhya as a key economic hub and a prominent pilgrimage destination.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal Unveils Logo and Booklet for Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024

At a curtain-raiser program in New Delhi, Union Minister Piyush Goyal revealed the logo and booklet for the highly anticipated “Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024.” Emphasizing India's innovative and holistic approach under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Goyal encouraged the automotive industry to target a 50% export share, highlighting global economic opportunities. Scheduled from February 1-3, 2024, at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, the expo boasts over 600 exhibitors from 50+ countries. It promises to showcase cutting-edge technologies in various specialized exhibitions, including Auto Show.

Piyush Goyal Inaugurates Indus Food 2024 in Greater Noida

In a momentous event, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal inaugurated 'Indus Food 2024' at India Exposition Mart, Greater Noida. Commending India's diverse food industry, Goyal emphasized its global potential and underscored the need for technological innovation in the culinary landscape.

New Republic Day Pact Allows States One Tableau Every Three Years

In recent years, the selection of tableaux for the Republic Day parade has been marred by controversies, with complaints from various States about the exclusion of their representations. The Defence Ministry has responded to these concerns by proposing a comprehensive rollover plan to address the issue. Official sources reveal that the 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. Approximately 15 tableaux are selected for the Republic Day parade each year, making it challenging to accommodate every State annually. The proposed plan aims at ensuring equitable distribution and fair representation for all.

Street Vendors Get a Boost: PAiSA Dashboard & PM SVANidhi Portal Launched

Union Minister Hardeep S. Puri emphasized the importance of strong grievance redressal committees under the Street Vendors Act 2014, aiming to swiftly resolve disputes among vendors. He further unveiled two key initiatives to empower street vendors: PAiSA Dashboard: This online platform provides real-time updates on the progress of the PM SVANidhi Mission scheme. Vendors can track loan applications, disbursements, and repayments at their fingertips, fostering transparency and accountability.

PM SVANidhi Mission Monitoring Portal: This dedicated portal offers comprehensive data and insights on the scheme's nationwide implementation. Stakeholders, including government officials, lenders, and street vendor associations, can access valuable information to monitor progress, identify challenges, and ensure effective execution.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Inaugurates the 27th National Youth Festival in Nashik

Nashik, Maharashtra, recently hosted the prestigious 27th National Youth Festival from January 12 to 16, 2024. This significant event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The festival, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, celebrated youthful talent and skills across the nation. The festival witnessed the presence of notable dignitaries including Union Ministers Anurag Singh Thakur, Bharati Pawar, Nisith Pramanik, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, and Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar.

Mulya Pravah 2.0: UGC's New Directive for Ethical Education in India

In a significant move to promote ethical practices in higher education, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India has introduced Mulya Pravah 2.0. This new guideline comes as a response to surveys that highlighted unethical practices such as favouritism, sexual harassment, and gender discrimination within various educational organizations. Mulya Pravah 2.0 is an updated version of the original Mulya Pravah guideline, which the UGC introduced in 2019. The main objective of this revised guideline is to instill human values and professional ethics in higher education institutions across India. It aims to create a culture of integrity, accountability, and transparency within these institutions.

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". This book, a significant addition to environmental literature, is published by Pentagon Press in collaboration with the Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation. The central theme of the book revolves around Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision and actions for a sustainable and eco-friendly future. It delves deep into the strategies and policies under PM Modi's leadership that have placed India at the forefront of the global environmental movement.

IIT Madras to Establish New Campus in Kandy, Sri Lanka

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras), a leading engineering institute in India, is set to expand its horizons by establishing a new campus in Kandy, Sri Lanka. This move is a significant development in educational collaboration between India and Sri Lanka.

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

Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has made history by securing recognition as India's inaugural Dark Sky Park, marking its position as the fifth in Asia. This prestigious acknowledgment underscores the reserve's unwavering commitment to protecting the sanctity of the night sky and creating an optimal setting for astronomy enthusiasts. The International Union for Conservation of Nature, recognizing the intrinsic value of the night sky as a natural, cultural, and historical resource, played a pivotal role in conferring this distinction. Prabhu Nath Shukla, the deputy director of the reserve, highlighted the significance of preserving natural darkness for nature conservation, maintaining ecological integrity, and contributing to the well-being of communities in urban centers.

PM Modi to Inaugurate NACIN Campus in Andhra Pradesh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the new campus of the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN) at Palasamudram in Andhra Pradesh's Sri Sathya Sai district. The event is scheduled for January 16, marking a significant development in the region's educational infrastructure. The establishment of NACIN in Andhra Pradesh aligns with the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014. The foundation stone for the facility was laid in 2015, and the academy represents a significant investment in the region's educational and administrative capabilities.

NHAI's 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' Initiative To Streamline Toll Collection

In a significant move to enhance the efficiency of the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system and streamline traffic at Toll Plazas, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has introduced the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative. This strategic measure aims to curb the prevalent practice of using a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a specific vehicle. The 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative is a proactive step taken by NHAI to address concerns related to the misuse of FASTags. This initiative seeks to promote a one-to-one correspondence between vehicles and FASTags, ensuring transparency and accountability in toll collection. NHAI is actively promoting the completion of the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process for the latest FASTag. Users are urged to update their KYC details in adherence to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines. FASTags with valid balances but incomplete KYC details will face deactivation or blacklisting by banks after January 31, 2024.

Union Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia Inaugurates Asia's Largest Aviation Expo Wings India 2024

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Jyotiraditya M Scindia inaugurated Wings India 2024, Asia's largest aviation expo, at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad. This event marks a significant milestone in the Indian aviation sector, highlighting its growth and future potential. The theme of Wings India 2024 is "Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for India Civil Aviation @2047".

PM Unveils Rs. 4,000 Crore Projects In Kochi, Kerala

In a momentous event, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated three pivotal infrastructure projects in Kochi, Kerala, signaling a significant stride towards transforming India's ports, shipping, and waterways sector. These projects, collectively worth over Rs 4,000 crore, align with the Prime Minister's vision to enhance the nation's maritime capabilities and foster self-sufficiency. The inauguration included the unveiling of the New Dry Dock (NDD) at Cochin Shipyard Limited, a national pride and an engineering marvel. With a length of 310 meters and built at an investment of ₹1799 crores, the NDD is set to accommodate large vessels, including aircraft carriers and other significant ships.

Defence Minister Unveils 35 BRO Projects In Border Regions

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, during a recent event, emphasized the pivotal role played by residents living near the borders in serving the nation. He equated their contributions to that of soldiers, asserting that while soldiers protect the country in uniform, border-area residents contribute in their own unique way. The occasion marked the inauguration of 35 projects, including 29 bridges and six roads, constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) across seven states and union territories, with a total cost of ₹670 crore.

PM Initiates 8 AMRUT Projects Worth Rs. 2,000 Crores In Solapur, Maharashtra

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, marked a historic day in Solapur, Maharashtra, by laying the foundation stone for 8 AMRUT projects and dedicating over 90,000 completed houses under PMAY-Urban. The event also witnessed the distribution of PM-SVANIDHI benefits to 10,000 beneficiaries, showcasing the government's commitment to inclusive development. In a significant stride towards urban rejuvenation, Prime Minister Modi kickstarted eight AMRUT projects, collectively valued at around Rs. 2,000 crores. These projects aim to enhance infrastructure, utilities, and overall living standards in Solapur, Maharashtra.

Ayodhya Ram Mandir Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

On January 22, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, marking a momentous occasion in India's history. The inauguration involved the 'Pran Pratishtha' (consecration) ceremony of the Ram Lalla idol, a pivotal event that symbolizes the infusion of life into the idol. The event, attended by over 7,000 dignitaries, was not just a religious ceremony but also a cultural milestone for India. Prime Minister Modi's involvement was central to the ceremony. He participated in the 'Pran Pratishtha' of the Ram Lalla idol from 12:29:03 pm to 12:30:35 pm, a brief but highly auspicious 84-second window during the 'Abhijit muhurta'. The temple itself, an architectural marvel, stands at a length of 380 feet, a width of 250 feet, and a height of 161 feet, embodying the traditional Nagara style of architecture.

India's All-Women Tri-Services Contingent at Republic Day 2024 Parade

In a historic first, the 2024 Republic Day Parade in India will witness the participation of two all-women contingents from the defence forces, marking a significant milestone in the country's journey towards gender equality and empowerment in the military. These contingents will include members from the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, showcasing the seamless integration and valour of Indian armed forces. Captain Sandhya, a 26-year-old officer who previously participated in the 2017 Republic Day parade as an NCC cadet, expressed her pride and fortune at being allowed to lead this historic contingent.

Petroleum Ministry Approves ONGC's Green Energy Unit

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has granted approval for the formation of a subsidiary company by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), dedicated to the green energy and gas sector. This significant move was announced during ONGC's board meeting on January 23, 2024, reflecting the company's commitment to diversify its portfolio and contribute to sustainable energy solutions. The newly approved subsidiary, tentatively named "ONGC Green Limited," is slated to be a wholly-owned entity of ONGC. However, the proposed name is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.

Nirmala Sitharaman To Become 2nd FM To Present 6 Consecutive Union Budgets

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is on the brink of etching her name in history books as she gears up to present her sixth consecutive Budget (Five consecutive annual Budgets and one interim Budget), an unparalleled feat in Indian parliamentary annals. Building upon her legacy of fiscal stewardship, Sitharaman's tenure resonates with the tenure of former Prime

Minister Morarji Desai, who previously held the finance portfolio during 1959-1964. Prime Minister Morarji Desai, who holds the distinction of presenting 10 Budgets—the highest by any Finance Minister—had consecutively presented six of them, including one interim Budget, in a row.

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

BRICS, the group of emerging-market nations comprising **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**, is poised to undergo a significant expansion on **January 1**. South Africa's envoy to the bloc revealed that Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Egypt have accepted invitations to join, effectively doubling the organization's membership.

Felix Tshisekedi Named President of The Democratic Republic of Congo

The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** is once again in the spotlight as **President Felix Tshisekedi** secures victory in the highly contested December 20 election. However, the results have sparked condemnation from various opposition candidates who label the election a "sham" and demand a rerun.

President Tshisekedi emerged victorious with **approximately 73% of the vote**, leaving his closest rival, **Moise Katumbi**, with 18%. The election faced significant issues, including delayed openings of two-thirds of polling stations and malfunctions in 30% of voting machines on the first day. **Millions of voters endured long waits, with some ultimately abandoning the process.** Opposition leaders argue that these challenges were part of a systematic plan to rig the results in favor of President Tshisekedi.

IMF to Release \$700 Million Bailout Tranche to Pakistan in January

Cash-strapped Pakistan is poised to receive a crucial **\$700 million bailout tranche** from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the Executive Board meeting on January 11. The disbursement, under the existing **\$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA)**, is expected to provide much-needed financial support to Pakistan's struggling economy.

Putin Kicks Off Russia's 2024 BRICS Chairmanship

On January 1, Russian President **Vladimir Putin** officially marked the commencement of **Russia's 2024 BRICS Chairmanship**. During this handover, President Putin emphasized the motto for the upcoming tenure, "**Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security.**" This signifies Russia's commitment to fostering collaboration among the BRICS nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Oman To Host FIH Hockey5s World Cup Qualifiers

Oman is set to unveil its latest sports marvel—a cutting-edge complex designed to host the **FIH Hockey5s World Cup qualifiers**. This grand facility is a testament to Oman's commitment to fostering excellence in the world of sports, particularly in the realm of hockey. Scheduled just ahead of the Summer 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, the FIH Hockey5s World Cup qualifiers promise to be a thrilling spectacle, attracting **eight international teams** vying for a chance to secure three coveted tickets to the upcoming Olympics.

Nepal To Export 10,000 MW of Power to India in next 10 years

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, currently on a two-day visit to Nepal, joined hands with his counterpart N P Saud to inaugurate three cross-border transmission lines. This marks a significant stride in enhancing connectivity between the two nations, fostering cooperation in the energy sector. India and Nepal solidified their commitment to a long-term energy partnership with the signing of an agreement for the export of 10,000 MW of power to India over the next 10 years. The bilateral agreement, signed by India's Energy Secretary Pankaj Agrawal and Nepal's Energy Secretary Gopal Sigdel, is a testament to the shared vision of sustainable energy cooperation.

EAM S. Jaishankar Boosts India-Nepal Relations in Two-Day Visit

In a diplomatic triumph, India's External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar concluded his two-day visit to Nepal, solidifying ties through various initiatives and agreements. The pivotal event of the visit was the 7th India-Nepal Joint Commission meeting, culminating in a landmark accord for India to import 10,000 MW of hydroelectricity from Nepal over the next decade.

Scientists from Mauritius and Bangladesh Join India's 43rd Antarctic Expedition

This December, India's 43rd Antarctic expedition, led by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, welcomed scientists from Mauritius and Bangladesh onboard, marking a significant step in international polar research collaboration. This initiative stems from the maiden Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) Oceanographers and Hydrographers conference held in 2022, which laid the groundwork for scientific partnerships among member nations. This conference facilitated joint endeavors in oceanographic and hydrographic studies, paving the way for further cooperation.

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 that span various areas of cooperation. The leaders announced the elevation of bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership, demonstrating the mutual commitment to enhancing diplomatic relations between the two nations. Twenty key agreements were signed, encompassing various sectors such as tourism cooperation, disaster risk reduction, blue economy, and investments in the digital economy. The agreements also included a commitment from China to provide grant assistance to the Maldives, with specific details undisclosed.

Security Agreement Signed Between Ukraine And Britain In Kyiv

In a significant diplomatic move, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed an unprecedented security agreement between their nations in Kyiv. The accord, as described by Zelenskiy, holds immense importance for Ukraine's security and signifies a robust alliance with the United Kingdom. The signed security accord is poised to remain in effect until Ukraine becomes a member of NATO, marking a strategic commitment between the two nations. Zelenskiy emphasized the historical significance of the agreement, underlining its potential impact on Ukraine's defense capabilities.

Denmark's King Frederik X Ascends As Queen Margrethe II Steps Down After 52 Years

Denmark witnessed a historic moment on January 14 as King Frederik X ascended the throne, succeeding his mother, Queen Margrethe II, who formally abdicated after an impressive 52 years as the monarch. The capital brimmed with anticipation and excitement as large crowds gathered to witness this significant event in the nation's history. The announcement of Queen Margrethe II's abdication came as a shock to the nation on New Year's Eve. At 83, she revealed her plans to become the first Danish monarch in almost 900 years to voluntarily relinquish the throne. The pivotal meeting saw the attendance of government representatives, Queen Margrethe, the new King Frederik X, his Australian-born wife Mary – now the queen consort, and their eldest son Christian, 18, who assumes the role of the new heir to the throne.

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

In a groundbreaking election, Taiwanese voters have chosen William Lai Ching-te, a pro-sovereignty candidate from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), as their president, marking

a significant departure from China. Lai, the current vice president, secured an unprecedented third consecutive term for the DPP by defeating his conservative rival, Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (KMT), by over 900,000 votes. China, branding Lai as a “dangerous separatist,” expressed anger over the election results, asserting Taiwan as part of China and framing the choice as one between “war and peace.” China has escalated its military presence around Taiwan, raising concerns about potential conflict.

India Secures Lithium Blocks in Argentina to Address ₹24,000 Core Import Dependency

In a significant development, India is poised to secure exploration and development rights for five lithium blocks in Argentina, marking its second international foray into critical minerals after a partnership with Australia in 2022. India has taken a crucial step towards reducing its ₹24,000 crore lithium import dependency, primarily sourced from China. The deal finalized between Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) and Catamarca Minera Y Energética Sociedad Del Estado (CAMYEN), an Argentine state-owned mining and energy company. The Indian government plans to invest around Rs 200 crore over the next five years for exploration, signaling a strategic commitment to securing a domestic supply of critical minerals.

World Economic Forum and Telangana Government Collaborate to Establish C4IR in Hyderabad

In a groundbreaking move, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Telangana government are jointly establishing the 19th Centre of the WEF’s Fourth Industrial Revolution Network (4IR) in Hyderabad. The WEF-Telangana Centre, slated for launch in February 2024, will be the world’s inaugural thematic center dedicated to health tech and life sciences. The collaboration, solidified during a meeting between Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and WEF President Borge Brende at Davos, underscores the commitment to advancing healthcare technology.

China’s Betavolt Unveils Groundbreaking Nuclear Battery: 50 Years of Maintenance-Free Power Generation

China’s Betavolt, a cutting-edge startup, has introduced a groundbreaking nuclear battery that claims to provide uninterrupted electricity for 50 years without the need for charging or maintenance. The miniaturization of atomic energy sets this battery apart as the first of its kind globally, challenging conventional views on nuclear technology.

Japan’s Lunar Ambition: Smart Lander Mission Set for Success on January 20

Japan is poised to join an exclusive group of nations that have successfully landed on the Moon. The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), developed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), is scheduled to touch the lunar surface on January 20, 2024. This mission marks a significant milestone in Japan’s space exploration endeavours and offers a unique opportunity to advance lunar science.

Saudi Arabia to Open First Alcohol Store for Diplomats

In a groundbreaking move, Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store, exclusively for diplomats. This significant development represents a notable shift in the Kingdom’s approach to alcohol, which has traditionally been banned under its strict interpretation of Islamic law.

State News

Jharkhand Reduces Age Limit For Old-Age Pensions To 50

In a significant move to enhance social security and address the challenges faced by marginalized communities, Chief Minister Hemant Soren of **Jharkhand** announced a reduction in the qualifying age for old-age pensions. The decision primarily targets tribals and Dalits, lowering the age threshold **from 60 to 50 years**. This bold initiative **aims to provide financial support to a broader segment of the population**, acknowledging the specific challenges faced by these communities.

PM Modi Inaugurates ₹1,156 Crore Projects in Lakshadweep

In a significant development, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** inaugurated projects worth ₹1,156 crore during his visit to the Lakshadweep islands. Among these projects is the **Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Cable**, a ₹1,072-crore initiative providing 100 Gbps internet connectivity to the islands.

Gujarat Government Inks Agreements Worth \$86 Billion Ahead of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit

In preparation for the upcoming **biennial Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit**, the Indian state of Gujarat has sealed preliminary investment deals totaling **7.17 trillion Indian rupees (\$86.07 billion)** with 58 companies spanning sectors like energy, oil and gas, and chemicals. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s home state has been strategically securing these agreements ahead of the summit scheduled from January 10 to January 12 in Gandhinagar.

Kerala Woman Sets Guinness Record, Sings In 100+ Languages

Kerala teenager Suchetha Satish achieved a remarkable feat by setting a Guinness World Record during her performance at the 'Concert for Climate' in Dubai on November 24, 2023. Singing in an astounding 140 languages, she captivated the audience and earned widespread acclaim for her musical prowess. The selection of 140 symbolizes the nations participating in the COP 28 summit held in Dubai. Suchetha Satish, a 16-year-old prodigy, mesmerized the audience at the Indian Consulate Auditorium in Dubai during the Concert for Climate. The event was part of the COP 28 summit, attended by representatives from over 140 nations, emphasizing the global significance of her achievement.

Ancient Tools Found In Telangana's Mulugu District

The Mulugu district of Telangana has become the stage for an unexpected archaeological revelation following the devastating floods in July 2023. Amidst the aftermath of the natural disaster, a team of amateur historians stumbled upon a collection of paleolithic quartzite tools that have not only captivated the local community but also pushed back the understanding of human habitations in Telangana and central India. Sriramoju Haragopal, the leader of the enthusiastic team, explained that the discovery occurred in the sand bed of a stream that had dried up after the flood. The exposed tools, identified as hand axes, were found between Gurrevula and Bhupatipuram villages in Mulugu district. The significant find was a stone axe measuring 15.5cm in length, 11cm in width, and 5.5cm in thickness. Eleswaram Janardanachari, a dedicated researcher, was the one who made this remarkable discovery.

Naveen Patnaik Inaugurates Malkangiri Airport In Odisha

On January 9, Odisha's Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of the Malkangiri airport in the southwestern region of the state. This strategic initiative is designed to enhance connectivity and foster development in the tribal-dominated areas, marking a crucial step forward in the region's progress. Situated over 233 acres in the Katelguda area of Goudaguda panchayat, Malkangiri airport was established at a cost of INR 70 crore.

Kerala Launches Operation AMRITH To Combat AMR

The Kerala Drug Control Department has taken a proactive step to combat the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through Operation Amrith (Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention For Total Health). This initiative aims to curb the overuse of antibiotics in the state by conducting surprise raids in pharmacies and detecting over-the-counter (OTC) sales of antibiotics without a doctor's prescription. AMR, or antimicrobial resistance, refers to the ability of bacteria and microbes to resist the drugs used to inhibit or kill them. Recognized as a "silent pandemic," AMR was associated with approximately 5 million deaths globally in 2019, with 1.3 million deaths directly attributed to it.

The Kashi Ropeway – A Spiritual Journey Inspired by Lord Shiva

The Kashi Ropeway in Varanasi, inspired by the theme of Lord Shiva, is set to be a landmark project combining spirituality and modern transportation. This article provides an overview of this unique initiative, intended to enhance the travel experience in one of India's most sacred cities.

Inspiration: The ropeway stations at Varanasi Cantt feature artefacts reflecting Lord Shiva, including the damru (drum), trident, conch, river, moon, and riverfront. **Cultural Integration:** Efforts are being made to showcase significant aspects of Varanasi at the ropeway stations, integrating the city's rich spiritual heritage.

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik Inaugurates Puri Jagannath Temple's Heritage Corridor

The SMPP (Shree Mandir Parikrama Prakalpa) introduces a 75-meter-wide space around the temple, referred to as the heritage corridor. This expansive area has been meticulously divided into nine distinct zones, each serving a specific purpose aimed at enhancing the overall experience for visitors and preserving the cultural heritage surrounding the Shree Jagannath Temple.

Assam Govt Unveils Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan

The Assam government recently launched a financial assistance scheme, the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA), with the aim of empowering rural women entrepreneurs. The program is designed to provide financial assistance to women who aspire to embark on their entrepreneurial journey independently, beyond their association with Self-Help Groups (SHGs). This initiative introduces unique conditions, focusing specifically on the number of eligible children for the beneficiaries. The MMUA scheme is designed to promote the development of rural women who are part of self-help groups. It aims to transform them into "Rural Micro Entrepreneurs" with an annual income target of ₹1 lakh per member.

Moh-Juj Fights: A Cultural Resurgence in Assam

After a hiatus of nine years, Moh-Juj, the traditional buffalo fights, have made a comeback in Assam. This revival, held during the Magh Bihu festival in mid-January 2024, marks a significant cultural reclamation in Assam. The Assam Government's approval, along with strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), ensures a balance between cultural preservation and animal welfare. The tradition of Moh-Juj was suspended in 2015 following the Supreme Court's ban on similar events like Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu. The ban was primarily due to concerns regarding animal cruelty. However, recognizing the cultural significance of Moh-Juj, the Assam government, after deliberations and the issuance of detailed SOPs, decided to permit these events again.

Maharashtra Secures Investments of Rs 3.53 Trillion at Davos

In a significant stride towards its ambitious goal of becoming a USD 1 trillion economy, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced the signing of 19 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) during his visit to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. Accompanied by Industries Minister Uday Samant and senior officials, Shinde expressed his determination to lead the state towards economic prosperity. The state government successfully sealed investment MoUs amounting to Rs 3.53 lakh crore (USD 44 billion) across various sectors, including electronics, IT, data centers, gems and jewelry, agriculture, automobile, and renewable energy. An additional expression of interest for Rs 1 lakh crore investment was also received, catapulting the total potential investment to Rs 4.5 lakh crore (almost USD 57 billion).

Telangana To Unveil Gruha Jyothi Scheme In February

The Chief Minister of Telangana, Revanth Reddy, has taken significant strides to expedite the implementation of various welfare schemes, including the much-anticipated Gruha Jyothi Scheme. The state government aims to roll out this scheme from the first week of February, bringing relief to numerous households. The announcement of the Gruha Jyothi Scheme, which promises 200 units of free electricity, sparked confusion among citizens. To address this, the Telangana government clarified that only individuals who have settled their electricity bills for December 2023 and January 2024 are eligible for the scheme. Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy announced that the Gruha Jyothi Scheme's free electricity component will be set in motion from the beginning of February.

Visakhapatnam Hosts 14th All India Police Commando Contest

The 14th edition of the Annual All India Police Commando Competition (AIPCC) began on January 22, 2024 at the Greyhounds Training Centre in Kapuluppada, Visakhapatnam. Elite commando forces from 16 states are participating in this week-long competition. Commissioner A. Ravi Shankar inaugurated the event, emphasizing its significance in fostering inter-state cooperation and showcasing the prowess of India's top commando units. The Additional Director General of Greyhounds, R.K. Meena, added prestige to the occasion with his presence.

World's First 'Black Tiger Safari': Odisha's CM Naveen Patnaik Announces

In a groundbreaking move, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has unveiled plans for the establishment of the world's first 'black tiger safari' near the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Mayurbhanj. This visionary project aims to provide tourists and visitors with a rare glimpse of the melanistic tigers, commonly known as black tigers, recently spotted at the Similipal National Park.

West Bengal News**Bengali Writer Shirshendu Mukhopadhyaya Receives 2023 Kuvempu Award**

In a prestigious recognition of his literary contributions, renowned Bengali writer Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay has been awarded the 2023 Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar. The national award, named in honour of the late Kannada poet Kuvempu, celebrates writers who have made significant contributions to any Indian language. Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, an accomplished author with a prolific literary career, has penned over 90 books, encompassing a diverse range of genres, including travelogues and fiction for children. The esteemed award comes with a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh, a silver medal, and a citation.

Mamata Banerjee launches 'Yogyasree' for SC/ST students in West Bengal

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has recently introduced a comprehensive social welfare scheme named "Yogyasree." The initiative aims to provide free training modules for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in West Bengal, specifically targeting entrance and competitive examinations. This move comes ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, reflecting the government's commitment to educational empowerment.

First Meeting Of Inland Waterways Development Council Held In Kolkata

The Inland Waterways Authority of India, operating under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW), created history by hosting the inaugural meeting of the Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC) in Kolkata. This significant event, spearheaded by Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, brought together representatives from waterway states, central government officials, and experts aboard the MV Ganga Queen.



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

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the 47th International Kolkata Book Fair on January 18, amidst a drizzle that posed challenges for last-minute preparations for several stall owners. Despite the weather, the event kicked off at the Boi Mela Prangan in Central Park, Salt Lake, marking an early start compared to the previous edition when the gates opened on January 30. The United Kingdom (UK) holds the spotlight as the theme country for this year's book fair, which is scheduled to continue till January 31.

Economy News**India's Forex Reserves Surge to \$623.2 Billion, Registering a \$2.75 Billion Increase**

In the week concluding on December 29, India's foreign exchange reserves witnessed a substantial uptick, surging by \$2.759 billion, reaching a total of \$623.2 billion, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday. This follows a previous week's increase of \$4.471 billion, bringing the overall reserves to \$620.441 billion. Notably, in October 2021, India's forex kitty had achieved an unprecedented peak at \$645 billion.

Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka Lead In Startup Ecosystem Development: DPIIT

The startup ecosystem in India witnessed a significant boost as Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu emerged as the best-performing states in the Startup Ranking for 2022. The rankings, released by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, highlight the commendable initiatives undertaken by these states to foster the growth of startups and encourage budding entrepreneurs. Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Telangana were also recognized as top performers in this dynamic landscape.

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

In celebration of its silver jubilee year, Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL), Asia's first listed depository, took a significant step towards inclusivity and accessibility in the capital market landscape. SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch launched two groundbreaking multi-lingual initiatives at the silver jubilee function held on January 17. CDSL introduced a revolutionary upgrade in investor Consolidated Account Statement (CAS), enabling investors to receive statements in their preferred language among 23 diverse Indian languages.

This initiative, titled 'Apka CAS – Apki Zubaani,' aims to provide easier accessibility, offering investors a consolidated view of their securities held in a demat account in a language of their choice.

Air India Fined Rs 1.1 Crore by Regulator For Safety Rule Violation

Air India, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, incurred a hefty fine of Rs 1.1 crore from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the country's aviation regulator, for safety breaches. This penalty was imposed following a pilot's report concerning insufficient emergency oxygen supply on Air India's B777 aircraft, which are crucially utilized for long-range flights. In October last year, a pilot filed a complaint with the DGCA, alleging that Air India, a Tata Group-run airline, failed to provide sufficient emergency oxygen on its B777 aircraft. Subsequent investigations by the DGCA confirmed the validity of the pilot's concerns, leading to the imposition of the fine.

Rankings & Reports News**Hyderabad, Bengaluru Airports Score High in Global On-Time Ranking**

In a recent on-time performance review conducted by aviation analytics firm Cirium, Hyderabad and Bengaluru airports have emerged as global leaders in punctuality, securing the second and third ranks, respectively. With over 84 per cent on-time departures, these airports have showcased their commitment to efficiency and reliability in air travel.

UN Report: India's GDP Growth Forecast at 6.2% for 2024

In the eagerly awaited United Nations' World Economic Situation and Prospects 2024 report, India emerges as a key player, projecting a GDP growth of 6.2% in the coming year. This slightly trails behind the 6.3% estimate for 2023, a testament to the country's robust domestic demand and the flourishing manufacturing and services sectors. South Asia, driven by India's prowess, is anticipated to witness a GDP surge of 5.2% in 2024 after a commendable 5.3% growth in 2023.

Chennai Tops As Best City For Indian Women

Chennai emerged as the top Indian city for women in 2023 in terms of inclusivity and conduciveness to working women, as per findings from diversity, equity, and inclusivity consultant Avtar Group's Top Cities for Women in India (TCWI) 2023. Tamil Nadu cities topped both categories that the study covered – 49 cities in the million-plus population category and 64 cities in the less than a million-population category. Chennai topped the million-plus category, and Tiruchirappalli came on top of the less than a million category. The southern state also had a total of seven cities featuring in the lists.

EU Scientists Confirm 2023 As Hottest Year Ever Recorded

On January 9, the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) declared that the year gone by was the hottest on record, significantly surpassing previous temperatures and potentially marking the warmest period in the last 100,000 years. The announcement sheds light on the alarming trajectory of global warming, with each passing month breaking climate records and raising concerns about the consequences for the planet. Scientists had anticipated this milestone, considering the consistent shattering of climate records. From June onward, each month in 2023 has claimed the title of the hottest on record compared to its respective month in preceding years. C3S Director Carlo Buontempo described the year as “very exceptional” and noted its uniqueness even when compared to other notably warm years.

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

In a significant development, 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 with easy access to 193 destinations. Following closely, Austria, Denmark, Ireland, and the Netherlands claim the third position, providing access to 192 destinations.

TCS ranked second most valuable IT brand in global list

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), a prominent name in the global IT services sector, has achieved a significant milestone by being rated the second most valuable IT services brand in the world, according to the 2024 Global 500 IT Services Ranking by Brand Finance. This achievement underscores TCS’s commitment to innovation, sustainability, and global expansion, positioning it as a leader in the technology industry.

Four DISCOMs Secured A+ Rating In The Latest CSRD Report For Exceptional Consumer Service

In a significant development, four electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) from Delhi and Uttar Pradesh have achieved the prestigious A+ rating in the latest Consumer Service Rating of Discoms (CSRD) report. The report, unveiled by Power Minister RK Singh, is a comprehensive evaluation of DISCOMs across the country, aimed at enhancing their accountability towards consumers. Out of the 62 DISCOMs evaluated, Delhi emerged as the frontrunner, with three companies securing the top A+ rating. The notable achievers include BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL), BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), and

Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL). This recognition reflects their commitment to delivering exceptional customer service and operational efficiency.

Indian Equity Market Surpasses Hong Kong, Ranks 4th Globally with \$4.33 Trillion Market Cap

India’s equity market has outpaced Hong Kong’s Hang Seng, securing the fourth position globally with a market capitalization of \$4.33 trillion. This milestone, marking India’s ascendancy, underscores the nation’s robust economic standing. The US remains the largest stock market with a staggering \$50.86 trillion market cap, followed by China at \$8.44 trillion and Japan at \$6.36 trillion.

Bhopal Ranks 5th In Swachh Survekshan 2023 Cleanliness

Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, has made significant strides in cleanliness, emerging as the 5th cleanest city in India among those with a population exceeding 1 lakh. The Bhopal Municipal Corporation’s persistent efforts have not only elevated its ranking from 6th in 2022 but also earned it a coveted 5-star Garbage Free City (GFC) rating, making it the cleanest State capital in the nation. Bhopal’s ascent can be attributed to a combination of best practices, innovation, and distinctiveness. The city produces 850 tons of waste daily, and what sets it apart is its commitment to processing the entire waste stream every day. The focus on scientific waste disposal, waste-to-wealth projects, recycling initiatives, and the mantra of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3Rs) are pivotal in Bhopal’s success.

Business News

Flipkart’s Binny Bansal launches OppDoor

In a significant development, Binny Bansal, co-founder of **Flipkart**, has ventured into the e-commerce space once again with his latest startup, **OppDoor**. The startup aims to facilitate the global expansion of e-commerce firms by offering comprehensive end-to-end solutions. The launch of OppDoor holds particular significance as it marks Binny Bansal’s re-entry into the e-commerce domain after the completion of a five-year non-compete clause following the sale of Flipkart to Walmart in 2018.

Reliance Industries Achieves India’s First ISCC-Plus Certification

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), the Mumbai-based conglomerate with a diverse portfolio in energy and petrochemical businesses, concluded the year 2023 on a remarkable note. The company achieved a significant milestone by becoming the **first in India to produce ISCC-Plus certified chemically recycled polymers**.

Adidas to set up its first Asia GCC outside China in Tamil Nadu

Adidas, the renowned athletic footwear and apparel giant, is making strategic moves to enhance its global operations by establishing its first and only Global Capacity Centre (GCC) in Asia outside of China. This significant development underscores the growing trend of multinational corporations choosing India as a prime destination for setting up their GCCs, capitalizing on the country's abundant software skills. The German corporation, headquartered in Herzogenaurach, Bavaria, is set to establish its Global Business Services (GBS) hub in Chennai. This move signifies a pivotal step for Adidas, as the Chennai facility becomes the first GCC outside of China in Asia. The choice of Chennai as the location for this hub reflects the city's rising prominence in the global corporate landscape.

REC Invests Rs. 35,000 Cr In Multi-Modal Projects With Rail Vikas Nigam For 5 Years

REC Limited, a prominent Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) established in 1969 under the Ministry of Power, has recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL). This collaboration aims to provide financial support of up to Rs. 35,000 Crores for a range of Infrastructure Projects over the next 5 years, showcasing the commitment of both entities to drive essential developments in the sector.

Gensol Engineering Allocates Rs 2,000 Crore For Gujarat EV Plant

Gensol Engineering, a prominent player in the sustainable energy sector, has embarked on a significant venture by entering into a strategic partnership with the Government of Gujarat. This collaboration is a pivotal step towards advancing the country's journey towards a sustainable future. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was formalized as part of the investment promotion activities associated with the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024, signifying a landmark agreement between the two entities. As a testament to its dedication to sustainable growth, Gensol Engineering has committed a substantial investment of Rs 2,000 crore for the establishment of an Electric Vehicle (EV) manufacturing plant in Gujarat.

LIC Approves Acquisition of 10% Stake in NHB-Promoted Company

In a recent regulatory filing, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) announced its board's approval to acquire up to 10% stake in a new company promoted by the National Housing Bank (NHB). The investment is targeted towards residential mortgage-backed securities and will be made through equity contribution in one or more tranches.

LIC overtakes SBI to become the most valuable PSU

In a significant turn of events, the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has not only staged an impressive comeback but has also surpassed the market capitalization of the State Bank of India (SBI). This article explores the recent surge in LIC's share price, its journey since listing, and the factors contributing to its remarkable revival.

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

L&T Construction's railways strategic business group has clinched a significant contract valued between ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 crore for a pivotal segment of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project. The 'mega' order, received from a Japanese agency overseeing the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project (MAHSR), entails the construction of 508 route km of high-speed electrification works.

Adani Group Announces Rs 50,000 Crore Investment for 1 GW Data Centre in Maharashtra

In a major development at the World Economic Forum 2024, the Adani Group unveiled plans to invest Rs 50,000 crore over the next decade in establishing a 1 GW hyperscale data centre in Maharashtra. The conglomerate's flagship company, Adani Enterprises Ltd, and the Maharashtra government formalized this commitment through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani.

LIC Introduces Jeevan Dhara II Deferred Annuity Plan

Unveiled by LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty, the new Jeevan Dhara II plan offers a non-participating, individual savings, deferred annuity option. The plan provides life cover during the deferment period and boasts a higher annuity rate at advanced ages.

Sony Terminates \$10 Billion Merger Deal with Zee Entertainment

On January 22, Sony issued a notice terminating the merger agreement with Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEEL) and Culver Max Entertainment Private Limited (CME), formerly known as Sony Pictures Networks India Private Limited. The \$10-billion deal, signed on December 22, 2021, faced challenges in meeting closing conditions within the specified timeframe. Despite engaging in good faith discussions to extend the merger cooperation agreement's end date, Sony and Zee failed to reach an agreement by the January 21 deadline.

Competition Commission of India Greenlights JSW Group's 38% stake buy in MG Motor India

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has given the nod to significant business transactions, signaling a shifting landscape in the corporate sector. Among the approved deals is the JSW Group's strategic move to acquire a substantial 38% stake in MG Motor India. Facilitated through JSW Ventures Singapore, a newly established subsidiary of JSW International Tradecorp Pte Ltd, the acquisition is poised to reshape the dynamics of the automotive industry.

Krutrim, Ola Founder's AI Start-Up Emerges As India's First AI Unicorn

In a groundbreaking move for the Indian tech landscape, Bhavish Aggarwal, the visionary behind Ola, has successfully raised \$50 million for his latest venture, Krutrim. This AI start-up, positioned at the forefront of cutting-edge technology, is set to revolutionize the industry. The recent funding round, led by Matrix Partners India and other key investors, has propelled Krutrim to unicorn status. With a valuation of \$1 billion, Krutrim is set to make significant strides in reshaping the landscape of artificial intelligence.

Agreement News

France And Germany To Provide 100 Million Euros For AMRUT Mission Financing

France's development agency, AFD, and Germany's KfW Bank are reportedly in talks with India to extend a €100 million loan to support the country's urban infrastructure plan, specifically the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0. Negotiations for the loan are scheduled for early 2024, with the signing expected to take place in February.

Cabinet Approves India-USAID MoU For Railways' Net-Zero Emission Goal

In a significant move towards sustainable development, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The focus of this collaboration is to support Indian Railways in achieving 'net zero carbon emission' by the ambitious target year of 2030. The primary objectives of this strategic alliance are to facilitate utility modernization, deploy advanced energy solutions and systems, foster regional energy and market integration, encourage private sector participation and engagement, and conduct training sessions and workshops.

Cabinet Greenlights India-Guyana MoU For Hydrocarbon Sector Collaboration

The Union Cabinet, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has granted approval for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India, and the Ministry of Natural Resources, Republic of Guyana. This MoU aims to foster collaboration in the hydrocarbon sector, covering various aspects of the value chain.

Rural Ministry Partners With SBI For SHG Loans

In a significant move towards fostering rural development and financial inclusion, the Rural Development Ministry and the State Bank of India (SBI) have joined hands through a memorandum of understanding (MoU). The primary objective of this collaboration is to streamline and facilitate enterprise financing for rural self-help groups (SHGs), as announced in an official statement. The MoU, a pivotal step towards rural economic empowerment, was formally signed by Mr. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana, Additional Secretary – National Rural Livelihoods Mission, and Mr. Shantanu Pendsey, Chief General Manager at the Corporate office of State Bank of India in Mumbai.

IndoSpace Signs Rs 2000 Cr Deal With Tamil Nadu Govt

IndoSpace, a leading player in industrial and logistics real estate, has solidified its commitment to Tamil Nadu's economic development by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) valued at Rs 2000 crore. This landmark agreement was unveiled during the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet 2024, a prestigious event attended by key dignitaries, including MK Stalin, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry.

IIT Madras and Altair Collaborate to Launch eMobility Simulation Lab

In a strategic partnership, the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has joined forces with Altair, a global technology leader specializing in simulation, high-performance computing (HPC), and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Together, they are set to inaugurate the cutting-edge eMobility Simulation Lab within the Department of Engineering Design at IIT Madras. The eMobility Simulation Lab is poised to become a hub for advanced research and training in the field. Thanks to Altair's generous financial backing, the lab will be equipped with state-of-the-art products and tools, featuring Altair's modeling and simulation technologies.

Google Pay Partners With NPCI To Extend UPI Payments Globally

In a significant move towards fostering international digital transactions, Google India Digital Services and NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) have joined hands to propel UPI payments beyond the borders of India. The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two entities is poised to revolutionize the way Indian travellers engage in financial transactions abroad. The primary objective of the MoU is to enhance the usage of UPI payments for Indian travellers outside their homeland. With this collaboration, Google Pay (GPay) becomes the conduit, enabling seamless and convenient transactions for Indian globetrotters.

National Farmers Society, IndiaAI, Wadhvani Foundation Signs MoU For AI-Driven Agriculture

In a significant development towards revolutionizing the agricultural landscape of India, a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been recently inked between the National Farmers' Welfare Programme Implementation Society, IndiaAI (Digital India Corporation), and Wadhvani Foundation. This collaborative effort aims to propel India to the forefront of AI-driven digital agriculture, leveraging the expertise and support of the Wadhvani Foundation in formulating and executing a robust AI strategy.

Serum Institute Partners With CEPI For Affordable Outbreak Vaccines

In a significant development for global health preparedness, the Serum Institute of India (SII) has joined the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) network of vaccine producers in the Global South. This collaborative effort aims to strengthen the response to future public health disease outbreaks through rapid, agile, and equitable means. CEPI, a global partnership dedicated to preventing epidemics, is investing up to \$30 million to expand SII's manufacturing capacity. The objective is to enable swift production and supply of investigational vaccines in the face of epidemic and pandemic threats. The collaboration between CEPI and SII aligns with the ambitious 100 Days Mission, a goal embraced by the G7, G20, and industry leaders.

India's ACME and IHI Sign Historic Green Ammonia Supply Pact

India's ACME Group and Japan's IHI Corporation have inked a groundbreaking deal for the supply of 0.4 million metric tons per annum (MMTPA) of green ammonia from Odisha, India, to Japan. The agreement, signed by Manoj Upadhyay, ACME Group's Founder and Chairman, and Hiroshi Ide, President and CEO of IHI Corporation, establishes a long-term partnership covering production, logistics, and supply of green ammonia for diverse industrial uses in Japan, ultimately aimed at reducing emissions.

Appointment News

Arvind Panagariya Appointed Head Of Sixteenth Finance Commission By Government

In a significant development, the government has appointed **Arvind Panagariya**, former Niti Aayog vice chairman and Columbia University professor, as the **chairman of the Sixteenth Finance Commission**. The Commission is entrusted with the crucial task of recommending the tax revenue sharing formula between the Centre and the States for the upcoming five-year period starting from April 2026.

Vivek Srivastava Named DG Of Fire Service, Civil Defence & Home Guards

The **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** has recently approved the appointment of **Vivek Srivastava**, a seasoned 1989-batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre, as the **Director General of Fire Service, Civil Defence & Home Guards under the Ministry of Home Affairs**.

The decision was made official through an order issued by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) on December 28. This significant appointment is set to take effect from the date of Srivastava's joining the post and will **continue until June 30, 2025**, or until further orders, whichever occurs earlier.

Ravindra Kumar Tyagi Appointed as CMD of Power Grid Corporation

Power Grid Corporation, a **leading state-owned enterprise**, announced a significant change in its leadership on January 1. **Ravindra Kumar Tyagi has been appointed as the new Chairman and Managing Director (CMD)**, succeeding **Sreekant Kandikuppa who retired upon reaching the age of superannuation**.

NIVEA India Appoints Geetika Mehta As New Managing Director

Nivea India, a leading personal care products company, has appointed **Geetika Mehta** as its **new managing director**. This significant announcement marked a strategic move for the renowned brand.

Kia India Appoints Gwanggu Lee as New MD and CEO

Kia India has appointed **Gwanggu Lee** as the new **Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer**, effective immediately. This transition marks an important shift in the leadership of the company, with Gwanggu Lee taking the reins from the former MD and CEO, **Tae Jin Park**.

Randhir Jaiswal Takes Over As MEA Spokesperson From Arindam Bagchi

In a significant transition at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), **Arindam Bagchi**, the official spokesperson, has passed on the baton to **Randhir Jaiswal**. This move comes after Arindam Bagchi's appointment as India's next Permanent Representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva in October 2023. Mr. Bagchi, a seasoned 1995-batch **Indian Foreign Service (IFS)** officer holding the position of Additional Secretary in the MEA, had taken over as the spokesperson in March 2021.

Adani Ports Elevates Karan Adani To MD, Appoints Ashwani Gupta As CEO

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (**APSEZ**), a prominent player in the ports and logistics sector, recently made significant announcements regarding its leadership structure. The company declared that CEO Karan Adani would be stepping into the role of Managing Director, succeeding **Gautam Adani**. In parallel, the company welcomed **Ashwani Gupta**, former global Chief Operating Officer at Nissan Motors, as its new CEO.

Puneet Chhatwal Appointed Chairman of FAITH

In a recent development, **Puneet Chhatwal**, the Managing Director and CEO of Indian Hotels Company Limited, has been appointed as the new Chairperson of the **Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH)**. This move comes as he succeeds **Nakul Anand**, the retired Executive Director at ITC Hotels.

Nadia Calvino Appointed as New President of the European Investment Bank

In a historic move, **Nadia Calvino** has been named the new president of the **European Investment Bank**, taking office on January 1. She succeeds **Werner Hoyer** to become the eighth president of the EU bank. Notably, Calvino is the first woman and the first Spaniard to lead this prestigious institution, marking a significant milestone in the bank's history.

Raghuram Iyer appointed as CEO of Indian Olympic Association

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has welcomed a seasoned professional, **Raghuram Iyer**, as its new CEO, marking a significant development after a meticulous selection process conducted by the nomination committee. The appointment, long-awaited and in response to reminders from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), brings a wealth of experience to the forefront. **Raghuram Iyer**, the former CEO of Rajasthan Royals, brings a diverse and rich professional background to his new role. His experience extends to prominent positions with IPL teams such as Lucknow Super Giants and Rising Supergiants.

Senior IAS officer Vikas Sheel appointed Executive Director, Asian Development Bank

India has appointed seven accomplished civil servants to crucial positions abroad, showcasing the country's global engagement. Notably, Mr. **Vikas Sheel**, a seasoned bureaucrat, is now the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila, emphasizing India's commitment to international development. **Vikas Sheel**, a 1994-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is now the Executive Director at ADB. He brings valuable experience from his current role as Additional Secretary and Mission Director of Jal Jeevan Mission, contributing to India's representation at this prestigious institution.

Ashwani Gupta Appointed as CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (**APSEZ**), India's premier ports and logistics company, has announced significant changes in its leadership structure, marking a new era in its corporate journey. In a strategic move, APSEZ has promoted its CEO **Karan Adani** to the role of Managing Director. This move signifies a shift in responsibilities, with **Karan Adani** stepping into a role previously held by **Gautam Adani**, Chairman of the Adani Group. **Gautam Adani** will now serve as the 'Executive Chairman' of APSEZ, reflecting a focus on strategic oversight and global growth.

PhonePe Appoints Ritesh Pai As CEO For International Payments Division

In a strategic move, Walmart-owned fintech firm PhonePe has appointed **Ritesh Pai** as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of its international payments business. This development aligns with India's ambition to globalize the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), attracting interest from countries like Japan, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, France, and the United Kingdom. **Ritesh Pai** brings a wealth of experience to his new role, with a proven track record in the digital payments sector. His expertise lies in launching innovative solutions and structuring strategic business partnerships on a global scale.

Samir Kumar Sinha Assumes Role As DG (Acquisition) In Defence Ministry

In a recent bureaucratic reshuffle, the Centre has announced several key appointments, signifying a strategic realignment of responsibilities. Among the notable changes, Senior IAS officer **Samir Kumar Sinha** has been appointed as Additional Secretary and Director General (Acquisition) in the Defence Ministry. **Samir Kumar Sinha**, a 1994-batch IAS officer from the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, has been entrusted with the crucial position of Additional Secretary and Director General (Acquisition) in the Defence Ministry. His extensive experience and background make him an apt choice for this vital role.

Manish Jain's Appointment as Country Managing Director for Experian India

Experian, a global leader in information services, has appointed Manish Jain as the Country Managing Director for its operations in India. This appointment marks a significant step in the company's efforts to strengthen its leadership team and expand its market presence in India.

VICE ADMIRAL AN PRAMOD APPOINTED DIRECTOR GENERAL NAVAL OPERATIONS

In a significant development, Vice Admiral AN Pramod assumed the pivotal role of Director General Naval Operations (DGNO) on January 15, 2024. A distinguished alumnus of the 38th Integrated Cadet Course at Naval Academy, Goa, Vice Admiral Pramod was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1990.

Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary appointed Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal

Senior IPS officer Daljit Singh Chaudhary has been appointed as the Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). This appointment is a significant development in the administrative reshuffling within India's internal security apparatus. The Sashastra Seema Bal, one of India's central armed police forces, is primarily responsible for guarding the country's borders with Nepal and Bhutan. The appointment of Daljit Singh Chaudhary, an experienced officer, is expected to bring in renewed vigour and strategic expertise in managing the crucial border areas, especially in the context of emerging security challenges in the region.

RuPay Prime Volleyball League Season 3: Hrithik Roshan Onboards as Brand Ambassador

The RuPay Prime Volleyball League (PVL) has taken a significant stride in its marketing and promotion efforts by appointing the acclaimed Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan as the brand ambassador for its third season. This development marks a notable merger of sports and entertainment, promising to enhance the visibility and appeal of the league.

Banking News**Mudra loans show record growth to ₹3-lakh crore in Q3 FY24**

In a promising **New Year development** for small businesses, loans disbursed under the **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** have soared to an unprecedented **₹3-lakh crore** in **December 2023**, showcasing a remarkable **16%** year-on-year growth.

FinMin allows 30th tranche of electoral bonds

The Indian government has granted approval for the release of the **30th tranche of electoral bonds**, set to go on sale from **January 2 to January 11, 2024**. This development precedes

the upcoming general elections later this year and coincides with the anticipated **Supreme Court** verdict on the validity of the electoral bonds scheme.

RBI Significantly Raises Bulk Deposit Limit for Large UCBs to ₹1 Crore and Above

In a significant move, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to substantially increase the bulk deposit limit for **large urban co-operative banks (UCBs)**. The new limit now stands at **₹1 crore** and above, a notable surge from the previous threshold of ₹15 lakh and above.

Tata Pay Secures RBI Payment Aggregator License for E-commerce Transactions

In a significant development, **Tata Pay**, the digital payments app under Tata Digital, has been granted a **payment aggregator (PA) license** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This license positions Tata Pay among industry leaders such as Razorpay, Cashfree, and Google Pay, enabling it to efficiently handle ecommerce transactions within its subsidiary entities.

Canara Bank CGM P Santhosh Appointed as MD of NARCL

In a surprising turn of events, P Santhosh, Chief General Manager at Canara Bank, has been appointed as the Managing Director of National Asset Reconstruction Company (NARCL) with effect from January 5, succeeding Natarajan Sundar, who resigned from the post. This unexpected change in leadership at the government-promoted asset reconstruction organization has raised eyebrows within the industry.

Karnataka Bank and Clix Capital Forge Digital Co-Lending Partnership via Yubi Platform

In a strategic move aligned with Reserve Bank of India guidelines, Karnataka Bank (KBL), a prominent private sector bank, and Clix Capital, a rapidly growing NBFC, have joined forces through the Yubi Co.lend Platform. This digital co-lending partnership targets the Indian MSME sector, a key driver of the country's GDP and employment growth.

TARGET WBCS 2024
Complete Prelims + Mains
Starts: 1 Feb, 2024

RBI Approves Praveen Achuthan Kutty as DCB Bank MD & CEO

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has granted approval for the appointment of Praveen Achuthan Kutty as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DCB Bank. The official confirmation came on January 16, signaling a tenure of three years starting from April 29, 2024, as outlined in the regulatory filing.

RBI Announces Revised Eligibility Norms for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) Inclusion in Second Schedule

In a recent press release, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) disclosed the revision of eligibility norms for the inclusion of urban co-operative banks in the second schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. The objective is to bring these banks under an updated regulatory framework. After the release of the Revised Regulatory Framework for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) on July 19, 2022, with revised categorization norms for UCBs, the criteria for classifying a UCB as Financially Sound and Well Managed (FSWM) were notified.

ICRA Upgrades FY24 Bank Credit Growth Forecast to 15%: Record Incremental Growth Anticipated

In a positive turn, ICRA has revised its bank credit growth estimates for FY24 upwards to 14.9-15.3%, surpassing the previous projection of 12.8-13.0%. The surge is attributed to robust performance in the retail segment and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), according to Anil Gupta, Senior Vice President at ICRA.

Zomato Payments Secures RBI Approval as Online Payment Aggregator

In a significant development, Zomato Payments Private Limited, the subsidiary of popular food delivery platform Zomato, has obtained the much-coveted payment aggregator (PA) license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The approval, dated January 24, 2024, empowers Zomato Payments to facilitate ecommerce transactions through its platform. Last year, Zomato collaborated with ICICI Bank to introduce its Unified Payments Interface (UPI) offering, Zomato Pay, with the goal of minimizing dependency on platforms like Google Pay, PhonePe, and Paytm. With the RBI nod, Zomato joins the league of esteemed players such as Tata Pay, Razorpay, and Cashfree, who have also secured the coveted payments license.

Science & Technology News

ISRO Tests Fuel Cell On PSLV-C58's POEM3 Platform Successfully

On January 1, 2024, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) achieved a significant milestone by successfully testing a 100 W class Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel Cell based

Power System (FCPS) in its orbital platform, POEM3. This remarkable feat took place aboard the PSLV-C58 mission, marking a crucial step in the assessment of fuel cell technology for future space missions. The primary objective of the experiment was to evaluate the operation of Polymer Electrolyte Membrane Fuel cells in the challenging environment of space.

IIT Madras Researchers Engineer Plant Cells To Produce Drug For Cancer

Researchers from the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) Madras and Mandi have achieved a significant milestone in the field of biotechnology. They have successfully metabolically engineered plant cells to boost the production of the anti-cancer drug camptothecin (CPT). CPT, traditionally extracted from the endangered plant *Nathapodytes nimmoniana*, has been a source of concern due to the plant's declining population. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has red-listed this species, noting a 20% decrease in its population in the past decade. This development by IIT researchers comes as a critical solution to both medicinal production and plant conservation.

Google DeepMind Introduces Mobile ALOHA Humanoid Technology

Stanford University has unveiled Mobile ALOHA, a robotic system designed to elevate the capabilities of bimanual mobile manipulation. This innovation builds upon the foundation of Google DeepMind's ALOHA system, taking it to new heights by introducing mobility and dexterity as focal points in robotic learning. Developed in collaboration with Berkeley University and Meta, Mobile ALOHA promises to reshape the landscape of robotics.

Swedish Scientists Create 'e-soil' That Accelerates Plant Growth

A groundbreaking development in agricultural technology has emerged from the laboratories of Linköping University in Sweden. Scientists have unveiled an electrically conductive "soil" engineered to foster exceptional growth in crops, particularly barley seedlings, marking a potential 50 per cent surge in growth within a mere 15-day period. Linköping University's Prof. Stavrinidou highlights the crucial importance of their breakthrough amidst global challenges, stating, 'Growing world population and climate change show existing agricultural methods alone can't sustain our planet's food needs.'

Mitsubishi Heavy Launches H-IIA Rocket Carrying Japan's Spy Satellite

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has achieved a significant milestone in space exploration and national security with the successful launch of an H-IIA rocket carrying Japan's Information-Gathering Satellite "Optical-8". This event marks a key development in Japan's aerospace capabilities and strategic surveillance. The

Optical-8 satellite is designed primarily for intelligence gathering. It is equipped with advanced optical devices to collect security information. This development is crucial for Japan's strategic surveillance and defence capabilities, especially considering regional geopolitical dynamics.

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

The Indian Science, Technology, and Engineering facilities Map, known as I-STEM, is set to embark on a groundbreaking initiative named 'Samavesha.' This ambitious project, spearheaded by the Office of Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India, aims to transform research collaboration in the country by facilitating easier access to scientific facilities and laboratories. The inauguration ceremony of 'Samavesha' is scheduled to take place at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru. One of the pivotal aspects of the project is the establishment of an online portal that will connect researchers and industries with scientific institutes.

Oxford Scientists Initiates First Human Trials For Deadly Nipah Virus Vaccine

In a groundbreaking initiative, researchers at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom have commenced the first-in-human vaccine trials for the deadly Nipah virus. This initiative is a significant step forward in addressing the severe impact of the virus on various Asian countries, including India. The trials will be conducted on 51 individuals aged 18 to 55 and are led by the Oxford Vaccine Group. The experimental vaccine, named ChAdOx1 NipahB, aims to combat the Nipah virus, a highly lethal disease with a fatality rate of approximately 75%. The Nipah virus has been responsible for outbreaks in several Asian countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and India. Notably, a recent outbreak occurred in Kerala in September of the previous year.

ISRO Unveils Advanced Distress Alert Transmitter For Fishermen

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has been at the forefront of technological innovation, contributing significantly to various fields. One such noteworthy development is the second-generation 'Distress Alert Transmitter' (DAT-SG), a remarkable advancement in satellite communication and navigation capabilities. Operational since 2010, the DAT-SG has become a crucial tool for fishermen at sea, allowing them to send emergency messages and receive real-time acknowledgments. With over 20,000 units currently in use, it has proven to be a reliable and effective tool for fishermen in distress.

SpaceX Launches Ax-3 Mission to ISS with First Turkish Astronaut Onboard

In a historic event, SpaceX successfully launched the Ax-3 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) from NASA's Kennedy Space Center on January 18. The Crew Dragon capsule, named "Freedom," was propelled into space atop a Falcon 9 rocket, marking the third mission organized by Houston-based Axiom Space. The launch, initially scheduled for January 17, was delayed by a day for additional prelaunch checks. Alongside mission pilot Walter Villadei and European Space Agency astronaut Marcus Wandt, it includes Alper Gezeravci, Turkey's inaugural astronaut. Axiom highlights this mission as "the first all-European commercial astronaut mission" to the ISS.

Japan Becomes Fifth Country To Land On The Moon Successfully

Japan has marked a significant achievement in space exploration by becoming the fifth country to successfully soft-land a spacecraft on the Moon. The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) touched down near the Shioli crater, south of the lunar equator, utilizing precision technology that allowed it to land closer to its target site than any previous mission. Hitoshi Kuninaka, vice president of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), stated that SLIM had been communicating with the ground station and responding to commands accurately. Only China, India, and Japan have successfully landed spacecraft on the Moon in the past decade, with India achieving its success just last August.

CoRover.ai Introduces BharatGPT, India's First Large Language Model

CoRover.ai, a leading player in the Conversational AI space, has recently introduced BharatGPT, India's first Large Language Model (LLM). This groundbreaking development aims to revolutionize AI conversations across 22 Indian languages, addressing the language diversity challenges prevalent in the country. Positioned as an Indigenous Generative AI platform, BharatGPT integrates seamlessly with both voice and text modalities, offering a unique solution to the complexities of linguistic diversity. One of the notable achievements of BharatGPT is its extensive language integration. The model proudly supports voice modality in over 12 Indian languages and text modality in a whopping 22 languages. This impressive feat has been made possible through a strategic collaboration with the National Hub of Language Technology (NHLT) under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's National Language Translation Mission (NLTM).

Schemes and Committees News

PM Modi Launched PRITHVI VIGYAN Scheme worth nearly 4,800 crore rupees

The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has launched an ambitious initiative named PRITHVI (PRITHvi Vlgyan), a comprehensive scheme by the Ministry of Earth Sciences. With a significant budget of Rs. 4,797 crore, the program spans from 2021-26, marking a new era in the study and understanding of Earth sciences in India.

ANUBHAV Awards Scheme, 2024

The ANUBHAV Awards Scheme, initiated by the Department of Pension and Pensioners Welfare (DoPPW), is an innovative platform for recognizing the contributions made by retired officials to nation-building during their tenure in government service. Launched in 2015 under the guidance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the scheme is a step towards documenting India's administrative history through written narratives by retired Central Government employees.

'Yuva Nidhi' Scheme Launched For Jobless Youth In Shivamogga, Karnataka

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah recently unveiled the fifth and final poll guarantee of the Congress party, named the 'Yuva Nidhi' scheme. Launched at Freedom Park in Shivamogga, this initiative aims to provide unemployment assistance to graduates and diploma holders who completed their degrees during the academic year 2022-23.

Key Features of the 'Yuva Nidhi' Scheme are

1. Financial Support for Unemployed Graduates and Diploma Holders
2. Cheque Distribution Ceremony
3. Domicile Requirement

Defense Minister Sanctions Insurance Scheme for BRO Workers

India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, has recently approved a groundbreaking scheme aimed at providing insurance cover to casual workers employed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). This move is designed to address the inherent risks associated with the challenging tasks these workers undertake in remote and hazardous areas. The scheme is expected to offer financial security and welfare to the families of casual paid labourers who play a crucial role in building infrastructure in the country's farthest frontiers.

Summits & Conference News

International Purple Fest 2024: A Global Celebration of Inclusivity and Empowerment in Goa

In a groundbreaking initiative, the International Purple Fest – Goa 2024, India's inaugural inclusive festival for persons with disabilities, kicked off today and is set to captivate audiences until January 13. The festival, organized by the Office of the State Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Goa, and supported by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, showcases unity and diversity in a spectacular display.

India to Chair UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and Host 46th Session in 2024

In a historic milestone for India, the nation is set to chair the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and host its 46th session in New Delhi from July 21 to 31, 2024. This significant announcement was made by Vishal V Sharma, India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, on January 9, underlining the nation's growing influence and commitment to global cultural and natural heritage conservation. The decision to hold the 46th session in India was confirmed during the 19th extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee in 2023. This decision, stemming from a proposal by Indian authorities in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General, reflects the collaborative efforts between India and UNESCO in fostering global cooperation in education, arts, science, and culture to promote world peace.

Switzerland to Host Ukraine Peace Summit on Zelenskiy's Request

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has secured Switzerland's agreement to host a global peace summit aimed at resolving the conflict sparked by Russia's incursion into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Switzerland, known for its neutrality and past mediation roles, will facilitate talks to find a resolution.

Awards & Honors News

Prof B R Kamboj Honoured With M S Swaminathan Award

In a notable achievement, **Prof. B.R. Kamboj**, the Vice Chancellor of **Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University**, has been bestowed with the prestigious **M.S. Swaminathan Award**. This recognition comes in appreciation of his significant contributions as a scientist and extension specialist in the field of agronomy.

Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports Announced the National Sports Awards 2023

The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2023, honouring individuals and institutions that have excelled in their respective fields. The awards ceremony, held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, witnessed the presentation of various awards to sportspersons, coaches, and entities for their outstanding contributions to sports in the country. President Droupadi Murmu has conferred the Arjuna Awards to various sports personalities at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. The second-highest athletic honour in India, the Arjuna Award, is given for demonstrating leadership, sportsmanship, and discipline along with good performance over the preceding four years.

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

In a historic moment for Indian sports, the accomplished equestrian athlete, 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. Divyakriti Singh's remarkable journey in the equestrian world reached new heights with the Arjuna Award, recognizing her outstanding contribution to the sport. Her dedication and prowess were on full display when she played a pivotal role in securing the Gold Medal for the Indian Dressage team at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, last September.

US Air Force Officer Madison Marsh Becomes First Active-Duty Winner Of Miss America 2024

In a groundbreaking moment, Second Lt. Madison Marsh, an officer in the U.S. Air Force, was crowned Miss America, marking the first time an active-duty service member has clinched this prestigious title, as confirmed by the Air Force. Hailing from Colorado, the home of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Marsh proudly represented her state in the pageant. Her academic background is just as impressive, having graduated from the academy with a degree in physics, according to details provided in her Miss Colorado biography. In an interview with the Air Force Institute of Technology in November, Marsh highlighted the values she cherished within the pageant community.

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

REC Limited, a prominent Maharatna Public Sector Unit and a leading Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) under the Ministry of Power, has been honored with the prestigious 'Plaque' at the ICAI Awards for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

The recognition is in the 'Financial Services Sector (Other than Banking and Insurance)' category for the financial year 2022-23. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) bestowed the award based on rigorous evaluation criteria, including the company's accounting practices, disclosure policies, presentation of financial statements, adherence to Indian Accounting Standards, statutory guidelines, and regulations. This accolade follows REC's recent achievements, including the 'Golden Peacock Award' for exceptional performance in risk management conferred by the Institute of Directors (IOD).

Assam Govt To Honor Ex-CJI Ranjan Gogoi With 'Assam Baibhav' Award

Former Chief Justice of India and current Rajya Sabha MP, Ranjan Gogoi, is set to be honored with the prestigious 'Assam Baibhav' award, the highest civilian award in Assam. This announcement was made by the Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, who highlighted Gogoi's significant contributions to the field of justice and jurisprudence. The award ceremony is scheduled to take place on February 10. This marks the third year of the Assam Baibhav awards, with the inaugural award presented to business magnate Ratan Tata in the first year, followed by journalist Tapan Saikia in the second year.

Serial No	Name	Year	Field
1	Ratan Tata	2021	Social Service
2	Dr. Tapan Saikia	2022	Healthcare & Public
3	Sri Ranjan Gogoi	2023	Law & Justice

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

Skyways Air Services Pvt Ltd has been recognized for its outstanding cargo services at the prestigious Wings India Awards held in Hyderabad. This recognition is a testament to Skyways Air Services' commitment to excellence in the aviation cargo sector. The event also honored various other entities in different categories, including the best airports, airlines, and service providers. The GMR Group was recognized as the Best Aviation Service Provider, and Indian Oil Skytanking Pvt Ltd for fuel services. Other categories included sustainability, innovation, connectivity, and training.

UP Govt to Honour Dr. Ritu and Naveen with 'UP Gaurav Samman'

Yogi government of Uttar Pradesh has announced the prestigious 'UP Gaurav Samman' award for two distinguished personalities – eminent scientist Dr. Ritu and renowned entrepreneur Naveen.

This award highlights the government's commitment to acknowledging excellence and inspiring future generations.

Ravi Shastri, Farokh Engineer Receive Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Awards

Former India captain and head coach Ravi Shastri expressed his gratitude on January 21, 2024 for being awarded the prestigious Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award at a glittering ceremony organized by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The ceremony also saw other cricketing stalwarts, such as Farokh Engineer, being honored for their contributions to the sport. In an emotional acceptance speech, Shastri shared his sentiments on receiving the Col CK Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award. He acknowledged the BCCI as his guardian throughout his four-decade-long cricketing journey, highlighting the board's role in shaping his career from a young age. Jasprit Bumrah, one of the key players in India's recent cricket success, was awarded the Polly Umrigar Award for Best International Cricketer – Men. Shubman Gill received the Polly Umrigar Best Men's International Cricketer of the Year award for his outstanding performance in the 2022-23 season. The awards ceremony also recognized Mohammed Shami for his excellence in international cricket.

Important Dates News

World Braille Day 2024

World Braille Day, annually observed on **January 4**, is a profound tribute to **Louis Braille**, the visionary mind behind the transformative braille system. Born in **1809 in France**, **Louis** faced the adversity of losing his sight in childhood. However, his resilience and determination led to the creation of one of history's most revolutionary systems.

African National Congress Foundation Day 2024

The African National Congress (ANC), a pivotal force in South Africa's history, celebrates its Foundation Day on January 8, commemorating its establishment in 1912. This day marks the ANC's enduring commitment to uniting African people and defending 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. In 1919, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) emerged as a significant force, organizing both rural and urban areas.

Earth's Rotation Day 2024: Honoring the Discovery of Our Planet's Movement

Every year, Earth Rotation Day is celebrated on January 8, and this year, the special day falls on a Monday. It's a day dedicated to recognizing the pivotal discovery of Earth rotation on its axis. The theme to observe Earth Rotation Day in 2024 is 'Honoring the Discovery of Our Planet's Movement'. The concept of Earth rotation dates back to ancient Greece in 470 BC. However, it wasn't until 1851 that French physicist Léon Foucault provided concrete proof with his famous pendulum experiment. This experiment showcased at the Pantheon in Greece and the Paris Observatory, became a cornerstone in demonstrating Earth rotation, a fact that had long been theorized but never conclusively proven.

Indian Army Day 2024, Date, Theme, History and Quotes

Indian Army Day is a special day celebrated on January 15 every year. In 2024, it will be celebrated on Monday, January 15. This day is important because it marks the anniversary of the Indian Army getting its first Indian chief in 1949. This chief was General K.M. Cariappa, who took over from the British. The theme for Indian Army Day in 2024 is "In Service of the Nation." This means that the Indian Army is always ready to serve and protect our country. Their motto is "Service Before Self," showing that they always think of the country first.

Kokborok Day 2024: Celebrating the Cultural Heritage of Tripura

Kokborok Day, observed annually on January 19th, is a significant cultural event in Tripura, India. The 2024 celebration marks the 46th anniversary of Kokborok's recognition as an official language of the state alongside Bengali and English. This day celebrates the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of the Tripuri people. Kokborok, also known as Tripuri or Tiprakoka, is the native language of the Tripuri community in Tripura and neighbouring regions. It belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, closely related to the Bodo, Dimasa, and Kachari languages spoken in Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya.

National Girl Child Day 2024, Date, History, Theme and Significance

National Girl Child Day 2024, observed annually on January 24th in India, plays a pivotal role in highlighting the importance of empowering girls and addressing the challenges they face in society. Initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, this day marks a commitment to promote gender equality, empower girls, and protect their rights. The inception of National Girl Child Day (NGCD) in 2008 was a crucial step in India's journey towards gender equality. The first NGCD was celebrated with the theme "Saving our Girls: Educating our Girls."

Foundation Day: Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya – Jan 21, 2024

January 21st, 2024, marks a momentous occasion for the northeastern region of India – the 52nd anniversary of statehood for Tripura, Manipur, and Meghalaya. Each state, with its own vibrant culture, unique history, and breathtaking landscapes, contributes to a rich tapestry that enhances the nation's identity. Statehood Day is celebrated with great fervor across all three states. Cultural programs, parades, musical performances, and traditional dances showcase the rich heritage of each region. People take pride in their shared history and the unique character that each state brings to the Indian union. Nagaland achieved statehood on December 1, 1963. Meghalaya became an autonomous state through the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969. Finally, in 1972, Tripura and Meghalaya were granted full statehood by the North East Reorganisation Act. Covering around 10,491 km², Tripura is bordered by Bangladesh to the north, south, and west, and Assam and Mizoram to the east. Imphal, also known as Kangleipak or Sanaleibak, serves as the capital of Manipur. Meaning "the abode of clouds" in Sanskrit, Meghalaya covers 22,430 square kilometers.

International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust 2024

The International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust is an annual observance to remember and honour the six million Jewish victims and millions of other victims of Nazism during World War II. This day serves as a poignant reminder of the horrors of the Holocaust and the enduring need to fight against hatred, bigotry, and racism in all its forms. The United Nations General Assembly designated January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust in November 2005, with resolution 60/7.

International Day of Clean Energy 2024, Date, History and Objectives

International Day of Clean Energy, observed on January 26, is a significant day dedicated to promoting the importance of renewable energy for a sustainable and environmentally friendly future. This day serves as a reminder of the critical role clean energy plays in combating climate change, reducing carbon emissions, and ensuring a healthier planet for future generations.

Sports News

David Warner Retires from One-Day Cricket Ahead of Test Farewell
On New Year's Day, Australian cricket stalwart **David Warner** officially announced his retirement from ODI cricket.

This announcement came just before his final Test match against **Pakistan at the Sydney Cricket Ground**. Warner, a two-time Cricket World Cup champion, chose this significant moment to close the chapter on his remarkable ODI career.

In his illustrious ODI journey, Warner amassed **6,932 runs across 161 matches**, boasting an average of 45.30 and an impressive strike rate of 97.26. His career highlights include 22 centuries and 33 fifties, with a personal best of 179 runs in a single match. Warner's consistent performance made him a formidable force in international cricket, particularly in global tournaments.

World Rapid Chess C'ship: Koneru Humpy Wins Silver in Women's Event

India's Koneru Humpy showcased her prowess in chess by clinching the **women's individual silver medal** at the **2023 World Rapid Chess Championships held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan**. Despite a valiant effort, the **36-year-old Grandmaster succumbed to Russian player Anastasia Bodnaruk** in a tie-break sudden death on time. This article delves into Humpy's journey, her achievements, and the accompanying heartbreak faced by **Vidit Gujrathi in the open section**.

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

In a dazzling display of skill and determination, **Anahat Singh**, a rising star in Indian squash, secured victory in the **girls' under-19 category at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh**. Her remarkable triumph added another feather to her cap, concluding a stellar year that included a double win at the National championships and success in the Asian Games. Anahat Singh showcased her dominance on the squash court with a commanding performance in the final against home favorite **Robyn McAlpine**. The young talent claimed victory with a decisive scoreline of **11-6, 11-1, 11-5**, leaving no room for doubt about her supremacy in the **girls' under-19 division**.

**WEST BANGAL
TEST MATE**
WBSCS | WBPCS | WBSSC
450+ Total Tests
Test Series

Beatrice Chebet Breaks 5 km World Record in Barcelona Event

In a spectacular display of athletic prowess, Kenya's **Beatrice Chebet** concluded her remarkable year by smashing the **world record for the women's 5 km marathon at the Cursa dels Nassos in Barcelona. Clocking an astounding 14:13**, Chebet outpaced her competitors and bettered the previous record by six seconds, setting the stage for a memorable achievement. Although subject to World Athletics' ratification procedure, this victory marks a triumphant end to **Chebet's stellar 2023 campaign**.

FIH and Viacom18 Ink Four-Year Media Rights Deal

In a groundbreaking move, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) has sealed a significant media rights partnership with Viacom18, spanning the four-year period from 2023 to 2027. This exclusive agreement encompasses all FIH events, with the exception of the FIH Nations Cup. Indian hockey enthusiasts are in for a treat as Viacom18 channels are set to broadcast a plethora of thrilling events, including the upcoming FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers, the inaugural FIH Hockey5s World Cup, the highly-anticipated FIH Hockey Pro League, and the pinnacle event, the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup.

Unveiling the Essence of the 9th Asian Winter Games: Slogan, Emblem, and Mascots

The 9th Asian Winter Games, set to illuminate the winter sports landscape in 2025, have officially entered an exciting phase with the unveiling of its core symbols – the slogan, emblem, and mascots. This grand reveal, hosted in the capital city of Heilongjiang Province, China, marks a significant milestone as the Games draw closer. Embracing the spirit of unity and sportsmanship, the official slogan "Dream of Winter, Love among Asia" resonates deeply with the ethos of the Games.

Rhythm Sangwan Clinches 16th Olympic Quota For 2024 Paris Games

In a remarkable feat at 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. This accomplishment marked India's 16th shooting quota for the upcoming Olympics, surpassing the previous record tally of 15 set for the Tokyo 2020 Games.

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Tim Southee Achieves Historic Milestone in T20 Internationals

New Zealand's veteran pace bowler Tim Southee has created history by becoming the first bowler to take 150 wickets in T20 Internationals. This milestone was achieved during a T20 match against Pakistan, where New Zealand secured a convincing victory.

Rohit Sharma Becomes The First Men's Player To Play 150 T20Is

In a historic moment for Indian cricket, Rohit Sharma, the captain of Team India, etched his name in the record books by becoming the first men's player to feature in 150 T20 International matches. This milestone was achieved during the second T20I against Afghanistan at the Holkar Cricket Stadium, marking a remarkable feat in Rohit's illustrious career. During the first T20I against Afghanistan, Rohit Sharma not only captained his side to victory but also secured another milestone by becoming the first player to win 100 T20Is. This accomplishment underlines his leadership prowess and the team's success under his captaincy.

Real Madrid Wins Against Barcelona in Spanish Super Cup

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

Indian President Inaugurated 5th Meghalaya Games

On January 15, 2024, the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, inaugurated the 5th Edition of the Meghalaya Games in Tura, Meghalaya. In her address, the President highlighted the tremendous potential for the development of sports and sportspersons in the North East region, citing its rich tradition of a strong sports culture. The 5th edition of the Meghalaya Games is accommodating nearly 3000 athletes, engaging in competitions across 23 disciplines distributed among 16 venues in Tura throughout a span of 6 days. The 5th installment of the Meghalaya Games holds historical significance on multiple fronts. Notably, it marks the inaugural occasion of being hosted in Tura, a departure from its previous exclusive location in Shillong. Additionally, this edition introduces traditional indigenous games into its lineup, and it is distinguished as the first instance where the inauguration is carried out by the President of India.

Praggnanandhaa Surpasses Viswanathan Anand to Become India's No.1 Chess Player

Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa, an 18-year-old chess prodigy from Chennai, achieved a historic milestone in his career by defeating World Champion Ding Liren from China. This significant victory occurred during the fourth round of the 2024 Tata Steel Chess Tournament held in Wijk aan Zee. Praggnanandhaa's triumph was notable as he played with black pieces and displayed strategic superiority from the onset of the game.

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Carlos Sainz's Historic Victory in Dakar Rally 2024

Carlos Sainz, at the age of 61, has made history by winning the Dakar Rally for the fourth time. His latest victory in the 2024 rally marks him as the oldest winner of this gruelling race. Sainz, also known as 'El Matador', is renowned for his extraordinary skills and endurance in one of the most challenging motorsport events in the world. Sainz's Dakar journey is marked by diversity and adaptability, having won the rally with four different manufacturers: Volkswagen (2010), Peugeot (2018), Mini (2020), and now Audi (2024). His experience and skill have proven invaluable in navigating the varied and challenging terrains of the Dakar Rally.

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

The 13th edition of the Khelo India Youth Games was inaugurated with great enthusiasm by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The opening ceremony witnessed not only the commencement of the much-awaited sporting event but also the launch and foundation stone laying of significant projects in the Broadcasting sector, valued at around Rs 250 crores. Prime Minister Modi graced the event with his presence and participated in a vibrant cultural program. The highlight of the ceremony was the lighting of the Games' torch, symbolizing the official inauguration of Khelo India Youth Games.

Wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya Claims Bronze At France's Grand Prix

Tokyo Olympic silver medallist Ravi Kumar Dahiya, who faced a setback in the form of injuries, made a triumphant return to the wrestling arena by securing a bronze medal at the prestigious Grand Prix De France Henri Deglane wrestling tournament held in Nice, France. Dahiya's absence from the international scene during the entire 2023 season was attributed to injuries he sustained during practice. The setback, which included Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) and Medial Collateral Ligament (MCL) injuries to his right knee in February, forced him out of the Asian Championships in April 2023. Despite attempts to compete in the national trials for the Asian Games in July, the aggravated injury sidelined him for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, this meant missing the World Wrestling Championships in Belgrade, a crucial qualifying event for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Madrid to host Spanish F1 GP from 2026

Madrid is set to become the new host city for the Spanish Formula 1 Grand Prix starting from 2026. This marks a significant shift in the Spanish Grand Prix's location, as Barcelona has been the event's home since 1991. The transition will see Madrid hosting the Grand Prix for 10 years, from 2026 to 2035, introducing a brand-new circuit to the world of Formula 1.

Tai Tzu Ying Clinches Victory In India Open 2024 Women's Singles

In the Olympic year, badminton enthusiasts witnessed an extraordinary performance by Chinese Taipei's legendary player, Tai Tzu Ying. After facing a Malaysian Open final loss, Tai Tzu Ying bounced back with determination, securing victory in the India Open 2024 women's singles title. Her opponent in the final was none other than the reigning Olympic champion, Chen Yu Fei of China. The Taiwanese star displayed remarkable skill and resilience, winning in straight sets with scores of 21-16, 21-12 on January 21.

Raiza Dhillon, Gurjoat Khangura Clinch Skeet Mixed Team Bronze Medal

In a spectacular display of skill and determination, the Indian shooting duo Raiza Dhillon and Gurjoat Singh Khangura clinched the bronze medal in the mixed skeet team event at the Asian Shotgun Championships 2024 in Kuwait City. The event marked a triumphant conclusion for India, securing a total of one gold, three silvers, and four bronze medals on the closing day. Facing off against Kuwait's Abdullah Al-Rashidi and Eman Al-Shamaa, the Indian pair emerged victorious with a scoreline of 41-39 in the intense bronze medal match. In the qualification round, India finished in the seventh position with a score of 138, earning a spot in the final.

Man Singh Clinches Gold at the Asian Marathon Championships 2024 in Hong Kong

The Asian Marathon Championships 2024 marked a historic moment for Indian athletics as Man Singh, a 34-year-old marathon runner from India, clinched the gold medal. This achievement is significant for Man Singh and Indian sports, showcasing the country's growing prowess in long-distance running.

Sreeja Akula Secures First Global Table Tennis Title At WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024

Indian table tennis player Sreeja Akula achieved a significant milestone in her career by securing her maiden international title at the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi 2024 in Texas, USA. The 25-year-old athlete displayed exceptional skill and determination in the women's singles event, culminating in a remarkable victory. Sreeja Akula faced a formidable opponent in the final, going up against world No. 46 Lily Zhang of the USA, a three-time Olympian.

Rohan Bopanna: A New Milestone at 43 as the Oldest World No. 1 in Men's Doubles

Indian tennis star Rohan Bopanna has etched his name in the history books by becoming the oldest player to claim the No. 1 spot in the men's doubles rankings at the age of 43. This remarkable achievement was secured following his quarter-final victory at the 2024 Australian Open, alongside Australia's Matthew Ebden.

Obituaries News**Franz Beckenbauer, World Cup-winning German and Bayern Munich great, dies aged 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 grew up as a fan of 1860 Munich. His 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.

Maestro Ustad Rashid Khan Passes Away at 55

The Indian classical music world mourns the passing of Ustad Rashid Khan, a towering figure who left an indelible mark on the Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana and beyond. At just 55, this musical prodigy succumbed to complications arising from prostate cancer, leaving a legacy that resonates with profound beauty and innovative spirit.

Renowned Urdu Poet Munawwar Rana Passes Away At 71

Munawwar Rana, a celebrated Urdu poet, passed away at the age of 71 due to cardiac arrest in Lucknow. He had been enduring a prolonged illness, including throat cancer, kidney, and heart-related ailments. He was receiving treatment at the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) in Lucknow.

Norman Jewison, director of 'In the Heat of the Night', passes away aged 97

Norman Jewison, the acclaimed Canadian director best known for his work on the classic film 'In the Heat of the Night', has passed away at the age of 97. His death marks the end of a remarkable era in cinema history, where Jewison's contributions played a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of modern filmmaking.

Defence News**Vice Admiral Dinesh Tripathi Appointed As Vice Chief Of Navy**

On January 4, 2024, Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, AVSM, NM, officially took over as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, succeeding in a distinguished naval career. The assumption of this crucial position was marked by a solemn tribute to the fallen heroes at the National War Memorial. As a symbol of respect and remembrance, Vice Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi paid homage to the brave hearts who made the supreme sacrifice in service of the nation. His act of placing a floral wreath at the National War Memorial underlines the deep sense of duty and reverence he holds for those who gave their lives for the country. Vice Admiral Tripathi's journey in the Indian Navy began after his commissioning on July 1, 1985. An alumnus of Sainik School Rewa and the National Defence Academy at Khadakwasla, his career has been marked by a series of key assignments and accomplishments.

Indian Army Chief Gen MM Naravane's Book "Four Stars of Destiny"

In a remarkable literary venture, General Manoj Mukund Naravane, the former Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) of the Indian Army, has penned his autobiography titled "Four Stars of Destiny: An Autobiography." Scheduled to be published in January 2024 by Penguin Veer, an imprint of Penguin Random House India, the book delves into the diverse experiences that have shaped Gen MM Naravane's character, spanning from his childhood to his illustrious years in the armed services.

Indian Navy's P-8I Aircraft Reaches Guam For Exercise Sea Dragon 24

The Indian Navy marked its presence in the Pacific, on January 9th, 2024, with the arrival of a P-8I aircraft at Guam, USA. This deployment signals the navy's participation in the fourth edition of Ex Sea Dragon 24, an Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercise spearheaded by the US Navy. Ex Sea Dragon 24 fosters collaboration and interoperability among the navies of the US, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and India. The exercise aims to refine coordination and communication through professional interactions both on the ground and in the air, as per the Indian Navy's official statement.

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). This marks a significant development in enhancing the navy's intelligence, surveillance,

and reconnaissance capabilities. Manufactured by Adani Defence and Aerospace in collaboration with Israeli defence firm Elbit Systems, the drone offers versatility and advanced features. Adani Defence and Aerospace, in collaboration with Elbit Systems, has delivered the Drishti 10 Starliner drone, showcasing indigenous capabilities in the defence sector. This UAV, a variant of Elbit Systems' Hermes 900 Starliner drones, is a crucial addition to India's military assets.

Rear Admiral Upal Kundu Takes Charge As Chief Of Staff, Southern Naval Command

Rear Admiral Upal Kundu, an esteemed alumnus of the Indian Naval Academy, has recently taken over as the Chief of Staff at the Southern Naval Command (SNC). This seasoned naval officer brings with him a wealth of experience and expertise, particularly in anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1991, Rear Admiral Upal Kundu embarked on a distinguished naval career. His early training at the prestigious Indian Naval Academy laid the foundation for his future accomplishments. Known for his dedication and commitment, Kundu quickly rose through the ranks, showcasing a natural aptitude for naval operations.

DRDO Achieves Success In Akash-NG Missile Flight Test

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved a significant milestone with the successful flight test of the New Generation AKASH (AKASH-NG) missile. The test, conducted at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur off the coast of Odisha, showcased the system's capability to intercept high-speed unmanned aerial targets at very low altitudes. The Ministry of Defence emphasized that the test validated the seamless functioning of the complete weapon system, marking a significant technological achievement for DRDO and India's defense capabilities.

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

In a historic move, the Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) joined forces for the maiden bilateral exercise named 'Ex-Ayutthaya' in December 2023. This maritime collaboration, symbolizing the invincible spirit, holds profound significance as it connects the ancient cities of Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand, reflecting shared historical narratives and rich cultural ties dating back centuries.

Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty Assumes Role As Commandant, Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala

Vice Admiral Vineet McCarty officially assumed the prestigious position of Commandant at the Indian Naval Academy on January 15, 2024. A seasoned officer with a remarkable career, Vice Admiral McCarty brings a wealth of experience and expertise to this significant role. The Vice Admiral is a graduate

of the Defence Service Staff College in Wellington (2005) and the National Defence College in New Delhi (2017). These institutions have played a crucial role in shaping his strategic acumen and preparing him for leadership roles within the Indian Navy.

Indian Army, MeitY Collaborate For Enhanced Defense Technology

The Indian Army, in a groundbreaking collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), is spearheading the development of cutting-edge military-grade software. This partnership aims to harness the power of technology for bolstering national defense capabilities, focusing on areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure, and healthcare.

Indian Army Launches Operation Sarvashakti To Eliminate Terrorists

In response to escalating terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian Army is launching Operation Sarvashakti, a strategic initiative aimed at curbing the influence of Pakistani proxy terrorist groups. Focused on the Pir Panjal mountain ranges in the Union Territory, this operation seeks to eliminate terrorists operating in the sensitive Rajouri Poonch sector. Operation Sarvashakti aims to conduct combined counter-terrorist operations on both sides of the Pir Panjal ranges.

India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR Begins In Himachal Pradesh

The 11th edition of the India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has kicked off at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh. Scheduled to take place from 22nd January to 3rd February 2024, this annual event has become a crucial platform for fostering collaboration and enhancing the capabilities of both nations' special forces. The Indian Army contingent, consisting of 20 personnel, is proudly represented by troops from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces). On the other side, the Kyrgyzstan contingent, also comprising 20 personnel, is represented by the Scorpion Brigade.

India And Egypt Armies Unite For Exercise Cyclone's Special Operations

The Indian Army contingent, comprised of 25 highly skilled personnel from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces), has arrived in Egypt to participate in the eagerly awaited 2nd edition of the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE. Scheduled to take place at Anshas, Egypt, from January 22nd to February 1st, 2024, this collaborative military endeavor aims to strengthen the ties between the two nations and foster a deeper understanding of each other's operational procedures. The Indian contingent will be joined by counterparts from the Egyptian Commando Squadron and the Egyptian Airborne Platoon, totaling another 25 personnel.

Iran's Military Receives Advanced Homegrown Drones

The Iranian army marked a significant milestone in its defense capabilities as it formally received a substantial number of domestically developed reconnaissance and combat drones in a ceremony held on January 23, 2024. The event, attended by the Iranian Army's Chief Commander Abdolrahim Mousavi and Defense Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani, showcased the latest advancements in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology. The delivered UAVs encompass a diverse range of capabilities, including the multipurpose Ababil-4 and Ababil-5, Arash, Bavar, and Karrar jet-powered target drones. Each drone is tailored to specific mission profiles, highlighting the versatility of Iran's indigenous drone technology.

India, France, UAE Conduct Joint Air Exercise Over Arabian Sea

In a significant move towards strengthening military cooperation and addressing regional security concerns, India, France, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) conducted a major air exercise, named 'Desert Knight', over the Arabian Sea. This joint exercise, held on January 23, 2024, comes against the backdrop of rising global concerns over Houthi militants targeting commercial vessels in strategic waterways.

Indian Navy to Establish Second VLF Communication Station in Telangana

The Indian Navy has strategically chosen Telangana as the location for its second Very Low Frequency (VLF) communication transmission station in the country. This significant development is set to take place in the Vikarabad district, with the new VLF center scheduled for completion by 2027. VLF communication is crucial for the Navy to maintain effective communication with ships and submarines, emphasizing the strategic role of the new transmission station.

Books & Authors News**"Conversations with Aurangzeb": A Novel by Charu Nivedita**

"Conversations with Aurangzeb" is a novel by Tamil literary icon Charu Nivedita, translated into English by Nandini Krishnan. This book represents a unique fusion of historical narrative and satirical commentary, offering readers a fresh perspective on both historical and contemporary themes.

Amit Shah Launches Book 'Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently launched a book titled 'Assam's Braveheart Lachit Barphukan' in Guwahati, Assam. The event, graced by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and other dignitaries, took place at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati's Panjabari. To make the heroic story

accessible to a wider audience, the book has been translated into 23 Indian languages. This initiative was suggested by Amit Shah during the 400th birth anniversary celebration of Lachit Barphukan in New Delhi.

Miscellaneous News**Francoise Bettencourt Meyers Becomes First Woman With \$100 Billion Fortune**

Francoise Bettencourt Meyers has made history by becoming the **first woman to amass a staggering \$100 billion fortune**. This remarkable achievement not only cements her status as a global financial powerhouse but also signifies a significant milestone for the expanding fashion and cosmetics industries in France.

Person of the Day: France's Youngest Prime Minister Gabriel Attal

Gabriel Attal is a name that has risen rapidly in French politics. At just 34 years old, he currently holds the prestigious title of Prime Minister of France, making him the youngest person to ever hold the position in the Fifth Republic. His journey to the top has been remarkable, marked by both meteoric ascents and notable hurdles. Born in 1989, Attal's journey began in Clamart, a suburb of Paris. His background instilled in him a strong sense of social justice and a desire to contribute to public service. He joined the Socialist Party at the young age of 17, already demonstrating his political zeal. After graduating from Sciences Po and pursuing further studies in law, Attal began his career working for the Ministry of Health.

Red Ant Chutney of Odisha Receives Geographical Indication (GI) Tag

In the heart of Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, a unique culinary tradition has thrived for centuries. Locally known as 'Kai Chutney,' this savoury delight is crafted using red weaver ants, scientifically identified as *Oecophylla smaragdina*. These ants, infamous for their painful sting, are harvested from the lush forests of Mayurbhanj, including the renowned Similipal forests, Asia's second-largest biosphere. On January 2, 2024, the red ant chutney of Mayurbhanj received a significant accolade—the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. This recognition highlights the uniqueness and regional identity of the culinary creation, adding to its cultural and economic significance.

Fresh Oil Discovery in Krishna-Godavari Basin by ONGC

The recent announcement by the Indian government regarding a fresh oil discovery in the Krishna-Godavari Basin signifies a major breakthrough in the country's energy sector. The discovery, led by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), is located near Kakinada's coastline in the Bay of Bengal.

India records its first-ever confirmed sighting of a rare Tibetan Brown Bear

In a remarkable development for India's wildlife conservation, the first-ever confirmed sighting of the rare Tibetan Brown Bear (scientific name: *Ursus arctos pruinosus*) was recorded in the high altitudes of North Sikkim. This discovery, made by the joint efforts of the Sikkim Forest Department and WWF-India, marks a significant addition to the country's mammal diversity and highlights the ecological richness of the region.

Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy Inaugurates Five New Galleries at Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad

In a momentous event, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, G. Kishan Reddy, inaugurated five new galleries at the renowned Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad. Recognized as one of India's premier cultural institutions, the Salar Jung Museum has undertaken significant initiatives under the leadership of Kishan Reddy to revitalize its exhibitions.

These Five New Galleries are

1. Indian Sculpture Gallery
2. Bidriware Gallery
3. Lamp and Chandelier Gallery
4. European Bronze Gallery
5. European Marble Gallery

Ayodhya Ram Temple's Solar-Powered "Surya Tilak" for Ram Lalla

The Ayodhya Ram Temple, a site of immense religious significance in India, is set to introduce a groundbreaking feature – a solar-powered "Surya Tilak" for the deity Ram Lalla. This initiative, blending spirituality with scientific innovation, highlights India's commitment to sustainable practices in cultural and religious celebrations.

IICF To Build 'Masjid Muhammed bin Abdullah' Mosque In Ayodhya

In a significant development, the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) has announced the commencement of the construction of a grand mosque in Ayodhya, starting this May. The mosque, named "Masjid Muhammed bin Abdullah" after Prophet Muhammad, aims to foster unity and goodwill among people, transcending religious differences. The initiative comes on the same day as Prime Minister Narendra Modi presides over the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple. The senior official of the IICF, Haji Arfat Shaikh, revealed that the construction is expected to span three to four years.

Kachchhi Kharek Gem from Kutch Receives GI Tag

Kachchhi Kharek, the indigenous date variety from the arid region of Kutch in Gujarat, has recently been awarded the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag. This accolade recognizes Kachchhi Kharek as the second fruit from Gujarat, after the Gir Kesar mango, to be distinguished with such an honour.

Maersk Reveals World's Largest Ship Fueled by Methanol

In a monumental stride towards sustainability, maritime titan Maersk unveils its latest marvel: the Ane Maersk, a revolutionary container vessel powered by green methanol derived from green hydrogen. The Ane Maersk represents a bold leap into a greener future, boasting the title of the world's largest container vessel fueled by green methanol, a derivative of green hydrogen. This innovative propulsion system heralds a new era of eco-friendly maritime transportation. With an unprecedented capacity to carry 16,000 20ft shipping containers (TEU), the Ane Maersk eclipses its predecessor, the Laura Maersk, by nearly eightfold.

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