

February 2024

**BANK
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Today**

Monthly Current Affairs Gk Digest

A circular graphic with a white border. Inside, the words "NATIONAL NEWS" are written in a bold, 3D-style font. "NATIONAL" is in red and "NEWS" is in dark grey. The background is a light blue and white grid pattern.

**NATIONAL
NEWS**

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“AIIMS DELHI AND UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL COLLABORATE FOR HEAD AND NECK CANCER RESEARCH”

- Here are **some key details about this collaboration:**
- The partnership will **lead to the opening of a Collaborative Centre for Translational Research in Head-Neck Cancer (HNC)**, located at the National Cancer Institute at AIIMS’ New Delhi Jhajjar Campus.
- This collaboration **aims to deliver research and education programs that will revolutionize the care of HNC patients in the UK, India, and globally.**
- The **initiative builds upon the pre-existing collaboration and links between the Liverpool Head and Neck Centre (LNHC), University of Liverpool (UOL), and the Head and Neck Cancer unit at AIIMS New Delhi.**

ABU DHABI'S FIRST HINDU STONE TEMPLE WAS INAUGURATED BY PM MODI

- **The temple was built by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) and cost around ₹700 crore.**
- The construction of the temple followed the ancient style of creation mentioned **in the Shilpa and Sthapathya Shastras, Hindu scriptures which describe the art for mandir design and construction.**
- The temple is **equipped with over 300 high-tech sensors to measure temperature, pressure, and movement (seismic activity), providing live data for research.**
- The temple was **constructed with 18 lakh bricks, seven lakh man hours, and 1.8 lakh cubic metres of sandstone sourced directly from Rajasthan.**

JICA SIGNED ODA LOAN OF JPY YEN 232.209 BILLION WITH INDIA FOR 9 PROJECTS ACROSS SECTORS

- The initiative **aims to strengthen infrastructure and developmental projects in India.**
 - Here are the **projects:**
 - a) Project for Promoting Start-up and Innovation in Telangana
 - b) Project for the Construction of Chennai Peripheral Ring Road (Phase 2)
 - c) North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (Phase 7)

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

- d) North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (Phase 3) (Tranche II)
- e) Project for the Improvement of Urban Water Supply System in Uttarakhand
- f) Project for the Improvement of Health and Medical Services in Uttar Pradesh
- g) Project for the Improvement of Health and Medical Services in Bihar
- h) Project for the Improvement of Health and Medical Services in Odisha
- i) Project for the Improvement of Health and Medical Services in Chhattisgarh

- The FATF **updated the statements identifying high-risk and other monitored jurisdictions and removed four countries from its increased monitoring list following successful on-site visits.**
- The FATF issued **a statement on the Russian Federation.**

11TH BILATERAL CONSULAR DIALOGUE BETWEEN INDIA AND THE US TOOK PLACE IN NEW DELHI

- They discussed ways of **enhancing cooperation on a wide range of issues such as extradition, mobility of students and professionals, safe and legal migration, protection of vulnerable women and children**, and enabling smooth travel of their respective nationals.
- They **welcomed the launch of a pilot in the US to adjudicate domestic renewals of certain categories of work permits, and the opening of the Indian Consulate in Seattle as proactive steps towards strengthening the robust peoples' connect between the two countries.**
- **Both sides agreed to hold the next Consular Dialogue** in the US next year.

FATF'S 5TH PLENARY HELD IN PARIS, FRANCE FROM 21-23 FEBRUARY 2024

- **Delegates from the FATF's Global Network of over 200 jurisdictions** and observers from international organisations participated in three days of discussions on key money laundering, terrorism financing and proliferation financing issues.
- **Key outcomes of the Plenary include:**
 - A new **risk-based guidance for the implementation of Recommendation 25 on the beneficial ownership and transparency of legal arrangements.**
 - This completes the **FATF's body of work to enhance transparency of beneficial ownership globally and prevent criminals and terrorists from hiding their activities and funds behind complex corporate structures and legal arrangements** such as trusts.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS- ONE LINER

- **The Iranian government has implemented a visa-free policy for Indian tourists from February 4, 2024.** This allows Indian nationals with ordinary passports to enter Iran without a visa for tourism purposes, **once every six months, for a maximum stay of 15 days. The policy applies only to air border entries.**
- **A health emergency has been declared in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil due to a surge in dengue fever cases.** The number of cases in January quadrupled compared to the same month last year. In response, the city is opening 10 treatment centres and urging people to prevent mosquito bites and eliminate breeding grounds.
- The headquarters of the Confederation of **International Tea Smallholders (CITS) is indeed shifting from China to India. This decision was taken at the 25th session of the FAO Intergovernmental Group on Tea (FAO IGG on Tea)** held in Guwahati. The FAO IGG on Tea is the highest global platform for tea where all tea-producing and consuming nations deliberate on trends in production, consumption, trade, and prices of tea.
- On February 14, 2024, **India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed several agreements to enhance cooperation in various areas, including digital payments, trade, and energy.** These pacts were signed during a meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.
- The United World Wrestling (**UWW) lifted the suspension on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)** on February 13, 2024. The **suspension was initially imposed due to the WFI's failure to hold timely elections. With the suspension lifted, Indian wrestlers can now compete under their national flag at UWW events.** The WFI is required to hold elections for its Athletes' Commission and ensure non-discrimination in all its events.

- Japan has recently slipped into a recession and lost its position as the world's third-largest economy. This is due to a weak yen and an ageing population. Germany has now overtaken Japan to become the world's third-largest economy.
- Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy, held its largest single-day election on February 14, 2024.
- The "Strengthening the Quad Act" (H.R.5375) was passed by the US Congress to enhance cooperation between the US, Australia, India, and Japan. It establishes a Quad Intra-Parliamentary Working Group for closer cooperation on shared interests. The bill addresses cooperation on pandemic preparedness, technology innovation, economic engagement, and promotes a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- On February 19, Malta became the 119th member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The ISA is a global effort to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources and combat climate change. The agreement was signed in New Delhi by the Permanent Secretary at the Maltese Foreign Ministry, Christopher Cutajar.
- The Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) is a program launched by the World Health Organization (WHO). It aims to strengthen international cooperation in digital health and promote country capacity. The initiative supports the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025 and other WHO norms and standards for Digital Health System Transformation.
- India has taken a commendable step towards alleviating poverty and hunger on a global scale by contributing USD 1 million to the India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA) Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund (IBSA Fund).
- Dubai has launched a 5-year multiple-entry tourist visa for Indian nationals. It allows multiple entries over five years with each stay up to 90 days, extendable once. The total stay should not exceed 180 days within a year. Applicants need a bank balance of \$4,000 or its equivalent and valid UAE health insurance. This visa aims to boost tourism and business ties between India and Dubai.
- On February 26, 2024, Germany changed its carbon dioxide storage law to allow carbon capture and

off-shore storage for certain industrial sectors. The transportation of CO2 and its storage in sub-seabed areas will be permitted. However, on-land carbon storage will remain banned unless requested by federal states. This move is part of Germany's aim to become carbon neutral by 2045.

- The **Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2024, a significant event in the tech industry, is taking place in Barcelona, Spain from February 26 to February 29, 2024.** The event is a platform for various tech companies to showcase their latest innovations. This year, TECNO unveiled its new AI capabilities and introduced the Camon 30 Premier with a new imaging system.
- The **New Zealand government has confirmed that it will repeal a world-first law banning tobacco sales for future generations.** This law, which was set to take effect from July, would have banned sales to those born after January 1, 2009, cut nicotine content in smoked tobacco products, and reduced the number of tobacco retailers by more than 90%.

NATIONAL NEWS

CHENAB RIVER DIVERTED FOR 850MW RATLE HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT IN J&K

- The river diversion will **enable isolation of the dam area at the river bed, which is a critical step for starting the excavation and construction of the dam.**
- This move is expected to **expedite project construction activities and help in minimizing delays, facilitating all efforts to meet the scheduled commissioning date of May 2026.**
- The Ratle Project is being **executed by Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (RHPCL), a Joint Venture of NHPC Limited and the Government of J&K, with a shareholding of 51:49 percent, respectively.**
- The project was **sanctioned by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in January 2021, at a total cost of Rs. 5281.94 crores.**

INDIA MOBILITY GLOBAL EXPO 2024 ADDRESSED BY PM MODI IN NEW DELHI

Current Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024 on February 2, 2024.

The event, held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, is India's largest and first-of-its-kind mobility exhibition.

- Here are **some Key highlights:**
 - India is on the **move and is moving fast.**
 - The growing **economy and increasing income are expected to boost confidence in the mobility sector.**
 - The **speed and scale of the government have changed the definition of mobility in India.**
 - The government is **addressing the concerns of truck drivers and their families. A new scheme is being launched to construct 1000 modern buildings with facilities for food, clean drinking water, toilets, parking, and rest for drivers** on all national highways.
 - The Prime Minister also **expressed satisfaction over the progress made in battery and electric vehicles during his second term and predicted that mobility will reach new heights in his third term.**
 - The **Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2024 showcases India's capabilities across mobility and automotive value chains.**

THANTHAI PERIYAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY DECLARED AS 18TH WILDLIFE SANCTUARY OF TN

- It **spans over 80,114.80 hectares of reserve forests and connects the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve** with the Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.
- This region is part of the **corridor that connects the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) to the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Tiger Reserve and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.**
- It's home to a **number of tigers and is also part of the Nilgiris Elephant Reserve.**
- This sanctuary plays a **crucial role in maintaining a viable tiger population and is a crucial source of water for agricultural activities.**

GUJARAT GOVERNMENT PRESENTED RS 3.32 LAKH CRORE BUDGET FOR 2024-25

- Here are **some key highlights from the budget:**
 - **No new taxes were proposed.**
 - The **budget indicates an increase of Rs 31,444 crore, or 10.44 percent, over the previous fiscal.**

- The **government's subsidies for 2024-25 are set to increase by 11%, with power subsidy to the agriculture sector** being the largest contributor.
- A **significant announcement was made for girls' education: Girls are to get Rs 10,000 per year till class 10th and Rs 25,000 till 12th.**
- **Eight cities have been given Municipal Corporation status.**
- The budget has **allocated Rs 55,114 crore for the education department.**

UGC ISSUED GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS TO PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ALL

- Here are some **key points from the guidelines:**
 - **Bridge Courses:** The UGC recommended implementation of bridge courses to improve educational opportunities.
 - **Earn-While-Learn Schemes:** Universities should ensure students have flexibility in gaining knowledge and skills essential for earning a living while they learn.
 - **Outreach Programmes:** These are to increase the participation of SEDG students in Higher Education Institutions through access, equity, and inclusion.
 - **Transparent Selection Process:** Establish a clear and transparent selection process, with priority given to students in financial need.
 - **Collaboration for Funding:** Collaborate with government, non-government agencies, and the corporate sector for funding or seeking projects to implement the scheme.
 - **Weightage in Assessment and Accreditation:** Provide necessary importance to the scheme by including it as a criterion for assessment and accreditation.
- The UGC also **mandated that dedicated SEDGs cells be established in all HEIs to ensure equal and quality higher education for SEDG students.**

GUIDELINES HAVE BEEN ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE USE OF GREEN HYDROGEN

- The guidelines, named "**Scheme Guidelines for implementation of Pilot projects for use of Green Hydrogen in the Shipping Sector**", were issued by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) on

1st February, 2024, under the National Green Hydrogen Mission.

- The pilot projects **aim to replace fossil fuels and fossil fuel-based feedstock with Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.**
- Two areas have been **identified as thrust areas under the pilot projects:**
 - Retrofitting of existing ships so as to **enable them to run on Green Hydrogen or its derivatives.**
 - Development of **bunkering and refuelling facilities in ports on international shipping lanes for fuels based on Green Hydrogen.**
 - The Scheme will be **implemented with a total budgetary outlay of Rs. 115 crores till the financial year 2025-26.**
 - The Scheme **aims to leverage existing resources and infrastructure available with the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) and its agencies for transport, storage and use of Green Hydrogen and its derivatives** in the shipping sector.

CRISIL REPORT: INDIAN ECONOMY TO GROW AT 6.7% BETWEEN FISCALS 2024-2031

- According to the report, the **Indian economy is projected to grow at an average rate of 6.7% per annum from the financial years 2024 to 2031, which is slightly higher than the pre-pandemic average of 6.6%.**
- The **key driver of this growth is expected to be capital, resulting from the government's investment-driven strategy.**
- However, the **report also cautions about the potential impact of the escalation of the Middle East conflict on energy and logistics costs, and the inflation level in India, which was 5.7% in December 2023.**

SMART CARD' LAUNCHED BY MSME MINISTER FOR STARTUPS

- The **'Smart Card' offers a comprehensive selection of products and services at subsidised rates, specially tailored to meet the needs of startups in their early stages.**
- The **products and services offered through the 'Smart Card' have been broadly classified into six different categories: legal and compliance,**

marketing/business consulting, finance and insurance, human resource and smart workspace, software and IT/ITES.

- During the launch event, the MSME Minister also **gave away sanction orders to four startups run by entrepreneurs from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, amounting to ₹9.05 crore under the Tamil Nadu SC/ST Startup Fund as equity investment.**
- He also launched **products and services of 20 startups run by women entrepreneurs under the Women Launchpad initiative.**

INDIA'S FIRST STATE-OF-THE-ART SMALL ANIMAL HOSPITAL LAUNCHED BY TATA TRUSTS

- This hospital is a **first-of-its-kind and spans over 98,000-square-foot, across 5 floors with a capacity of over 200 beds.**
- The hospital was inspired by **philanthropist and former Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata's vision for a super speciality hospital for pets.**
- The facility will **provide round the clock services through pet-sensitised veterinarians, nurses and technicians trained to deliver quality care with a mission to save lives.**
- The hospital will **initially offer emergency and critical care services, along with inpatient and ICU units.**
- It will also have **facilities like Surgical Services (Soft Tissue Surgery, Orthopedics etc.), Pharmacy Services, and Support Functions such as Diagnostics - Radiology & Imaging (MRI, X-Ray, CT Scan & USG), Laboratory - Hematology, Microbiology, Cytology, Clinical Pathology, Biochemistry, Histo-pathology and Anesthesia.**

PM MODI INAUGURATES AND LAYS FOUNDATION FOR RS 7550 CR PROJECTS IN JHABUA, MP

- Here are **some key details:**
 - The projects are **expected to benefit the region's considerable tribal population.**
 - The Prime Minister also **disbursed monthly installments to nearly two lakh women beneficiaries under the 'Aahar Anudan Yojana' of the state.**

- This scheme provides Rs 1,500 per month for nutritious food to women, especially those from backward tribes.
- He also distributed 1.75 lakh 'adhikar abhilekh' (record of land rights) under the SVAMITVA scheme, providing documentary evidence to people for the right to their land.
- The foundation stone of the Tantya Mama Bhil University was also laid. This university, to be developed at a cost of Rs 170 crore, will cater to the youth from tribal-dominated districts of the state and provide world-class infrastructure for holistic development of students.

PM MODI LAUNCHES PROJECTS WORTH □ 10 LAKH CRORE IN UTTAR PRADESH

- These projects span various sectors such as:
 - Manufacturing
 - Renewable Energy
 - Food Processing
 - Housing and Real Estate
 - Hospitality and Entertainment
 - Education
- The Prime Minister also toured the exhibition held on the sidelines of the Ground Breaking Ceremony 4.0 to get an insight into the progress of major development projects across various sectors in Uttar Pradesh.
- Uttar Pradesh is emerging as a significant hub for AI development and there are proposals to establish an AI City in Lucknow.
- The exhibition also featured advancements in the robotics sector, the defence sector, tourism, clean energy, and infrastructure sectors.

RUCHIRA KAMBOJ OF INDIA CHAIRED 62ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

- This session took place from 5 to 14 February 2024, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
- The priority theme of the session was "Fostering Social Development and Social Justice through Social Policies to Accelerate Progress on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to Achieve the Overarching Goal of Poverty Eradication".
- During the session, four resolutions were successfully adopted.

- This was a significant milestone as it was the first time since 1975 that India held this esteemed position within the Commission for Social Development.
- The Commission serves as a vital intergovernmental platform to discuss and enhance international cooperation on social development matters.

ACTRESS RASHMIKA MANDANA & ZEPTO FOUNDERS IN FORBES INDIA'S 30 UNDER 30 LIST, 2024

- Rashmika Mandanna has been acknowledged for her work in the entertainment category.
- She has successfully made it to the top 30 list.
- As for the Zepto founders, Aadit Palicha and Kalvalya Vohra, both 21 years old, are the youngest winners this year.
- Their company is now one of India's fastest-growing internet companies with 150 stores and a target of annualised sales of \$200 million by April 2025.
- Zepto is valued at \$1.6 billion and raised \$235.4 million in 2023.
- This list shines a spotlight on 30 extraordinary individuals - under the age of 30 - across various industries.
- These young achievers are all outliers in their fields and people to watch for the next decade.

SITHARAMAN UNVEILS 3 COINS AT SPMCIL'S 19TH FOUNDATION DAY

- The first coin featured the theme of Ram Lalla and the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya.
- The second was a bi-metallic clad souvenir coin commemorating the Enlightenment of Lord Buddha, showcasing oxidized Matte finish images of Buddha & Stupa.
- The third coin featured the Greater one-horned Rhino as part of the Endangered Animals of India series.
- These coins can be purchased from the SPMCIL's official website for a nominal price.

PM MODI LAUNCHES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WORTH OVER 13,000 CRORE IN VARANASI

- These projects, worth over Rs 13,000 crore, aim to boost the city's infrastructure, protect its cultural legacy, enhance the living standards of locals, and promote tourism.
- Some of the key initiatives include:
 - **Road Projects:** The inauguration and foundation stone laying of multiple road projects, including the four-laning of the Ghagra-Bridge-Varanasi section of National Highway 233 and the Sultanpur-Varanasi section of National Highway.
 - **Industrial Development:** The inauguration of an HPCL LPG bottling plant in Sewapuri, Banas Kashi Sankul milk processing unit at UPSIDA Agro Park Karkhiyaon, and various infrastructure work at the UPSIDA Agro Park.
 - **Textiles Sector:** The foundation stone of a National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in Varanasi to strengthen the education and training infrastructure of the sector.
 - **Health Infrastructure:** The foundation stone of a new medical college and the National Centre of Ageing at Banaras Hindu University.
 - **Cultural Preservation:** The 'Namami Gange' project aims to clean and revitalise the Ganges River while maintaining its environmental sustainability. The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, inaugurated in December 2021, has significantly increased visitor numbers to the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

PM MODI UNVEILED INDIAN RAILWAYS PROJECTS WORTH RS 41000 CRORE

- Here are some key details:
 - The projects include the **redevelopment of 553 railway stations under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, modernizing passenger amenities, and enhancing connectivity.**
 - These **553 stations, spread across 27 states and union territories, are being redeveloped at over Rs 19,000 crore.**
 - The **stations will act as 'City Centres' integrating both sides of the city.**
 - They will have **modern passenger amenities like roof plaza, beautiful landscaping, intermodal connectivity, improved modern façade, kids play area, kiosks, food courts, etc.**
 - The design of these station buildings will be **inspired by local culture, heritage, and architecture.**

- The **Gomti Nagar station in Uttar Pradesh, which has been redeveloped at Rs 385 crore, was also inaugurated.**
- Foundation stones were **laid for 1,500 Road Under Bridges (RUBs) and Road Over Bridges (ROBs), which have been constructed at a cost of Rs 21,520 crore.**

JAL SHAKTI MINISTRY AND 12 TECHNICAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS HAVE SIGNED AN AGREEMENT

- These rivers are **Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Cauveri, Narmada, and Periyar.**
- The agreement was **signed under the National River Conservation Plan.**
- The **responsibility of research, monitoring, and gathering technical knowledge required for the condition assessment and management plan in basin management of these rivers has been given to 12 institutions, which include different IITs, NITs, and NEERI.**
- This initiative is a **significant step towards making India rich in water resources.**

NATIONAL NEWS ONE-LINER

- The **Assam Tourism (Development and Registration) Bill, 2024, approved by the Assam Cabinet on February 1, 2024, aims to boost tourism in Assam.** It focuses on **sustainable development, safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, and includes provisions for safety audits of adventure sites.**
- The **Surajkund Crafts Mela is a vibrant celebration of Indian culture that takes place annually in Faridabad, Haryana. The 2024 edition of the Mela was held from February 2nd to 18th. The Mela showcases the rich traditions, exquisite crafts, and captivating performances that define this iconic event. Over 250 stalls from across India and the Partner Nation exhibit an array of traditional and contemporary crafts.**
- The **Rashtriya Arogya Mela was inaugurated by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on 1st February 2024.** The event, organized by the Shri Puran Chandra Gupta Smarak Trust and the Ministry of Ayush, showcased India's traditional healing systems. The **'Har din Har Ghar Ayush'**

campaign was highlighted, and it was announced that more than 9000 Ayush Health and Wellness Centres have been established out of the targeted 12500. The fair took place from 1st to 4th February 2024 at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi.

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved several amendments to streamline food safety and standards regulations in its 43rd meeting held on February 5, 2024.** Key changes include the removal of BIS or AGMARK certification for food products, making only FSSAI certification mandatory. Other approvals include standards for certain beverages and milk fat products, and a comprehensive manual for regulatory compliance of food products.
- The Uttar Pradesh government presented its annual budget for the financial year 2024-25 on February 5, 2024. **The budget is the largest in the state's history, amounting to Rs 7,36,437.71 crore. It includes significant allocations for the police department and the Women Farmer Empowerment Project.** After deducting total expenditure from the receipts of the consolidated fund, a deficit of Rs 15,103.89 crore is estimated.
- **Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal presented the state's budget for the financial year 2024-25 on February 5, 2024. The budget aims to transform Kerala into a medical hub and revamp the higher education sector to attract international students.** It plans to attract Rs 3 lakh crore investment within the next three years.
- The **Election Commission of India has declared the faction led by Ajit Pawar as the "real" Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and has allotted the NCP symbol 'Wall Clock' to this group.** This decision ended months of speculation over the factional fight with his party founder and uncle, Sharad Pawar.
- The **Government of India launched 'Bharat Rice' at a subsidized rate of Rs 29 per kg on February 6, 2024.** This initiative was taken in response to a 15% increase in retail rice prices over the past year. It's available in 5 kg and 10 kg packs through NAFED, NCCF, and Kendriya Bhandar.
- **Andhra Pradesh's FY25 budget is Rs 2,86,389.27 crore. It includes a vote on account of Rs 88,215 crore for 2024-25.** The revenue and capital expenditures are estimated at Rs 2,30,110.41 crore and Rs 30,530.18 crore respectively. The fiscal deficit

is around Rs 55,817.50 crore, about 3.51% of the GSDP. The state's per capita income has increased from Rs 1,54,031 in 2018-19 to Rs 2,19,518 in 2022-23.

- On February 9, 2024, IIT Guwahati launched a Centre of Excellence named "SWASTHA". It aims to advance the healthcare industry through nanoelectronic theranostic devices. Alongside, ISO five and six clean room facilities were also inaugurated at the institute's Centre of Nanotechnology department.
- The Assam Cabinet approved the 'Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024' on February 10, 2024. This bill aims to ban 'magical healing' practices in the name of treatment for certain congenital diseases. Strong punitive actions are proposed against the 'healers'.
- National:
- The Ministry of Education (MoE) in India, in collaboration with FIFA and the All India Football Federation (AIFF), has launched the Football for Schools (F4S) programme to promote football in Indian schools. The initiative aims to distribute over 11 lakh FIFA footballs across the country and benefit more than 1.50 lakh schools.
- Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena approved the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) budget of Rs 8,811 crore for FY25. The budget focuses on infrastructural development, including housing, aesthetic upgrades, and heritage preservation. A total of Rs 3,460 crore is allocated for the development of land and physical infrastructure. Rs 1,953 crore is allocated for ongoing housing projects.
- The 2023 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 list has ranked Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) as the most valuable Indian company for the third consecutive year, with a value of Rs 15,64,663 crore. Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) and HDFC Bank followed in second and third places respectively. The list, released by Axis Bank's Burgundy Private and Hurun India, represents a cumulative value of Rs. 231 lakh crore (USD 2.8 trillion) across 500 companies.
- A statue of U Tirod Sing, a freedom fighter from the Khasi Hills who rebelled against British colonialism 200 years ago, was unveiled at the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre in Dhaka on 16th February 2024. The statue was unveiled by the Deputy Chief Minister of Meghalaya, Sniawbhalang Dhar, and

Pranay Verma, the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh.

- The **11th International Puppet Festival was inaugurated at Tagore Theatre in Chandigarh by the Governor of Punjab and UT administrator Banwarilal Purohit.** The festival ran from February 17th to February 21st and featured performances from various international puppet troupes, including the **Novosibirsk Regional Puppet Theatre from Russia.** The event also included a Puppet Exhibition showcasing the art of puppet making.
- The **Indian government raised the authorised capital of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) from ₹10,000 crore to ₹21,000 crore on February 17, 2024. This move is expected to enhance FCI's operational capabilities and reduce the economic cost.**
- The **16th World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 took place in Kathmandu, Nepal from February 15 to 19, 2024.** The event saw participation from over 50,000 participants from more than 1400 organizations spanning 98 countries. The discussions ranged from economic inequality, social justice, climate justice, to gender equality, peace, and sustainable development. The event concluded with 60 declarations from organizations worldwide.
- The **Banana-Turmeric Festival 2024 was held in Burhanpur, Madhya Pradesh on 20th and 21st February. It was part of the one-district one-product programme (ODOP) to promote bananas and turmeric. The festival aimed to attract investment, bring banana products to e-commerce platforms, and showcase the diversity of products derived from bananas.**
- The **Union Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying Minister, Parshottam Rupala, announced that the Union government has increased the death compensation for fishermen from one lakh rupees to five lakh rupees.** This is a significant increase and will provide more financial security to the families of fishermen in the event of accidental death.
- The **'Gati Shakti Research Chair' was established at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Shillong on 23rd February 2024. It aims to spearhead research on multimodal logistics, particularly focusing on the North-East region of India.**

- The **iMPEL-AI programme, launched on February 21, 2024, is a collaboration between Microsoft, iCreate, and India's Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY). The initiative aims to empower 1100 AI innovators across India, focusing on sectors like Healthcare, Financial Inclusion, Sustainability, Education, Agriculture, and Smart Cities.**
- The **Interest Equalisation Scheme, which aids exporters from identified sectors and all MSME manufacturer exporters, has been extended until 30th June 2024 with an additional allocation of Rs 2500 Cr.** The scheme offers pre and post shipment Rupee export credit at competitive rates. The additional outlay is to bridge the funding gap to continue the Scheme up to 30.06.2024. The scheme has been beneficial for the exports growth of the country.
- **NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL) has signed an agreement with Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) to develop an "Integrated Green Hydrogen Hub" in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The hub will be built on 1,200 acres of land and will include India's largest green hydrogen production facility.** The project is part of the National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- **Union Minister Arjun Munda, along with Union Minister of Ayush Sarbananda Sonowal, launched a health initiative on February 21, 2024. The initiative aims to improve the health of children in Eklavya Model Residential Schools through Ayurvedic interventions and includes the creation of medicinal plant gardens.**
- **Uber partnered with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) on February 22, 2024. This collaboration aims to expand Uber's mobility offerings in India, aligning with ONDC's objective of democratizing digital commerce.**
- **The Odisha Budget for 2024-25, presented on February 24, 2024, has an outlay of Rs 2.55 lakh crore, an 11% increase from the previous year.** The highest allocation is for the school and mass education department at Rs 33,865 crore. The fiscal deficit is kept within the prescribed limit of 3% of GSDP.
- **In the 2024 Rajya Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won eight seats in Uttar Pradesh, while the Samajwadi Party (SP) secured the**

remaining two. The results were declared on February 27, 2024.

- The Assam government has decided to repeal the Muslim Marriage Act, a law from 1935 that laid down the process for registration of Muslim marriages and divorces. The decision is **aimed at prohibiting child marriages in the state, as the Act allowed marriage registrations even if the bride or groom were below the legal marriageable age**. This move is seen as a significant step towards the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code.
- The **'Purple Fest' was inaugurated by President Draupadi Murmu at the Amrit Udyan of Rashtrapati Bhavan on 26 February 2024. Organized by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, it aimed to raise awareness about disabilities**. The fest included various activities and saw participation from over 14,000 people. The fest aimed to promote empathy, acceptance, and understanding toward persons with disabilities.
- The **Adani Group inaugurated India's first and South Asia's largest ammunition twin-facility complex in Kanpur on February 26, 2024. The complex, spread across 500 hectares, will manufacture a wide range of ammunition for the Indian Armed Forces, contributing to India's self-reliance in the defence sector**. The facility is expected to generate nearly 4000 jobs and will start production from March onwards.
- The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for multiple development projects worth about Rs 17,000 crores in Madhya Pradesh. **These projects span various sectors including irrigation, power, road, rail, water supply, coal, and industry. He also launched the Cyber Tehsil project. The projects are expected to boost the state's infrastructure and contribute to its overall development.**
- The **'Tawi Festival' is a four-day event that started on March 1, 2024, in Jammu & Kashmir. It showcases the region's cultural legacy through arts, cuisine, literature, and folk traditions. The festival includes performances, literary and cultural events, a food festival, and exhibitions**. It aims to nurture local talent, promote cultural tourism, and highlight Jammu's distinct ethos.
- **Reliance Industries and Reliance Foundation launched an animal welfare initiative called**

'Vantara' on February 26, 2024. Led by Anant Ambani, 'Vantara' focuses on the rescue, treatment, care, and rehabilitation of injured and threatened animals. The initiative is spread over 3,000 acres within the Green Belt of Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery Complex and has rescued thousands of animals so far.

BANKING

RBI BARS PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK FROM ACCEPTING DEPOSITS AFTER FEBRUARY 29

- This was **due to "persistent non-compliance" and "material supervisory concerns"** identified by the RBI.
- Here are some key points to remember:
 - **Effective date:** The restriction on deposits and credit transactions took effect on March 1, 2024.
 - **Reason for the ban:** The RBI cited non-compliance with regulations and supervisory concerns identified in an external audit report.
 - **What's affected:** PPBL cannot accept new deposits, top-ups, or carry out credit transactions in any customer accounts, wallets, FASTags, etc. However, withdrawals and utilization of existing balances are permitted.
 - **Future of PPBL:** The current status of PPBL is unclear. The future course of action will depend on how PPBL addresses the RBI's concerns and seeks regulatory approval.

GOVT TO RECEIVE RS 1.02 LAKH CR AS DIVIDEND FROM RBI, PSBS IN FY25

- This is **slightly lower than the estimated Rs 1.04 lakh crore** that the government is set to earn in the current fiscal year.
- The **increase in the current fiscal year's estimate** is due to the **RBI paying a dividend of Rs 87,416 crore** in May last year.
- In addition to the **dividends from the RBI and public sector banks, the government also expects to receive dividends** from Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- The **total dividend income from the RBI, public sector banks, and CPSEs** is projected to be **Rs 1.50 lakh crore** for the next financial year.

- This **higher dividend income, along with improved tax mobilisation**, is expected to help the government achieve its fiscal deficit glide path.
- The government **aims to reduce the fiscal deficit to below 4.5% by 2025-26 from 5.1% of GDP** in 2024-25.

RBI REVISES NORMS FOR UCBS INCLUSION IN SECOND SCHEDULE, RBI ACT, 1934

- **Here the details:**
 - **Revised Norms for UCBS Inclusion in Second Schedule, RBI Act, 1934:** The RBI has revised the eligibility norms for the inclusion of Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) in the Second Schedule to the RBI Act, 1934. The new norms are in line with the Revised Regulatory Framework. The eligibility criteria for UCBS now include a Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR) that is 3% above the minimum requirement, and no major regulatory concerns. These revised instructions are applicable to all Commercial Banks (including RRBs) and all Co-operative Banks and shall come into effect from April 1, 2024.
 - **Advance Payment for Gold Import via IIBX by TRQ Holders:** The RBI has allowed Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) holders under the India-United Arab Emirates (UAE) Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) to remit advance payment for eleven days for the import of gold through the India International Bullion Exchange IFSC Ltd (IIBX) against the TRQ. This decision is aimed at facilitating the import of gold by TRQ holders.

UPI HAS BEEN FORMALLY LAUNCHED AT EIFFEL TOWER IN PARIS, FRANCE

- This **significant event marks the global debut of UPI** and is a part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of **taking UPI to a global level**.
- The **NPCI has tied up with French e-commerce and proximity payments Lyra**, which will help ensure that the **UPI payment mechanism is accepted in France, starting with the Eiffel Tower**.
- This **initiative is expected to facilitate seamless financial transactions** for Indian tourists in France.

ESAF SFB & EDELWEISS TOKIO LIFE PARTNERS TO OFFER LIFE INSURANCE PRODUCTS

- This partnership **aims to enhance the accessibility of innovative life insurance products, leveraging ESAF Small Finance Bank's presence in rural markets** across India.
- K. Paul Thomas, MD and CEO of ESAF Small Finance Bank, stated that this partnership aligns with their goal of providing their customers with a broad range of financial solutions.
- By extending the reach of life insurance to underserved communities, they are taking a significant step towards inclusive financial security.
- Sumit Rai, MD & CEO of Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance, also expressed that their partnership with ESAF Small Finance Bank will enable them to cement their leadership in this region.
- They plan to collaborate with the Bank to improve their customer understanding in the region to bring innovative and relevant insurance solutions.

RBI APPROVED HDFC BANK GROUP TO ACQUIRE UP TO 9.5 PC IN 6 BANKS

- **These banks are:**
 - Axis Bank
 - Suryoday Small Finance Bank
 - ICICI Bank
 - Bandhan Bank
 - YES Bank
 - IndusInd Bank
- The term **"aggregate holding"** includes **shareholding by the bank and entities under the same management/control, mutual funds, trustees, and promoter group entities**.
- The **RBI's approval is valid for a period of one year from the date of the RBI's letter**, which is until February 4, 2025.
- **HDFC Bank must ensure that the "aggregate holding" in these six banks does not exceed 9.50% of the paid-up share capital or voting rights** of the respective banks, at all times.
- While **HDFC Bank does not intend to invest in these banks, since the "aggregate holding" of HDFC Bank group was likely to exceed the prescribed limit**

of 5%, an application seeking approval of the RBI for increase in investment limits was made.

FEDERAL BANK LAUNCHES RUPAY NCMC WALLET DEBIT CARD

- This card is a **dual-interface card supporting both online (contact and contactless) and offline (contactless) transactions.**
- The National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) is a **feature introduced on RuPay Contactless Debit Card which allows cardholders to make payments across NCMC-enabled terminals at metro stations, buses, etc in an offline mode, just by tapping the card on the card reader.**
- To **activate the NCMC functionality and begin using the card for offline transactions, cardholders are required to enable the “contactless feature” through mobile banking, internet banking, or IVR.**
- This initiative is a **step towards streamlining travel experiences by digitising payments.**

SBI TIES UP WITH FLYWIRE TO FOSTER PAYMENTS OF INDIAN STUDENTS ABROAD

- This collaboration is **aimed at revolutionizing the landscape of international education payments for Indian students.**
- Under this partnership, **Flywire’s technology will be integrated directly into the bank’s platform.**
- This integration will **offer Indian students an advanced digital checkout experience** for their international educational payments.
- The services will **range from application to tuition fees, and students can complete transactions effortlessly in Indian rupees within three simple steps** on SBI’s net banking platform.
- This is expected to **provide a seamless and fully digital payment experience, which is an improvement over the existing complex process.**

RBI DECIDED TO KEEP THE REPO RATE UNCHANGED AT 6.5 PER CENT FOR THE SIXTH CONSECUTIVE TIME

- This decision was taken by the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) during its bi-monthly policy review.**

- The repo rate is the **rate at which RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs.**
- The decision to keep the **repo rate unchanged** is expected to have **several implications:**
 - There is likely to be **no impact on loan Equated Monthly Installments (EMIs).**
 - **Home loan interest rates** are likely to **remain unchanged** in the near term.
 - The decision is **part of an effort to bring down inflation and support growth.**
 - The **RBI’s decision** is based on **various factors such as the current economic conditions, inflation levels, and global uncertainties.**
 - The central bank continues to **focus on aligning inflation towards its target of 4%.**

HDFC BANK LAUNCHED 4 BUSINESS CREDIT CARDS FOR SELF-EMPLOYED COMMUNITY

- These cards were introduced to cater to the needs of the self-employed community, including small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), professionals, and freelancers.
- They are part of HDFC Bank’s SME Payment Solution, which is designed to meet the diverse payment needs of self-employed individuals, SMEs, and MSMEs.
- **Key features** of these business credit cards include:
 - **Up to 55 days free credit period.**
 - **Up to 10X Reward Points on Business Spends** (Bill Payments, Tax Payments, Vendor Payments, Business Travel, Business Productivity Tools).
 - **Specially Curated Business Insurance Package** (Fire & Burglary, Cash in Safe & Transit, Electronic Equipment).
 - **Exclusive Business focused Redemption Catalogue** (Travel & Hotels, Microsoft Office 365, Clear Tax, Amazon for Business, Google Ads).
 - **EMI and Loan on card facility.**

ZOHO, JUSPAY, AND DECENTRO RECEIVED RBI NOD FOR PAYMENT AGGREGATOR BUSINESS

- This approval allows these companies to **provide payment services to online merchants by accepting payments from customers.**

- **Zoho, a software as a service startup**, received the payment aggregator license on February 2.
- It is the **first enterprise SaaS player** to get this nod from the RBI.
- **Juspay and Decentro** received the **final license to operate as payment aggregators** on February 6.
- **Juspay operates as a payment gateway** running a **technology stack for ecommerce payments**, while Decentro offers financial services like lending, KYC, and other services to consumer-facing companies through APIs.
- With this **approval, these companies join the likes of Stripe, Zomato, and Tata Pay**, which got the nod in January.
- Major **fintech players like Razorpay and Cashfree** received the license in 2023.
- This makes a **total of 8 companies** so far that have **secured the coveted payments aggregator license** from the RBI.

TWO MORE RUSSIAN BANKS HAVE REGISTERED AS FOREIGN PORTFOLIO INVESTORS

- This **brings the total number of FPI registrations from Russia to 10**.
- **Earlier, Sberbank became the first Russian bank** to register with the Indian markets regulator as an FPI.
- **Other Russian banks, including VTB, Sberbank, and Gazprombank**, are also considering becoming FPIs to trade on Indian stock exchanges.
- This is a **significant development in the financial sector** as it **indicates a growing interest in the Indian market among Russian banks**.

KARNATAKA BANK HAS LAUNCHED CENTENARY CAMPAIGN

- This **campaign marks a hundred years of trust, excellence, resilience, and commitment** to serving the nation.
- The campaign **encapsulates the idea that true legacy lies in understanding the need to evolve** with the times.
- It **underscores Karnataka Bank's ability to adapt to the changing times** while staying true to its core values.
- The campaign **aims to strengthen Karnataka Bank's brand awareness, fostering a deeper connection**

with customers while also inviting new patrons to be a part of its storied legacy.

- The **bank's CEO and managing director, H Srikrishnan, said the milestone exemplifies the bank's unwavering commitment** to advancing India's agenda of national financial inclusion.
- **Karnataka Bank executive director Sekhar Rao said the 'Bharat Ka Karnataka Bank' campaign denotes the bank's journey towards a tech-driven future, blending tradition with cutting-edge solutions** for customers and communities nationwide.

INDIA LAUNCHES UPI SERVICES IN SRI LANKA AND MAURITIUS, AND RUPAY CARD SERVICES IN MAURITIUS

- In addition to **UPI, RuPay card services were also launched in Mauritius**.
- This allows **Mauritian banks to issue cards based on the RuPay mechanism**.
- Such **cards can be used at ATMs and Point of Sales (POS) terminals** in Mauritius as well as in India.
- With this, Mauritius **becomes the first country outside Asia to issue cards using RuPay technology**.
- These **initiatives are expected to facilitate seamless and secure cost-effective payments** for customers and strengthen the economic ties between India and these countries.
- They will also **benefit travelers and enhance financial integration**.

HSBC IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOOGLE CLOUD FINANCES CLIMATE TECHNOLOGY FIRMS

- Under the terms of the partnership, **HSBC aims to provide financing to companies selected by Google to join its Google Cloud Ready-Sustainability programme**.
- These **companies undergo a validation process**.
- The **partnership has already resulted in a venture debt financing package from HSBC delivered to GCR-Sustainability-validated company LevelTen Energy**.
- This is part of **HSBC's ambition to deploy \$1bn of financing to early-stage climate tech companies**.

- This initiative is a significant step towards supporting the growth of climate tech vendors and developing solutions for global climate change.

PAYTM E-COMMERCE HAS CHANGED ITSELF TO PAI PLATFORMS

- Along with the name change, **Pai Platforms has also acquired Bitsila, a seller platform on ONDC.**
- This acquisition is expected to strengthen **Pai Platforms'** presence in the online retail business.
- It manages over **600 million product categories across over 10,000 stores** in more than 30 cities.
- The platform caters to various sectors, including **grocery, food and beverages, fashion, beauty, personal care (BPC), and home decor.**
- **Elevation Capital is the largest shareholder** in the newly named Pai Platforms.
- It is also backed by **Paytm Founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Softbank, and eBay.**

ALL SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANKS SAW A DECREASE IN CURRENT ACCOUNT DEPOSITS

- According to the **RBI's Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India, CA deposits** declined to 10.13% of their overall deposits in 2023 from 10.43% in 2022.
- This decrease is largely attributed to the **government's adoption of the JIT (just-in-time) principle** for the release of funds.
- This principle, **applied to all payments including centrally sponsored schemes, has improved the government's efficiency** in managing funds and reduced the float available to banks.
- The Chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI), **Dinesh Kumar Khara, noted that the float available in the current account has shrunk due to the government adopting the JIT system** for the release of funds and cash management.
- However, SBI has **diversified its options in terms of raising current account deposits.**

RBI, NEPAL RASTRA BANK SIGN PACT FOR UPI-NPI LINKAGE

- This integration aims to facilitate seamless cross-border remittances between India and Nepal.

- The collaboration between RBI and NRB in linking their fast payment systems through the UPI-NPI linkage will further deepen financial connectivity and reinforce the enduring historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries.
- The necessary systems will be **put in place for interlinking of UPI and NPI, and the formal launch of the linkage** i.e., commencement of operations will be done at a later date.

RBI IDENTIFIES UNAUTHORIZED BPSP OPERATIONS IN ONE CARD NETWORK

- **Key points:**
 - **Unapproved arrangement:** The RBI identified an arrangement facilitated by a card network that allowed businesses to use intermediaries to make card payments to entities that don't accept card payments directly.
 - **Concerns:** This arrangement raised concerns about bypassing card acceptance protocols and potentially violating the Payment and Settlement Systems Act (PSS Act).
 - **Only one network:** While the RBI didn't name the specific network, they clarified that only one card network had implemented this arrangement in India so far.
 - **Action taken:** The RBI directed the unnamed network to stop this unauthorized practice and keep all such arrangements on hold until further investigation.

FEDERAL BANK LAUNCHES STELLAR SAVINGS ACCOUNT & MASTERCARD ENABLED STELLAR DEBIT CARD

- Here are some key features of these offerings:
 - **Stellar Savings Account:**
 - **Milestone Rewards:** Earn Reward Points when you complete milestones and get accelerated reward points when you spend using your Debit Card.
 - **Complimentary One Year Wellness Plan:** This includes Fitness tracking, psychologist consults, telemedicine, and offline care.
 - **Complimentary Insurance Cover:** Coverage includes Personal Accident Cover, Disability Cover, and Hospital Cash.

- **Powerpacked Eco Friendly Debit Card:** Save up to ₹50,000* per year using the Debit Card offers on your Stellar Debit Card.
- **MasterCard enabled Stellar Debit Card:**
 - Mastercard has **launched the MDES (Mastercard Digital Enablement Service) Token Connect** in India to enable card-on-file and device tokens for debit and credit cards through issuer banks' mobile and internet banking channels.
 - **MDES Token Connect is a consumer-centric platform that supports issuer-initiated tokenization.**
 - It **aims to provide a convenient and secure way** for cardholders to transact online.
 - **Issuer banks can easily integrate their mobile and Internet banking platforms** with MDES Token Connect.
 - These **offerings are part of Federal Bank's commitment to providing innovative solutions** that meet the evolving needs of its customers.

BOBCARD & NPCI LAUNCHED INDIA'S SECOND CORPORATE CREDIT CARD ON THE RUPAY NETWORK

- This **card offers a range of benefits including complimentary lounge access**, fuel surcharge waiver, personal accidental death insurance cover, and an attractive rewards program for various business transactions.
- It also **provides the convenience of linkage with UPI through any UPI-enabled app.**
- This launch is a **significant step towards enhancing credit card penetration** in the country, contributing to the overall growth and development of the economy.

LIC LAUNCHES A NEW INSURANCE PLAN 'LIC AMRITBAAL PLAN 874' FOR CHILDREN

- Here are **some key details about this plan:**
 - It is a **Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual, Savings, Life Insurance plan.**
 - The plan is specifically **designed to meet the higher education and other financial needs of your child and provides risk cover on the life** of the child during the policy term.

- It **facilitates the accumulation of corpus through Guaranteed Addition of Rs. 80 per 1000 Basic Sum Assured** throughout the Policy Term.
- The plan **offers flexibility in premium payment with options for single premium and limited premium payment.**
- The plan also **offers a premium waiver rider for child safety.**
- The paid **premiums are exempted from income tax under section 80C**, and the maturity amount is tax-free under section 10 (10D).
- The **plan allows you to choose the maturity age from 18 to 25 years** for the various needs of your child.
- You can **opt for payment of benefit in installments.**
- **Loan benefits are available with 1% less interest charge if the loan is taken on a girl child's policy.**

GOA & WORLD BANK PARTNERS TO LAUNCH BLENDED FINANCE FACILITY FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- This **initiative was announced on February 20, 2024**, by Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant.
- This will be the **first-of-its-kind, climate-focused, multi-sectoral facility at a subnational level** that will enable Goa to access and mobilize concessional finance to implement low-carbon and climate-resilient investments.
- The **facility includes public, private, international, and domestic climate finance.**
- The key areas that will **benefit from blended finance investments include e-mobility and related infrastructure, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, coastal protection, and green tourism.**

PAYMART INDIA PARTNERED WITH 5 INDIAN BANKS TO INTRODUCE INDIA'S 1ST 'VIRTUAL ATM'

- This **service allows users to withdraw cash** from nearby shops using their smartphones, eliminating the **need to visit a traditional ATM or remember their card PIN.**
- Here's **how it works:**
 - **Use your mobile banking app** to initiate a **withdrawal request from your bank.**

- The **bank generates an OTP and shares** it with you through the registered number.
- **Show the OTP to the nearest shop** empaneled with PayMart to collect cash from the shopkeeper.

RBI PERMITS PPIs FROM APPROVED ENTITIES FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT PAYMENTS

- This **amendment allows authorized bank and non-bank issuers** to issue PPIs for making payments across various public transport systems.
- **Public transport systems** across India cater to a multitude of commuters on a daily basis.
- The **aim of this amendment is to provide convenience, speed, affordability, and safety of digital modes of payment** to these commuters for transit services.
- The **Master Directions on PPIs prescribes the various types of PPIs which banks and non-banks** can issue after obtaining necessary approval or authorization from RBI.
- With this amendment, the **paragraph 10.2 of the Master Directions has been updated.**
- These **instructions were issued under Section 18 read with Section 10 (2) of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (Act 51 of 2007)** and came into effect immediately.
- This is a **significant step towards enhancing the digital payment infrastructure** in public transportation.

RBI HAS APPROVED HDFC BANK FOR SALE OF 90% OF STAKE IN HDFC CREDILA

- This **move is expected to boost HDFC Bank's income** in the fourth quarter.
- The **entire investment in HDFC Credila** was transferred from HDFC Ltd, the parent housing finance company, to HDFC Bank when the two entities were amalgamated on July 1 of the previous year.
- **Bank analysts predict that HDFC Bank's other income for the fourth quarter** will reflect about Rs 9000 crore as earnings from selling its stake in HDFC Credila.
- The **housing finance company had agreed to sell its stake to private equity firm ChryCapital** and BPEA EQT.

- As part of the **transaction post-stake sale completion, the new investors** have agreed to bring in a **fresh equity infusion of Rs 2,000 crore to support growth in operations.**
- The **balance Rs 1,300 crore would be made available** on a need basis by the new promoter.

THE FINANCIAL LITERACY IDEATHON HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED BY RBI

- As part of the **FLW campaign of 2024, RBI has announced a Financial Literacy Ideathon.**
- This **Ideathon is aimed at soliciting innovative ideas from postgraduate students** on creative strategies to propagate financial literacy among the youth.
- The goal is **to empower them to engage in responsible financial behaviour and make informed financial decisions.**

RBI IMPOSED PENALTY OF RS.3 CR OF SBI, CUB, CANARA BANK & OCEAN CAPITAL MARKET

- Here are the details:
 - **State Bank of India (SBI):** A penalty of Rs 2 crore was imposed on SBI for shortcomings in regulatory compliance, including holding shares exceeding 30% of the paid-up share capital of certain companies as a pledgee and failing to deposit the eligible amount into the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund within the specified timeframe.
 - **Canara Bank:** Canara Bank was fined Rs 32.30 lakh for failing to comply with specific directives issued by the RBI. These directives pertained to 'Data Format for Furnishing of Credit Information to Credit Information Companies and other Regulatory Measures', 'Resolution Framework 2.0 - Resolution of Covid-19 related stress of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)', and 'Resolution Framework - 2.0: Resolution of Covid-19 Related Stress of Individuals and Small Businesses'.
 - **City Union Bank Limited (CUB):** A penalty of Rs 66 lakh was imposed on CUB for non-compliance with certain directions issued by the RBI on 'Prudential Norms on Income Recognition, Asset Classification and Provisioning about Advances — Divergence in NPA Accounts' and Know Your Customer Directions.
 - **Ocean Capital Market Ltd:** Ocean Capital Market Ltd, based in Rourkela, Odisha, was fined Rs 16 lakh

for failing to adhere to certain provisions outlined in the “Non-Banking Financial Company - Systemically Important Non-Deposit taking Company and Deposit taking Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2016” as well as specific directives issued by the RBI to the company regarding the submission of returns on the XBRL platform.

INNOVITI & RBL BANK PARTNERED TO SET UP OMNIUM, A PAYMENT PLATFORM FOR PROGRESSIVE RETAILERS

- This platform **aims to unlock value hidden in a retailer’s data and business processes, helping them grow faster** and with lesser efforts.
- Omnium **integrates with RBL Bank’s modern banking and payment Application Programming Interfaces (APIs)**, enabling a fast, seamless, and secure payment integration.
- Omnium **allows the retailer to integrate their business processes across HR, ERP, and marketing platforms** with payment events to enable a precise measurement of their impact.
- It also **enables consumer journeys that cut across online and offline consumer touchpoints**.
- Key features of **Omnium include product-specific payment promotions, price and promotion benchmarking**, real-time attribution of transactions to promotion, and budget sharing through collaborative and targeted promotions.

THE "ENABLING FRAMEWORK FOR REGULATORY SANDBOX" HAS BEEN UPDATED BY RBI

- The updates were **based on the experience gained over the last four and a half years in running four cohorts** and feedback received from FinTechs, banking partners, and other stakeholders.
- **Here are some key updates:**
 - The **timelines of the various stages of the Regulatory Sandbox** process have been revised from seven months to nine months.
 - The updated **framework now requires sandbox entities to ensure compliance with provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.
 - The ‘**Enabling Framework for Regulatory Sandbox**’ was initially placed on the RBI website on August 13,

2019, after wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders.

- The objective of the Regulatory Sandbox (RS) is to **foster responsible innovation in financial services, promote efficiency, and bring benefit to consumers**.

BANKING- ONE LINER

- The Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) Digital Payments Index (DPI) indeed shows an increase from 395.57 in March 2023 to 417.77 in September 2023. This **indicates a growth in digital transactions during this period. The DPI is a measure of the extent of digitization of payments across the country**. It reflects the penetration and deepening of various digital payment modes. The higher the DPI, the greater the adoption of digital payments.
- The Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has achieved the **highest growth in deposit mobilisation among public sector banks in the third quarter, with a growth rate of 17.89%**. It also leads in terms of **low-cost CASA deposits, holding 50.19% of the market**. In terms of asset quality, BoM and SBI have the lowest gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) at 2.04% and 2.42% respectively.
- On 2nd February 2024, **Financial services giant Morgan Stanley bought 50 lakh (5 million) shares of One 97 Communications, the parent company of Paytm, for ₹244 crore (approximately \$30 million)**. This represents roughly a 0.8% stake in the company.
- On February 6, 2024, **UPI payments across multiple banks in India started failing due to server outages. Major platforms like Google Pay, PhonePe, and BHIM were affected. The issue was not with UPI or NPCI, but with some major banks**.
- On February 4, 2024, the **Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) received Rs 9,013.72 crore from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) after invoking Government of India (GoI) guarantees on decade-old loans extended to some African countries**. The MEA has also provided a further Rs 4,383.40 crore in 2024-25 towards payment to Exim Bank towards guarantees that may be invoked against doubtful debts.
- **Pharmaceutical exports from India grew by 8.2% from April to December 2023, reaching USD 20.40 billion. The global demand for Indian pharmaceutical products drove this growth**. The

total pharmaceutical exports for the fiscal year 2023 were USD 25.39 billion.

- The **liquidity deficit of the banking system has decreased to ₹1.40 lakh crore. This is part of the RBI's policy to align inflation with the target while supporting growth.** Despite the deficit, the potential liquidity in the banking system is still in surplus. This impacts money market rates and inflation.
- **LIC Index Plus is a new unit-linked life insurance product launched by LIC on February 6, 2024. It offers life insurance cover and savings, with guaranteed additions added to the unit fund after specific policy years.** The plan is open to individuals from 90 days to 60 years old, with maturity age up to 85 years.
- On February 9, 2024, **the RBI permitted branches of Indian banks in GIFT-IFSC to act as Trading Members or Trading and Clearing Members of the India International Bullion Exchange IFSC Limited (IIBX).** Additionally, Indian banks authorized to import gold or silver were allowed to act as Special Category Client 1 of IIBX.
- The **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to set up a wholly-owned subsidiary in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) situated in GIFT City, Gujarat.** This move is expected to open up new business opportunities and establish IREDA's global presence for the renewable energy sector.
- The **Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$200 million loan agreement to manage flood and riverbank erosion risks along the Brahmaputra river in Assam on 9th February 2024.** The project will stabilize riverbanks, install pro-siltation measures, and build flood embankments in five districts. It is expected to benefit about 1 million people and increase crop production over 50,000 hectares.
- **HDFC Bank raised \$300 million through its first-ever sustainable finance bond issue on February 7, 2024. The funds will be used for green and social loans, including lending towards electric vehicles, SMEs, and affordable housing.** The bonds will be listed on India International Exchange (India INX) in GIFT IFSC.

- **Bandhan Financial Holdings Limited (BFHL) has secured the final regulatory approval to acquire AEGON Life Insurance.** This approval from the Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority (IRDAI) represents the last regulatory hurdle for BFHL, following consent from the Reserve Bank of India.
- On February 9, 2024, **the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the remuneration ceiling for Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) of private sector banks by ₹10 lakh, raising it from ₹20 lakh to ₹30 lakh per annum.**
- On February 10, 2024, **the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) increased the interest rate on provident fund deposits from 8.15% to 8.25% for the fiscal year 2023-24. This decision is expected to benefit over six crore subscribers.**
- **On February 10, 2024, Yes Bank partnered with fintech startup LeRemitt to enable cross-border transactions for MSMEs.** This partnership aims to make global trade more accessible for small businesses.
- **Shivalik Group, an Ahmedabad-based real estate developer, received SEBI approval for its first Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) on February 9, 2024.** The fund aims to raise up to Rs 300 crore through private placement.
- The **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has increased its shareholding in SBI Cards and Payment Services from 4.99% to 5.02%.** This increase in stake was achieved through the acquisition of a little more than three lakh shares in the non-banking financial company at an average cost of ₹716 per share.
- **Bandhan Bank's loans worth ₹23,300 crore are under a forensic audit by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company (NCGTC).** The audit is investigating potential evergreening of loans and identifying any fictitious customers. The bank's CEO, Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, has denied any chance of evergreening.
- **Industrial output growth increased in December after falling to an eight-month low in the month before. This suggests a boost in factory production. In terms of inflation, retail inflation dropped to a three-month low in January. It stabilized within the 2-6% band, with the core rate declining to 3.8% in December 2023.**

- **Mizuho Bank from Japan has acquired a 15% stake in Credit Saison India for Rs 1,200 crore. This is the first external investment for Credit Saison India.** The investment will help Credit Saison India grow and become a resilient lending franchise. Currently, Credit Saison India has 1.2 million active loans worth over Rs 10,000 crore.
- **Mirae Asset Mutual Fund has launched two passive smallcap funds: the Mirae Asset Nifty Smallcap 250 Momentum Quality 100 ETF and the Mirae Asset Nifty Smallcap 250 Momentum Quality 100 ETF Fund of Fund.** These are India's first multi-factor-based ETFs on the Nifty Smallcap250 Index. The NFO for the ETF opened on February 12, 2024, and closed on February 21, 2024, while the Fund of Fund opened on February 15, 2024, and will close on February 28, 2024.
- **On 13th February 2024, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) approved Matrix Pharma's acquisition of 100% equity shares of Tianish Laboratories. Matrix Pharma doesn't currently have any business activity, while Tianish Laboratories manufactures and sells active pharmaceutical ingredients in India.**
- **The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued draft regulations for "Bima Sugam - Insurance Electronic Marketplace".** This digital platform aims to increase insurance penetration in India, enhance accessibility, and protect policyholders' interests. The draft regulations were issued on February 13, 2024.
- **The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has brought pension funds under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). This move is part of a regulatory overhaul aimed at strengthening oversight on pension funds.** It introduces 'fit and proper' criteria for Principal Officers and mandates the setting up of a nomination and remuneration committee as part of the board of pension fund.
- **Jefferies, a financial services company, predicts that the Indian stock market could reach a staggering \$10 trillion by 2030.** This would be more than double its current size of around \$4.5 trillion, making it one of the world's largest markets.
- **CRISIL's Financial Conditions Index (FCI) showed that India's financial conditions tightened in**

January compared to December. This was mainly due to a deeper liquidity deficit and foreign portfolio investors turning net-sellers. Despite the Reserve Bank of India's rate hikes, bank credit growth remained largely unaffected. The RBI is expected to start cutting rates from June 2024.

- **The Indian government has recently approved a significant amendment to the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy in the space sector. This new policy allows up to 100% FDI for the manufacturing of components, systems, and sub-systems for satellites, ground segments, and user segments.** It also permits up to 74% FDI for the manufacturing and operation of an entire satellite, and up to 49% FDI for creating a spaceport or for launch vehicles and their systems and subsystems.
- **The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has made amendments to the National Pension System Trust (NPST) and Pension Fund Regulations.** The key changes include simplification of trustee appointments, clarity of roles of the Sponsor of Pension Fund & Pension Fund, constitution of additional board committees, and enhanced disclosure requirements. These changes aim to reduce compliance and enhance ease of doing business.
- **The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 23 million loan on February 22, 2024, to construct an International Fintech Institute (IFI) inside Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in India.** The IFI will enhance fintech education, research, and innovation.

APPOINTMENTS

Name of the Person	Designation
Harun Rashid Khan	Part-Time Chairman of AU Small Finance Bank
Vice Admiral Lochan Singh Pathania	Chief Hydrographer to the Government of India
Shri Pawan Kumar	Officer of Indian Cost Accounts Service
Champai Soren	Chief Minister of Jharkhand
Radha Raturi	First woman Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand
Justice Pradeep Kumar Srivastava	Permanent Judge of the Jharkhand High Court
Apurva Chandra	Secretary of the Department of Health and Family Welfare
Nangolo Mbumba	Interim president of Namibia

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah	First female vice president
Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi	Vice Chief of the Indian Army
Senior advocate Rajendra Prasad Gupta	Advocate General of Rajasthan
Sinn Féin's Michelle O'Neill	First Minister of Northern Ireland
Jay Shah	Chairman of the Asian Cricket Council
Brazilian footballer Vinícius Junior	UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador
Mio Oka	New Country Director for India
Olzhas Bektenov	Prime Minister of Kazakhstan
Shri Vivek Kumar Gupta	Managing Director of NHSRCL
Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak	Prime Minister of Yemen
H Venkatachalam Iyer	CEO & MD of Tata AIA Life Insurance
Naveen Tahilyani	CEO & MD of Tata Digital
Nayib Bukele	President of El Salvador
Ravi Kumar Jha	Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of LIC Mutual Fund Asset Management
Narendra Kumar Yadav	Brand ambassador for the Fit India Movement
Lebanese Judge Nawaf Salam	President of the International Court of Justice
Ajay Kumar Choudhary	Non-executive chairman of its board
Sindhu Ganapathy	Transwoman Travelling Ticket Examiner
Alexander Stubb	13th President of Finland
Anand Radhakrishnan	CEO of Sundaram Asset Management
Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal	72nd President of ICAI
Charanjot Singh Nanda	Vice-President of ICAI
M R Kumar	Part-time non-official Director and non-executive Chairman of BOI
Srinivasan Sridhar	Part-time non-official Director and non-executive Chairman on the IOB
Aravamudan Krishna Kumar	Board of UCO Bank
Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jain	Chairman & Managing Director of the IRCTC
Virendra Bansal	MD & CEO of SBICAPS
Pranam Wahi	An additional independent director of Axis Bank
Nikhil Joshi	Managing Director of BDI

Nand Kishore Yadav	Speaker of the Bihar Vidhan Sabha
Justice Nilay V Anjaria	Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court
Pradeep Kumar Sinha	Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank
Shubman Gill	Punjab's 'state icon' for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections
Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi	Vice Chief of the Army Staff
Ilham Aliyev	President of Azerbaijan for a fifth term.
Ashish Vijayakar	Managing Director and CEO of SBM Bank India
Rajeev Mantri	Member Chief Financial Officer and Key Managerial Personnel
Salil Parekh	Board of Directors of the USISPF
A S Rajeev	Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission
Jacinta Kalyan	India's first female pitch curator
Wencai Zhang	Managing Director and World Bank Group Chief Administrative Officer
Anand Singhi	Member of Chief – Retail and Government Business
Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar	Chairperson of Lokpal
Sachin Jain	CEO for India by the World Gold Council
Viswas Raghavan	Head of Banking and Executive Vice Chair of Citigroup
Geeta Batra	Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility
Maryam Nawaz	First woman Chief Minister of Punjab, Pakistan
Feleti Penitala Teo	14th Prime Minister of Tuvalu
Samir Shah	Chairman of the BBC

INDEX AND RANKING

IIRF'S TOP MBA COLLEGES IN INDIA 2024: IIM-AHMEDABAD RANKED FIRST IN GOVERNMENT COLLEGES CATEGORY

- The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) has been ranked as the top MBA college in India for the year 2024 in the Government Colleges category.
- The ranking is based on several criteria including Placement Performance, Teaching Learning Resources and Pedagogy, Research, Industry

Income and Integration, Placement Strategy & Support, Future Orientation, and External Perception and International Outlook.

- The **top five government MBA colleges according to the IIRF 2024 rankings** are **IIM Ahmedabad, FMS- Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, New Delhi, IIM Calcutta, IIM Bangalore, and IIM Kozhikode.**

MUKESH AMBANI TOPS AMONG INDIANS AND RANKS 2ND GLOBALLY ON THE BRAND GUARDIANSHIP INDEX 2024

- The Brand **Guardianship Index** recognises **CEOs who effectively build business value while considering the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, investors, and society at large.**
- Ambani’s ranking surpassed **influential figures like Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Sundar Pichai of Google, Tim Cook of Apple, and Elon Musk of Tesla.**
- The **first rank is held by Huateng Ma of China-based Tencent.**
- Brand Finance awarded Ambani a **BGI score of 80.3, just slightly below Huateng Ma’s score of 81.6.**

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Awardee	Awards
Nikhil Mukund Wagh	Maha Gaurav 2024’ Award
Lal Krishna Advani	Bharat Ratna
Priest Ishwari Prasad Namboodiri	Shankar Smriti Award
PT Usha	‘Lifetime Achievement’ Award
REC Limited	Best Green Bond - Corporate Award
Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain	66th Annual Grammy Awards
Pyarelal Sharma	Lakshminarayana International Award
PV Narasimha Rao	Bharat Ratna
S. Somanath	K.P.P. Nambiar Award
NIMHANS	Nelson Mandela Award
Noida Authority	Water Warrior Award
Nima Sarikhani	People’s Choice Award
iRASTE Project	GovTech Prize
Neeraj Chopra and Sheetal Devi	Sportstar of the Year (Male) and Sportstar of the Year (Female)
Havildar Varinder Singh	Vishisht Seva Medal
South Indian Bank	‘Best Technology Bank of the Year’

Isha Ambani	Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year’
City Union Bank	Best AI & ML Bank, Best Fintech & Digital Payment Index adoption, Best Financial Inclusion,
Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya	58th Jnanpith Award
‘Oppenheimer’	77th BAFTA Awards
Sh. Shashikant Kumar	Jeevan Raksha Padak’
Shashi Tharoor	Chevalier de la Legion d’honneur
Alex Dawson	Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024
Prof. Aditi Sen De	G. D. Birla Award
Central University of Punjab, Bathinda	The Running Shield’ and Trophy
Vellayan Subbiah	EY Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2023
Niladri Kumar	Akademi Ratnas and Akademi Puraskar
Pankaj Kumar Chatterjee	Romain Rolland Book Prize
Acharya Lokesh Muni	Global Jain Peace Ambassador:
C-DOT	Innovation in AI,Social Good,Telecom

IMPORTANT DAYS

Date	Day	Theme
1st February 2024	Indian Coast Guard Day	Theme: Innovating, Protecting, and Serving with Valor.
1st-7th February 2024	World Interfaith Harmony Week	Theme: ‘Uniting for Peace’.
2nd February 2024	Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day	Theme: “Living Well with RA: Early Diagnosis, Effective Management, and a Brighter Future”
1st February 2024	World Wetlands Day	Theme: ‘Wetlands and Human Wellbeing’.
3rd February 2024	National Golden Retriever Day	Theme: Celebrating the Heart of Gold”
4th February 2024	National Day of Sri Lanka	Theme: "Let’s stand together".
4th-10th February 2024	International Development Week	Theme: ‘Go for the Goals’
4th February 2024	World Cancer Day	Theme: ‘Close the care gap’

4th February 2024	International Day of Human Fraternity	Theme:-
6th February 2024	International Day of Zero Tolerance	Theme:"Her Voice. Her Future.
6th February 2024	Safer Internet Day	Theme: "Inspiring Change? Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online".
8th February 2024	National Opera Day	Theme: "Celebrating the Heart of Opera"
9th February 2024	Death anniversary of Baba Amte	Theme:-
10th February 2024	National Deworming Day	Theme: "Protect Our Children, Break the Chain of Worm Infections."
10th February 2024	World Pulses Day	Theme: 'Pulses: Nourishing Soils and People'.
10th February 2024	United Nations International Day	Theme:-
11th February 2024	International Day of Women and Girls in Science	Theme:"Women and Girls in Science Leadership, a New Era for Sustainability".
11th February 2024	World Day of the Sick	Theme: "Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships".
11th February 2024	World Unani Day	Theme: "Unani Medicine for One Earth, One Health".
12th February 2024	Darwin Day	Theme:-
12th February 2024	Lincoln's Birthday	Theme:-
12th February 2024	National Productivity Day	Theme:"Artificial Intelligence (AI)- Productivity Engine for Economic Growth".
12th February 2024	International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism	Theme: "Preventing Violent Extremism through Education and Empowerment:

		Building Inclusive and Peaceful Societies."
12th February 2024	International Epilepsy Day	Theme: "Inspire Inclusion"
13th February 2024	National Women's Day	Theme: 'Milestones on My Epilepsy Journey'
13th February 2024	World Radio Day	Theme:'Radio: A century informing'.
14th February 2024	World Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day	Theme: "Hearts United: Raising Awareness, Fostering Hope, Promoting Care".
15th February 2024	World Hippo Day	Theme:-
15th February 2024	International Childhood Cancer Day	Theme:"Reducing the Survival Gap" or "Unveiling Challenges"
16th February 2024	World Anthropology Day	Theme: "Connections and Collaborations"
17th February 2024	Global Tourism Resilience Day	Theme: "Resilient Tourism: Building Back Better".
17th February 2024	World Pangolin Day	Theme:-
19th February 2024	Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti	Theme:-
20th February 2024	Arunachal Pradesh Foundation Day	Theme:- Cultural Heritage and Diversity
20th February 2024	Mizoram Foundation Day	Theme:- Cultural Pride and Social Progress
20th February 2024	World Day of Social Justice	Theme:
21st February 2024	International Mother Language Day	Theme: "Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning".
22nd February 2024	World Thinking Day	Theme: "Our World, Our Equal Future."
23rd February 2024	World Peace and Understanding Day	Theme: "Service above Self"

24th February 2024	Central Excise Day	Theme:-
25th February 2024	77th Raising Day	Theme:
27th February 2024	World NGO Day	Theme: "Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".
27th February 2024	National Protein Day	Theme: #SolveWithProtein
28th February 2024	National Science Day	Theme: "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat".
29th February 2024	Rare Disease Day	Theme: "Share Your Colours,"

IREDA and the Indian Institute of Technology	11th February 2024	To foster joint research, technology transfer, and support for the start-up ecosystem in the renewable energy sector.
Uttar Pradesh government and IIT Roorkee	13th February 2024	To enhance disaster management in the state by leveraging IIT Roorkee's expertise in research and training.
(CIAL) and (BPCL)	14th February 2024	To set up a green hydrogen plant at the Cochin Airport
India and Colombia	16th February 2024	To share successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for digital transformation.
India and Taiwan	16th February 2024	To facilitate the employment of Indian workers in Taiwan, with Taiwan deciding the number of migrant workers and types of industries, while India handles recruitment and training.
IREDA and Punjab National Bank	19th February 2024	To advance renewable energy initiatives across India.
Dept of Fisheries & ONDC	19th February 2024	to promote digital marketing of fish and other aquatic produce, providing a digital platform to empower stakeholders in the fisheries sector.

MOUS SIGNED

Signed Between	Date Signed	Purpose
(NRLPS) and BRAC Internation	2nd February 2024	To promote economic inclusion and social protection for the poorest women under the DAY-NRLM.
PSB & WDRA	5th February 2024	Improving agricultural pledge finance in India.
Telangana State Aviation Academy and NRSC	7th February 2024	Providing advanced training for drone pilots.
Government of Maharashtra and Google	8th February 2024	Aims to leverage Google's AI capabilities to provide solutions in sectors like agriculture, healthcare, education, and startups.
Embraer Defense & Security and Mahindra Defence Systems	9th February 2024	To jointly fulfill the acquisition of the C-390 Millennium multi-mission aircraft

IEPFA and DBS Bank	20th February 2024	To enhance investor awareness and protection by disseminating safety messages via DBS Bank's various digital platforms.
Aeronautical Development Agency and the Indian Air Force	21st February 2024	To integrate futuristic weapons and sensors into the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) to enhance its operational capabilities.
Akshayakalpa Organic with (BII) and Samunnati Financial Intermediation & Services Pvt Ltd	22nd February 2024	To provide financing to up to 1,500 smallholder dairy farmers in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, enabling them to scale up their organic dairy business.
BSTF and the SIDBI	23rd February 2024	Aims to enhance the startup ecosystem in BSSFF), a Rs 50-crore fund designed to provide financial support to startups.
Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Women and Child Development	26th February 2024	Controlling anaemia among adolescent girls using Ayurveda interventions in five districts under Mission Utkarsh.
(ECI), (IBA), and (DoP)	26th February 2024	To enhance voter outreach and awareness ahead of the Lok Sabha 2024 elections.
Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine	27th February 2024	To promote, facilitate, and develop academic collaboration in the field of Ayurveda and Thai

		Traditional Medicine.
Ministry of Ayush and Research and Information System	27th February 2024	To enhance cooperation and research in Indian Traditional Medicine and provide an overview of the Ayush Service sector.
NABARD and NRLM	27th February 2024	To support rural women's (SHGs) through financial support, capacity building, sustainable economic activities, and entrepreneurship development.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO LAUNCH 'MUKHYAMANTRI VAYOSHRI YOJANA

- Here are some key features of the scheme:
 - The scheme **aims to provide necessary aids and appliances to senior citizens to overcome any physical or mental disabilities.**
 - The beneficiaries will **receive a one-time amount of INR 3,000 directly into their bank accounts.**
 - The scheme will **cover all districts in the state.**
 - The Health Department will **conduct a survey and screening to identify eligible beneficiaries.**
 - It is estimated that **approximately 1.5 million senior citizens in the state** will benefit from this scheme.

THE ROOFTOP SOLAR SCHEME FOR FREE ELECTRICITY HAS BEEN LAUNCHED

- This scheme **aims to light up one crore households by providing up to 300 units of free electricity every month.**
- The project entails an **investment of over Rs 75,000 crore.**
- Subsidies will be **given directly to people's bank accounts, and the central government will ensure that there is no cost burden on the people.**

- All stakeholders will be **integrated into a National Online Portal**.
- Urban local bodies and panchayats will be incentivised to **promote rooftop solar systems in their jurisdictions**.

ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME FOR POLITICAL FUNDING DECLARED “UNCONSTITUTIONAL”

- Here are **some key points from the verdict**:
 - The Supreme Court stated that the **scheme violates the Right to Information (RTI) and can lead to quid pro quo**.
 - The court has ordered the State Bank of India (SBI) to **reveal the names of the donors and the amounts received by political parties through the Electoral Bond scheme**.
 - The **primary concern raised by transparency activists is that voters can no longer know which individual, company, or organization has funded which party and to what extent**.
 - The Centre, however, has **pitched bonds as an alternative to cash donations and as a way to increase transparency and accountability in political funding**.

MINISTER NARAYAN RANE LAUNCHES SPECIAL SCHEME FOR IMES

- The scheme **enables IMEs to access collateral-free loans up to Rs 20 lakh under the government’s Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**.
- The scheme **offers an impressive 85% guarantee cover for unsecured loans up to Rs 20 lakh, specifically tailored for IMEs registered on the Udyam portal**.
- This substantial guarantee cover is anticipated to **incentivize Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) to ramp up lending activities, thereby empowering IMEs with the requisite financial resources**.
- The scheme **aims to foster a conducive environment for financial institutions to extend loans, thus bolstering credit flow within the Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) sector**.
- The government’s **formalization drive is gaining momentum with nearly 1.41 crore IMEs already**

registered on the Udyam portal out of a total of 3.74 crore MSMEs.

- Initiatives such as the **Udyam Assist Platform (UAP) have been instrumental in simplifying the registration process for IMEs**, thereby enabling them to avail themselves of priority sector lending (PSL) benefits.

ODISHA’S SWAYAM SCHEME OFFERS INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO JOBLESS YOUTHS

- Here are **some key features of the Swayam Scheme**:
 - **Financial Assistance for Ration Cardholders**: The scheme provides Rs.1,000 livelihood assistance to 95.90 lakh PDS beneficiary families. This is aimed at supporting financially vulnerable individuals in the state.
 - **Interest-Free Loans for Youth**: 1 lakh eligible rural and urban youth (18-35 years) can apply for loans up to Rs.1 lakh. This encourages entrepreneurship and the establishment of small businesses.
 - **Total Budget**: The scheme allocates a total budget of Rs.1,237.74 crore to benefit Odisha residents.
 - The **application process for the Swayam Scheme is online**.
 - The **eligibility criteria include permanent residency in Odisha, possession of a valid ration card, and youth aged between 18 to 35 years are eligible for the loan scheme**.

KARNATAKA CM SIDDARAMAIAH LAUNCHES ASHA KIRANA EYE CARE SCHEME

- This initiative, under the National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCB&VI), **aims to provide comprehensive eye care services to individuals across all age groups**.
- Health personnel and ASHA workers **conduct primary eye checkups at homes, refer those identified with eye problems to the primary health centre (PHC) for secondary screening, provide free spectacles, and perform cataract surgeries free of cost for the identified beneficiaries**.

TRIPURA LAUNCHED CM JAN AROGYA YOJANA; BECOMES 1ST NORTHEAST STATE UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVER

- Here are **some key points about the scheme:**
- **Coverage:** Provides an insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.
- **Beneficiaries:** Covers 4.15 lakh families in the state, including those not covered under the central government's Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).
- **Benefits:** Free healthcare services for indoor patients at primary health centers, empaneled private hospitals within the state, and even outside the state for specific treatments.
- **Uniqueness:** The scheme has four unique features compared to AB-PMJAY:
 - Covers pre-existing conditions after a waiting period.
 - Includes daycare procedures.
 - Provides travel allowance for availing treatment outside the state.
 - Offers financial assistance for organ transplantation.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

KUFOS & ISRO PARTNERS FOR NISAR PHASE II RESEARCH PROGRAMME

- Here are **some key details:**
- The **collaboration aims to revolutionize earth resource observation.**
- The project **holds significant potential for the systematic monitoring of agriculture, forestry, wetlands, and soil moisture estimation.**
- The first phase involved the **validation of ground truth data in the forest biomass of Shimoga, Hoshangabad (MP), and Nilambur regions.**
- The second phase will **concentrate on optimizing drone-mounted optical and LIDAR data for forest biomass stock estimation in the study areas of Shimoga, Nilambur, and Hoshangabad (MP) within a larger inventory plot.**
- The project will **validate NISAR forest biomass products using ground-measured inventory data, processed LIDAR data, and optical images of Airborne data.**

SPACEX LAUNCHED NASA'S PACE SATELLITE TO STUDY EARTH'S OCEANS, AIR & CLIMATE

- The PACE mission **will study microscopic life in the oceans and microscopic particles in the atmosphere to investigate key mysteries** of our planet's interconnected systems.
- The **satellite's hyperspectral ocean color instrument will allow researchers to measure oceans and other water bodies** across a spectrum of ultraviolet, visible, and near-infrared light.
- This will **enable scientists to track the distribution of phytoplankton and – for the first time from space – identify which communities** of these organisms are present on daily, global scales.
- The **spacecraft also carries two polarimeter instruments, Hyper-Angular Rainbow Polarimeter #2 and Spectro-polarimeter** for Planetary Exploration.
- These will detect how **sunlight interacts with particles in the atmosphere, giving researchers new information on atmospheric aerosols and cloud properties, as well as air quality at local, regional, and global scales.**

ON FEBRUARY 17, THE INSAT-3DS WILL BE LAUNCHED BY ISRO FROM SRIHARIKOTA

- The satellite was **launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota aboard the GSLV F14 spacecraft.**
- The **INSAT-3DS is a state-of-the-art meteorological satellite and is the latest addition to India's third-generation satellites** in geostationary orbit.
- It is **equipped with advanced payloads designed to provide more accurate and timely data on atmospheric conditions.**
- This enhancement in **meteorological services is expected to significantly benefit various sectors, including agriculture, aviation, and disaster management.**
- The launch was carried out using the **GSLV-MkII rocket, which deployed the spacecraft in the geostationary transfer orbit.**

SKYROOT AEROSPACE LAUNCHES KALPANA FELLOWSHIP FOR WOMEN IN SPACE SECTOR

- The fellowship, named after Kalpana Chawla, the first woman of Indian origin to go to space, **aims to empower the next generation of women engineers in the space sector.**
- It **offers a monthly stipend, experiential learning, guidance from seasoned professionals, and access to world-class infrastructure at Skyroot Aerospace.**
- The fellowship **provides a platform for women engineers to work hands-on with cutting-edge space technology projects and offers career opportunities at Skyroot.**
- The **inaugural batch of the fellowship is set to commence in July 2024.**

ON 27 FEBRUARY, ISRO'S TECHNICAL FACILITIES IN KERALA INAUGURATED BY PM MODI

- These **facilities include:**
- **Trisonic Wind Tunnel** at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC).
- This tunnel can **generate speed ranging from subsonic to supersonic up to four times the speed of sound** (Mach number 4.0).
- **Semi-cryogenic integrated Engine and Stage Test Facility at the ISRO propulsion complex** at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu.
- This is a **world-class state-of-the-art facility handling large flow of propellants.**
- **PSLV Integration Facility** at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, Sriharikota.

SPORTS

TATA STEEL CHESS 2024: CHINA'S WEI YI WIN MASTERS TITLE & INDIA'S LEON LUKE MENDONCA

- Wei Yi emerged as **the winner after a thrilling four-player tiebreak that also involved Grandmasters Anish Giri, Gukesh Dommaraju, and Nodirbek Abdusattorov.**
- This **victory is considered the most significant achievement in Wei Yi's chess career.**

- On the other hand, **Leon Luke Mendonca had a remarkable performance in the Challengers category.**
- He defeated **International Master Divya Deshmukh in the final round to secure his victory.**
- This **triumph earned him a spot at the 87th Tata Steel Masters, which will take place from 17th January to 2nd February 2025.**

INDIA AND BANGLADESH DECLARED JOINT CHAMPIONS OF SAFF U19 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

- The **championship took place at the BSSSMK Stadium in Dhaka, Bangladesh.**
- **India led for the majority of the contest, thanks to an early goal by Sibani Devi Nongmeikapam.**
- **India won the coin toss, but the decision was later revoked.**
- **After more than two hours of waiting, the trophy was shared.**
- This **marked India's fourth age-group title in women's SAFF competition history, and their first victory on Bangladeshi soil.**

BADMINTON ASIA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024: INDIA WOMEN WIN TITLE

- The **championship took place from 13th to 18th February 2024 at the Setia City Convention Centre in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia.**
- The **final was a thrilling event, with India clinching a 3-2 victory over Thailand.**
- The day started with **two wins for India, with PV Sindhu defeating Supanida Katethong and Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand upsetting the world No 10 pair of Jongkolphan Kititharakul-Rawinda Prajongjai.**
- **After two defeats in the subsequent matches, the responsibility fell on 17-year-old Anmol Kharb, who confidently won her match against world No 45 Pornpicha Choeikeewong, securing the championship title for India.**

INDIA SHINES AT ASIAN INDOOR ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS WITH THREE GOLDS, ONE SILVER, AND TWO NATIONAL RECORDS

- Here are the **details of the Indian medal winners:**
- **Harmilan Bains won gold** in the **women's 1500m**.
- **Jyothi Yarraji won gold** in the **60m hurdles**.
- **Tajinderpal Singh Toor**, the **men's shot put Asian record holder**, defended his men's shot put crown.
- **Gulveer Singh**, an **Asian Games bronze medallist in the 10,000m**, won the gold medal in the men's 3000m race.
- **Ankita Dhyani won the silver medal in the women's 3000m event**.
- With these achievements, **India finished third on the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships 2024 medals tally**.
- This was also **India's second-best outing at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships**.

INDIA SHINES AT ARCHERY ASIA CUP 2024: BAGS 14 MEDALS INCLUDING NINE GOLDS IN BAGHDAD

- **Notable performances included three-time Olympian Deepika Kumari winning the gold medal in the women's individual recurve category and Dhiraj Bommadevara beating Tarundeep Rai 7-3 to win the men's recurve archery title.**
- **India also clinched top positions in both the men's and women's compound events.**
- **The Indian women's recurve team comprising Simranjeet Kaur, Deepika Kumari, and Bhajan Kaur defeated Uzbekistan 5-4 via shootout in a closely-fought final to clinch gold.**
- **The men's team ousted Bangladesh 6-2 to claim the gold.**
- **Dhiraj and Simranjeet also teamed up to win the mixed team recurve gold, blanking the Bangladeshi team 6-0 in the final.**

INDIA WINS 18 MEDALS AT BWF PARA-BADMINTON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

- The Indian shuttlers **secured a total of 18 medals, which included three gold, four silver, and 11 bronze.**
- Here are the **Indian medal winners:**

Gold Medalists:

- Suhas Yathiraj (Men's Singles SL 4)
- Krishna Nagar (Men's Singles SH 6)

- Pramod Bhagat (Men's Singles SL 3)

Silver Medalists:

- Manisha Ramadass (Women's Singles SU 5)
- Chirag Baretha/Rajkumar (Men's Doubles SU 5)
- Manasi Joshi/Thulasimathi Murugesan (Women's Doubles SL 3 - SU 5)
- Rachana Patel/Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan (Women's Doubles SH 6)

Bronze Medalists:

- Sukant Kadam (Men's Singles SL 4)
- Nitesh Kumar (Men's Singles SL 3)
- Manoj Sarkar (Men's Singles SL 3)
- Manasi Joshi (Women's Singles SL 3)
- Palak Kohli (Women's Singles SL 4)
- Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan (Women's Singles SH 6)
- Pramod Bhagat/Sukant Kadam (Men's Doubles SL 3 - SL 4)
- Nehal Gupta/Naveen Sivakumar (Men's Doubles SL 3 - SL 4)
- Mandeep Kaur/Manish Ramadass (Women's Doubles SL 3 - SU 5)

DEFENCE

GRSE & ROLLS-ROYCE SIGNED FRAME AND INDIVIDUAL LICENSE PACT

- This agreement is to **cooperate in the license production and localization of the MTU IMO Tier II compliant Series 4000** Marine Engines for governmental ships.
- This collaboration is a **part of the 'Make in India' joint initiative.**
- This initiative has **significant market potential in the coming years for all Fast Patrol Vessels, Interceptor Boats, and Fast Attack Craft projects** of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard.
- The **MTU Series 4000 engines have a power output of 746-4300 KW, providing the right propulsion to every naval vessel, from small patrol vessels to frigates and large submarines.**
- The engines also **stand out for their high-power density, power-to-weight ratio, compact design, and mechanical and thermal stability.**

US STATE DEPT APPROVES USD 4 BILLION SALE OF 31 MQ-9B ARMED DRONES

- This decision underscores the deepening strategic partnership between India and the United States.
- The MQ-9B SkyGuardian is a remotely piloted aircraft system (RPAS), created to assist in gathering intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) around the globe.
- The acquisition will significantly enhance India’s capacity to address present and future threats by facilitating unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance patrols in maritime zones.
- This decision follows the Defense Security Cooperation Agency’s formal notification to Congress, signalling a pivotal step towards finalising one of the most high-profile defence transactions between the two nations.

WORLD DEFENSE SHOW 2024 HELD IN RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

- The esteemed leadership of HRH Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Prime Minister, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI), hosted the second edition of the World Defense Show.
- The event was dedicated to creating the ultimate B2B event for the defense industry, supporting its relevant ministries and authorities, and reinforcing the national commitment to the growth and success of the show.

SUMMITS AND CONFRENCES

Name of the Summit	Organized/Led by	Venue	Aim/Theme
(CLEA) - (CASGC) 2024	Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors	Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi	Theme: “Cross-Border Challenges in Justice Delivery”
World Sustainable Development Summit	The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)	Habitat Centre in New Delhi	Theme: 'Leadership for Sustainable Development and Climate Justice'.

(WSDS) 2024			
7th Indian Ocean Conference	Ministry of External Affairs, in association with the India Foundation	Perth, Australia	Theme: "Towards a Stable and Sustainable Indian Ocean"
2024 World Governments Summit	World Government's Summit Organization	Dubai	Theme: 'Shaping Future Governments'
“Road to Paris 2024” Conference	National Anti-Doping Agency	New Delhi	Theme: Championing Clean Sports and Uniting for Anti-Doping
National Conference on APAAR	Ministry of Education, Government of India	New Delhi	Theme: One Nation One Student ID Card
19th Annual Banking Technology Conference	Indian Banks’ Association (IBA)	Trident Hotel, Nariman Point, Mumbai	"Building the AI-Enabled Bank of the Future"
60th Munich Security Conference	Munich Security Conference Foundation, a non-profit foundation	Hotel Bayerischer Hof and the Hotel Rosewood Munich	Theme: "Currency for Change: World Politics on a Budget"
INDUS-X Summit	Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)	New Delhi	Theme: Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism, Public-Private Partnerships
National Conference on Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)	Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	Theme: ‘Unified Approach Towards Sustainable Solutions in the Rural WASH Sector’
13th Ministerial Conference (MC13)	World Trade Organization (WTO)	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates	Theme: "The WTO, the Multilateral Trading System and the Current

			Global Economic Environment"
21st edition of BioAsia Summit 2024	Government of Telangana	Hyderabad, India	Theme: "Transforming Life Sciences with Data and AI,"
first-ever Future Skills Summit	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology	Guwahati	Theme: "Catalyzing future-ready talent for India & the World"
National CSR Summit	Confederation Of Indian Industry	IIT Madras	Theme: 'Building India 2047 – Technology for Better Tomorrow',
9th edition of the Raisina Dialogue Conference	Observer Research Foundation	New Delhi	Theme: "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create"

ECONOMY- ONE LINER

- In the **Interim Budget 2024, no changes were made to the income tax slabs and rates.** This applies to both the new and old tax regimes. The tax rates range from 0% to 30%, depending on income brackets.
- In the **2024 Union Budget, the Ministry of Defence received the highest allocation of ₹6.2 lakh crore.** On the other hand, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare received the lowest allocation. This budget reflects the government's priorities for the fiscal year.
- The **fiscal deficit for the financial year 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1% of GDP, with total borrowing estimated at Rs 14.13 lakh crore.** This was announced in the interim Union Budget before the Lok Sabha elections.
- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) raised India's GDP growth forecast for FY25 to 6.2% on February 5, 2024.** The growth for the current year is expected to be 6.7%, but it's projected to slow down to 6.1% in FY24 due to various challenges. However, services exports and public investment will continue to support the economy.

- The **Indian government has increased the windfall tax on petroleum crude to ₹3,200 per tonne from the previous rate of ₹1,700 per tonne.** This change is effective from February 3, 2024. The government revises this tax every two weeks. This tax was initially introduced in July 2022 in response to the increasing prices of crude oil.
- The **HSBC India Services PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) for January 2024 was recorded at 61.8, up from 59 in December 2023.** This is the highest it has been since July 2023. The **increase in the PMI indicates a growth in India's services sector, reaching a six-month high. This growth was driven by a strong upturn in new business, expanding at the fastest rate in six months.**
- By 2030, **India is projected to account for over one-third of the global increase in oil demand, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).** This growth is attributed to urbanisation, industrialisation, and the emergence of a wealthier middle class. The country's oil demand is expected to rise by almost 1.2 million barrels per day, reaching 6.6 million barrels per day by 2030. Diesel/gasoil is anticipated to be the largest contributor to this demand growth. Jet-kerosene demand is also expected to grow significantly, at an average rate of 5.9% per year.
- **FAME-II initially reduced the e-two-wheeler subsidy to 15% of the ex-factory price, aiming to push battery performance over capacity.** However, as of February 2024, the scheme offers a flat Rs. 20,000 subsidy, potentially benefiting lower-priced models, and is extended until May 2024.
- In January 2024, **India's steel exports reached 0.9 million tonnes (mt), up over 30% month over month and 43% year over year.** According to preliminary data from the Steel Ministry, the nation was still a net importer for the first ten months of the fiscal year (April through January).
- **India's services trade surplus did indeed reach a record \$44.9 billion in the October-December quarter of 2023.** This was a 16% increase year-on-year. **The surplus was driven by a growth of 5.2% in services exports to \$87.7 billion, while services imports contracted by 4.3% to \$42.8 billion during the same period.** This strong performance shows the resilience of India's service sector amid global economic challenges.

- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation did ease to a three-month low of 0.27% in January. This was mainly due to a moderation in food prices, including vegetables. Sequentially, the wholesale price index was down 0.3%, with the food index declining 1% and manufactured products continuing its deflation for a second consecutive month. Prices of manufactured products in January were down 1% sequentially as well.
- Wholesale inflation in India indeed dipped to a three-month low of 0.27% in January 2024. This decline was primarily driven by easing food prices, particularly vegetables, along with a continued fall in the prices of manufactured products.
- India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) rose by 25.7% to \$2.09 billion in January 2024, compared to the same month in the previous year. This data was released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on February 16, 2024.
- India's crude oil imports hit a 20-month high of 21.4 million tonnes in January due to increased domestic consumption and export demand. Despite the rise in volume, the import value declined due to lower international prices. India also increased its imports of discounted Russian crude.
- S&P Global Ratings predicts India's credit growth will decrease to 14% in FY25 from 16% in FY24 due to slower deposit growth. This could lead to competition for deposits, squeezing bank margins. Private-sector banks may be more affected due to higher Loan-to-Deposit Ratios. However, S&P expects these banks to withstand the pressure without a major decline in their credit profiles.
- The government just announced a hike in the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane, raising it by Rs. 25 per quintal to Rs. 340 for the 2024-25 season. This translates to an 8% increase, marking the highest since 2014 and potentially benefiting over 5 crore farmers across the country.
- Morgan Stanley Research has projected India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to be 6.9% for FY24 and then moderate to 6.5% for FY25. This projection is based on their constructive outlook on the Indian economy, with risks emanating from global factors and elections in May 2024. They also expect the GDP growth for the third quarter of FY24 ending December 2023 to be at 6.5%.
- The mineral production in India grew by 5.1% in December 2023 compared to the same month in the previous year. This growth was observed across various minerals including Magnesite, Lignite, Limestone, Coal, Natural Gas, Zinc, Manganese, Lead, Copper and Bauxite. Furthermore, the cumulative growth for the period from April to December in 2023-24 was 8.5% higher than the corresponding period of the previous year.
- The Flash Composite PMI for India indeed reached a seven-month high of 61.5 in February 2024. This suggests that the economy continues to perform exceptionally well. The improved performance in manufacturing and services is reflected in the increase of the Flash Manufacturing PMI to 60.4, up from 59.7 in January, and the Flash Services PMI climbing to 62 from 60.4.
- India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has projected India's GDP to grow at 6.9% in FY24 and 6.5% in FY25. This growth is expected to be supported by sustained government capex, soft global commodity prices, and signs of growth in the private corporate capex cycle. They also forecast consumer inflation to ease to 4.8%, and wholesale inflation to rise to 2.2% in FY25.
- According to the NITI Aayog CEO, BVR Subrahmanyam, poverty in India has reduced to 5% of the total population. This is based on the latest consumer expenditure survey by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), which showed a significant rise in household consumption expenditure and a narrowing gap between rural and urban areas.
- India's steel trade deficit rose to over ₹11,500 crore from April to January, a significant increase due to soaring imports from China. This has led to India becoming a net importer of steel, with imports rising by 35% and exports increasing by a modest 3.6%.
- The Mauritius Government amended the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India on February 23, 2024. This amendment aligns with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) proposal on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), aiming to prevent tax avoidance by multinational corporations.
- The Indian MSMEs' commercial credit portfolio grew by 11% YoY in Q3 2023, reaching a credit exposure of Rs 28.2 lakh crores. New credit value

was Rs. 2.43 lakh crores, with small enterprises having a 42% share. Lending sustained despite the end of the ECLGS scheme. Delinquencies improved to 2.3%, and 46% of MSME originations were in semi-urban and rural regions.

OBITUARY- ONE LINER

- Former Union Minister and **AAP leader Harmohan Dhawan** passed away following a prolonged illness at a private hospital in Mohali. He was 83 years old. **Dhawan had been hospitalized following a fall at his residence three months back.**
- **Navarre Scott Momaday, a renowned Kiowa author and poet, passed away** at the age of 89 on January 24, 2024. He was a **Pulitzer Prize winner for his novel "House Made of Dawn" and a significant figure in Native American literature.**
- **Veteran Odia actor and director, Sadhu Meher,** passed away at his residence in Mumbai. He was 84 years old. **Sadhu Meher was a prominent figure in parallel cinema in the mid-1980s and was critically acclaimed for his acting in 'Bhukha', a 1989 Sambalpuri-language film.**
- **Carl Weathers, best known for playing Apollo Creed in the Rocky movies,** passed away at the age of 76. He died peacefully in his sleep on February 1, 2024. **His contributions to film, television, the arts, and sports have left an indelible mark and he is recognized worldwide and across generations.**
- **Farooq Nazki, a renowned Kashmiri poet and broadcaster,** passed away at the age of 83. He was battling several health issues, including lung and kidney complications.
- **Former Chilean President Sebastián Piñera died in a helicopter crash** on February 6, 2024. The accident occurred near Lago Ranco. All other passengers survived. A state funeral began on February 9.
- **Baroness Shreela Flather, a prominent British-Indian peer,** passed away after a short illness in the UK. She was 89 years old. **Known for her elegant sarees in the House of Lords, she was a teacher and a politician, serving as a life peer as Baroness Flather of Windsor and Maidenhead in Berkshire.**
- **Renowned artist A. Ramachandran** passed away due to a prolonged illness at his residence in New Delhi on February 10, 2024. He was known for

his monumental canvases, colorful oils, and watercolors. He was 89.

- **Renowned Hindi and Maithili writer Dr. Usha Kiran Khan** passed away at the age of 79. She was known for her significant **contributions to Hindi and Maithili languages and was a recipient of the Padma Shri in 2015.**
- **Kelvin Kiptum, the world marathon record holder,** died in a road accident. **The accident occurred in western Kenya while he was driving from Kaptagat to Eldoret. Kelvin Kiptum was only 24 years old.**
- **Dattajirao Gaekwad, India's oldest living Test cricketer,** passed away at the age of 95. He died at his residence in Baroda on Tuesday, February 13. **Gaekwad played 11 Tests for India between 1952 and 1961.**
- **Padma Shri Prof. I.C. Verma, a renowned geneticist and advisor at the Institute of Medical Genetics and Genomics at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital,** passed away on February 9, 2024, at the age of 78.
- **Chef Imtiaz Qureshi, the mastermind behind ITC Maurya's Bukhara and Dum Pukht,** passed away on February 16, 2024. He was 93 years old and was known for reviving the Dum Pukht cooking technique.
- **Kavita Chaudhary, known for her role in the TV show 'Udaan',** passed away at 67 due to a heart attack. She was in Amritsar at the time of her death.
- **Suhani Bhatnagar, known for her role in 'Dangal',** has passed away at 19. She was suffering from Dermatomyositis, a rare disease. She was admitted to AIIMS on February 7 and passed away on February 16 due to complications. **Her passing is a great loss to the film industry.**
- **Renowned Jain monk Acharya Vidyasagar Maharaj** passed away at the age of 77. He died at **Chandragiri Teerth in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district after undertaking 'sallekhana', a Jain religious practice involving voluntary fasting unto death for spiritual purification.**
- **Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny** died on February 16 in prison. His spokesperson claimed he was "murdered". **His death has led to widespread mourning and protests in Russia.**
- **Fali Sam Nariman, a distinguished constitutional lawyer and senior advocate** of the Supreme Court of India, passed away on February 21, 2024. He was internationally recognized for his expertise in

international arbitration and served as the President of the Bar Association of India from 1991 to 2010.

- **Ameen Sayani, renowned for his iconic voice behind 'Binaca Geetmala'**, passed away at the age of 91 due to a heart attack. He was known for his introduction 'Namaste behno aur bhaiyon, main aapka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon' on Radio Ceylon.
- **Manohar Joshi, former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Lok Sabha Speaker**, passed away at the age of 86 on February 23, 2024. He had a significant political career with the Shiv Sena and served as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and Lok Sabha Speaker.
- **Germany's Andreas Brehme, 1990 World Cup Winning Goal Scorer**, Passes Away at the age of 63. He was a legendary footballer who is best remembered for scoring the winning goal for West Germany in the 1990 World Cup final against Argentina.
- Former **Karnataka cricketer K Hoysala, aged 34, tragically passed away due to a cardiac arrest**. The incident occurred at Bengaluru's RSI cricket ground after a match.
- **Renowned Indian filmmaker Kumar Shahani** has passed away at the age of 83. He was a significant contributor to India's parallel cinema movement and is known for films like **Maya Darpan (1972)** and **Tarang (1984)**.
- **Legendary ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas** passed away due to a prolonged illness. He was known for his **soulful ghazals and significant contributions to Hindi cinema and Indian pop music**.
- **Raja Venkatappa Naik**, the Congress MLA from Shorapur, Karnataka, passed away due to a prolonged illness leading to multiple organ dysfunction. His age is reported between 64-67.
- **Shafiqur Rahman Barq, the senior Samajwadi Party leader and Member of Parliament (MP) from Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal**, passed away at the age of 94. He was India's oldest MP in Parliament.

BOOKS

- The book **KASHMIR: Travels in Paradise on Earth** is authored by **Romesh Bhattacharji**. It's a non-fiction work about the author's travels in Kashmir,

capturing the region's beauty and charm. The book was released on 5th February 2024.

- The book "**Transforming HARYANA: 9 Incredible Years of Haryana Government**" was launched by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on February 6, 2024. Edited by Kuldip Chand Agnihotri, the book provides an in-depth look at the transformation of Haryana over the past nine years. It covers the state's journey towards development, systemic reforms, and good governance.
- On February 3, 2024, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan unveiled the **book 'Artificial Intelligence and National Security' at the Defence Literature Festival in Pune**. The book is authored by Amit Sinha and Vijay Khare.
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- The **coffee-table book 'Shree Jagannatha, Lord Of The Universe'** was released by Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on February 5, 2024. The book, edited by Raghuvir Srinivasan, contains contributions from various experts on Jagannath culture, journalists, and former bureaucrats. It narrates the traditions and rituals associated with Lord Jagannath and his siblings, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, in Puri.
- Sanjay Jaju, Secretary of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, unveiled **two publications, 'India Year Book 2024' and 'Career Calling'**, at the New Delhi World Book Fair on February 10, 2024. The 'India Year Book 2024' is a reference annual that provides insights into India's progress, while 'Career Calling' is a collection of articles offering career guidance to students and youth.
- "**Maha Swaapnikudu**" is a book launched by former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and authored by journalist P. Vikram. The book **provides a**

captivating journey into the intricacies of societal fabric and historical context.

- **“Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat” is a book by Professor S.D. Muni.** This book provides an insider’s view of the diplomatic efforts that shaped the course of nations, **particularly focusing on India’s role in bringing democracy to Nepal.**
- **“Sculpted Stones: Mysteries of Mamallapuram” is a book authored by Ashwin Prabhu.** It was published by Tulika Publishers on January 1, 2023. The book is a fascinating journey through the Pallava-era architecture of Mamallapuram, a small town on Tamil Nadu’s coast that is now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS QUESTION BANK: FEBRUARY 2024

Q.1 Who was appointed as the Part-Time Chairman of AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB) Limited on 30th January 2024?

- Harun Rashid Khan
- Raj Vikash Verma
- Raghuram Rajan
- Urjit Patel
- None of these

Answer (a): Harun Rashid Khan, former Deputy Governor of RBI, was appointed as the Part-Time Chairman of AU Small Finance Bank (AU SFB) Limited on 30th January 2024.

Q.2 What is the name of the new species of kangaroo lizard discovered in Western Ghats?

- Agasthyagama edge
- Western Ghats lizard
- Calicut kangaroo lizard
- Kerala terrestrial lizard
- None of these

Answer (a): The Agasthyagama edge, a new species of kangaroo lizard, was discovered in the Western Ghats by a team from Calicut University and Kerala Forest Research Institute on 31st January, 2024.

Q.3 Which campaign was highlighted during the Rashtriya Arogya Mela?

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

- Har din Har Ghar Ayush
- Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
- Make in India
- None of these

Answer (b): The ‘Har din Har Ghar Ayush’ campaign was highlighted, and it was announced that more than 9000 Ayush Health and Wellness Centres have been established out of the targeted 12500.

Q.4 What is the estimated fiscal deficit for the financial year 2024-25?

- 5.1% of GDP
- 4.1% of GDP
- 6.1% of GDP
- 7.1% of GDP
- None of these

Answer (a): The fiscal deficit for the financial year 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1% of GDP, with total borrowing estimated at Rs 14.13 lakh crore.

Q.5 Who has assumed charge as Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance?

- Shri Pawan Kumar
- Shri Ramesh Kumar
- Shri Suresh Kumar
- Shri Mahesh Kumar
- None of these

Answer (a): Shri Pawan Kumar, an officer of the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS) from the 1992 batch, has assumed charge as Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.

Q.6 Who laid the foundation stone for the Talabira Thermal Power Project of NLC India Limited in Odisha?

- President Ram Nath Kovind
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- Chief Minister of Odisha
- Minister of Power
- None of these

Answer (b): Prime Minister Narendra Modi did indeed lay the foundation stone for the Talabira Thermal Power Project of NLC India Limited in Odisha on February 3rd, 2024.

Q.7 Which metro service in India is the first to join the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)?

- a) Kochi Metro
- b) Kanpur Metro
- c) Chennai Metro
- d) Pune Metro
- e) None of these

Answer (c): The Chennai Metro has become the first metro service in India to join the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC).

Q.8 Which city was the most congested in the world in 2023?

- a) Dublin
- b) London
- c) Toronto
- d) Milan
- e) None of these

Answer (b): London was indeed the most congested city in the world in 2023. Commuters in London spent an average of 37 minutes and 20 seconds in traffic to cover a distance of 10 km.

Q.9 What is the name of the "super-Earth" discovered by NASA?

- a) TOI-715 a
- b) TOI-715 b
- c) TOI-715 c
- d) TOI-715 d
- e) None of these

Answer (b): NASA! discovered a "super-Earth," aptly named TOI-715 b, lurking 137 light-years away.

Q.10 Who was appointed as the new Country Director for India by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 5th February 2024?

- a) Mio Oka
- b) John Doe
- c) Jane Smith
- d) Satoshi Nakamoto
- e) None of these

Answer (a): Mio Oka was appointed as the new Country Director for India by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 5th February 2024.

Q.11 Which state in India is the first to pass the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill?

- a) Uttar Pradesh
- b) Madhya Pradesh
- c) Uttarakhand
- d) Bihar
- e) None of these

Answer (c): Uttarakhand is the first state in India to pass the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill.

Q.12 What is the 'Kilkari' program?

- a) A mobile health initiative
- b) A new mobile game
- c) A new social media platform
- d) A new e-commerce platform
- e) None of these

Answer (a): The 'Kilkari' program, a mobile health initiative, was launched in Gujarat and Maharashtra on February 7, 2024.

Q.13 Who launched the 'NITISH' device?

- a) IIT Delhi
- b) IIT Patna and BSDMA
- c) ISRO
- d) DRDO
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The 'NITISH' device, launched by the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA) in collaboration with IIT Patna.

Q.14 Who was the recipient of the Lakshminarayana International Award at the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival on 8th February 2024?

- a) Laxmikant
- b) Ilaiyaraaja
- c) A.R. Rahman
- d) Pyarelal Sharma
- e) None of these

Answer (d): The prestigious Lakshminarayana International Award was indeed presented to the renowned music composer Pyarelal Sharma.

Q.15 Who was honored at Jungfrau's Ice Palace in Switzerland on February 8, 2024?

- a) Usain Bolt
- b) Michael Phelps
- c) Neeraj Chopra
- d) Simone Biles
- e) None of these

Answer (c): Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra was honored at Jungfrau's Ice Palace in Switzerland on February 8, 2024.

Q.16 Where is the headquarters of the Confederation of International Tea Smallholders (CITS) shifting to?

- a) Japan
- b) India
- c) Sri Lanka
- d) Bangladesh
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The headquarters of the Confederation of International Tea Smallholders (CITS) is indeed shifting from China to India.

Q.17 Who was appointed as the first transwoman Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) by Southern Railway?

- a) Sindhu Ganapathy
- b) Anjali Sharma
- c) Priya Rani
- d) Geeta Kumari
- e) None of these

Answer (a): Sindhu Ganapathy was appointed as the first transwoman Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) by Southern Railway on February 13, 2024.

Q.18 Where is the Dakshin Bharat Sanskritik Kendra located?

- a) Delhi
- b) Mumbai
- c) Hyderabad
- d) Kolkata
- e) None of these

Answer (c): The Government of India has inaugurated a Regional Centre of Sangeet Natak Akademi, known as Dakshin Bharat Sanskritik Kendra, in Hyderabad.

Q.19 What is one of the main features of the Gupteswar Forest?

- a) It is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna
- b) It is the smallest forest in Odisha
- c) It is a man-made forest
- d) It is known for its desert-like conditions
- e) None of these

Answer (a): This forest is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Q.20 Who won the Chennai Open 2024 singles final?

- a) Roger Federer
- b) Rafael Nadal
- c) Novak Djokovic
- d) Sumit Nagal
- e) None of these

Answer (d): Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal won the Chennai Open 2024 singles final on February 11, 2024, in Chennai, India.

Q.21 Who has been elected as the 72nd President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) for the term 2024-25?

- a) Charanjot Singh Nanda
- b) Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal
- c) Mukand Lal
- d) All of above
- e) None of the above

Answer (b): The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has elected Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal as the 72nd President and Charanjot Singh Nanda as the Vice-President for the term 2024-25.

Q.22 Who developed the "PURAN" system?

- a) The Department of Computer Science at Punjabi University
- b) The Department of Computer Science at Harvard University
- c) The Department of Computer Science at Stanford University

- d) The Department of Computer Science at Oxford University
- e) None of these

Answer (a): The “PURAN” system, developed by the Department of Computer Science at Punjabi University, was launched on February 13, 2024.

Q.23 Who was appointed as the new MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAPS) on February 14, 2024?

- a) Rajay Kumar Sinha
- b) Virendra Bansal
- c) Ratan Tata
- d) Mukesh Ambani
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Virendra Bansal was appointed as the new MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBICAPS) on February 14, 2024.

Q.24 What is the state fruit of Assam as of February 12, 2024?

- a) Mango
- b) Banana
- c) Kaji Nemu lemon
- d) Orange
- e) None of these

Answer (c): The ‘Kaji Nemu’ lemon was declared as the state fruit of Assam on February 12, 2024.

Q.25 Who organized the first-ever Future Skills Summit?

- a) Ministry of Human Resource Development
- b) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
- c) Ministry of Science and Technology
- d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) organized the first-ever Future Skills Summit in Guwahati on February 15, 2024.

Q.26 Who was appointed as the Managing Director of Boeing Defence India (BDI) on February 15, 2024?

- a) Nikhil Joshi
- b) Ravi Shankar
- c) Anand Mahindra

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- d) Mukesh Ambani
- e) None of these

Answer (a): Nikhil Joshi, with over 25 years of industry experience, was appointed as the Managing Director of Boeing Defence India (BDI) on February 15, 2024.

Q.27 Which is the first North-Eastern state to achieve 100% household tap water connections?

- a) Assam
- b) Manipur
- c) Arunachal Pradesh
- d) Meghalaya
- e) None of these

Answer (c): Arunachal Pradesh has indeed become the first North-Eastern state to achieve 100% household tap water connections.

Q.28 Who were the recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award for 2023?

- a) Rabindranath Tagore and Mirza Ghalib
- b) Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya
- c) Harivansh Rai Bachchan and Kalidas
- d) Mahadevi Verma and Tulsidas
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The recipients of the award are renowned Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya.

Q.29 Which types of iron ore were included in the deposits discovered in Karauli, Rajasthan?

- a) Magnetite and Hematite
- b) Goethite and Limonite
- c) Siderite and Pyrite
- d) Chalcopyrite and Galena
- e) None of these

Answer (a): Large deposits of iron ore, over 840 million tonnes, were discovered in Karauli, Rajasthan on February 12, 2024. The deposits include both magnetite and hematite iron ore and are spread across Khoda, Dadaroli, Todupura, and Liloti near Hindon.

Q.30 Who is the author of the book “Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat”?

- a) Professor A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
- b) Professor J.K. Rowling
- c) Professor R.K. Narayan
- d) Professor S.D. Muni
- e) None of these

Answer (d): "Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat" is a book by Professor S.D. Muni.

Q.31 What does the Digital Naari platform offer?

- a) Only financial services
- b) Only digital services
- c) Both financial and digital services
- d) Neither financial nor digital services
- e) None of these

Answer (c): The platform offers various financial and digital services, and aims to onboard one lakh women by the end of 2025.

Q.32 How many pairs of legs does the Parhyale Odian have?

- a) 10 pairs
- b) 11 pairs
- c) 12 pairs
- d) 13 pairs
- e) None of these

Answer (d): The Parhyale Odian is a new species of marine amphipod discovered in Chilika Lake, Odisha, India on February 19, 2024. The species is brown, about eight millimeters long, and has 13 pairs of legs.

Q.33 Which country became the 119th member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)?

- a) India
- b) France
- c) Malta
- d) Australia
- e) None of these

Answer (c): Malta became the 119th member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Q.34 Who has been appointed as the Managing Director and CEO of SBM Bank India?

- a) Ratan Tata

- b) Ashish Vijayakar
- c) Mukesh Ambani
- d) Aditya Puri
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Ashish Vijayakar has been appointed as the Managing Director and CEO of SBM Bank India for a three-year term starting from February 17, 2024.

Q.35 What is the purpose of the "Kerala Brand" certification?

- a) To represent quality and competitiveness
- b) To represent the cultural heritage of Kerala
- c) To represent the tourism potential of Kerala
- d) To represent the agricultural products of Kerala
- e) None of these

Answer (a): The "Kerala Brand" certification, available through the portal, represents quality and competitiveness.

Q.36 Where did the "World's highest frozen lake marathon" take place?

- a) Mount Everest
- b) Pangong Tso
- c) Lake Baikal
- d) Lake Tahoe
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The icy expanse of Pangong Tso, perched high in the Ladakhi Himalayas, witnessed a thrilling feat on February 20th, 2024: the "World's highest frozen lake marathon."

Q.37 Who was appointed to the Board of Directors of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) on February 21, 2024?

- a) Nandan Nilekani
- b) Salil Parekh
- c) Sundar Pichai
- d) Satya Nadella
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Salil Parekh, the CEO and MD of Infosys, was appointed to the Board of Directors of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) on February 21, 2024.

Q.38 Who is the author of the book "Neeraj Chopra: The Man Who Made History"?

- a) Neeraj Chopra
- b) Bloomsbury India
- c) Norris Pritam
- d) All of the above
- e) None of the above

Answer (c): The book “Neeraj Chopra: The Man Who Made History” was written by Norris Pritam and published by Bloomsbury India.

Q.39 Who won the inaugural 2024 Freestyle Chess G.O.A.T. Challenge?

- a) GM Fabiano Caruana
- b) Magnus Carlsen
- c) Vishwanathan Anand
- d) Garry Kasparov
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Magnus Carlsen won the inaugural 2024 Freestyle Chess G.O.A.T. Challenge on February 16, 2024.

Q.40 What is Pratham?

- a) A coding platform
- b) A manufacturing tool
- c) A security system
- d) A no-code computer vision platform
- e) None of these

Answer (d): Assert AI launched Pratham, the world’s first no-code computer vision platform, on February 21, 2024.

Q.41 What is the length of the ‘Sudarshan Setu’?

- a) 1.32 km
- b) 2.32 km
- c) 3.32 km
- d) 4.32 km
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the ‘Sudarshan Setu,’ a 2.32 km-long cable-stayed bridge connecting Okha and Beyt Dwarka in Gujarat on 25th February 2024.

Q.42 Who has been appointed as the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the World Bank’s Global Environment Facility (GEF)?

- a) Sunita Narain

- b) Amartya Sen
- c) Raghuram Rajan
- d) Geeta Batra
- e) None of these

Answer (d): Geeta Batra, a distinguished Indian economist, has been appointed as the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the World Bank’s Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Q.43 Where is the Central Research Institute of Yoga & Naturopathy (CRIYN) located?

- a) Pune, Maharashtra
- b) Jhajjar, Haryana
- c) New Delhi, Delhi
- d) Jaipur, Rajasthan
- e) None of these

Answer (b): The Central Research Institute of Yoga & Naturopathy (CRIYN) in Jhajjar, Haryana, and the National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN) titled ‘NISARG GRAM’ in Pune, Maharashtra.

Q.44 Who is the new chairman of BBC?

- a) Richard Sharp
- b) Lucy Frazer
- c) Samir Shah
- d) Boris Johnson
- e) None of these

Answer (c): Samir Shah, a British television and radio executive of Indian origin, has been confirmed as the new Chairman of the BBC.

Q.45 How many astronauts were announced for the Gaganyaan mission?

- a) 2
- b) 3
- c) 4
- d) 5
- e) None of these

Answer (c): The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced the four astronauts for its first manned space mission, Gaganyaan.

Q.46 Who has been appointed as the new chairperson of Lokpal?

- a) Justice Droupadi Murmu
- b) Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar
- c) Justice Dipak Misra
- d) Justice Ranjan Gogoi
- e) None of these

Answer (b): Former Supreme Court judge Justice Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar has been appointed as the new chairperson of Lokpal.