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## LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2024

### Model Code of Conduct (MCC) comes into force for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections

- On March 16, the Election Commission of India (ECI) announced that the country would vote in seven phases for the eighteenth Lok Sabha elections.
- The voting will take place from April 19 to June 1 and the results will be announced on June 4. With this, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect.
- The MCC of ECI is a set of guidelines issued to regulate political parties and candidates before elections. It comes into force from the date the election schedule is announced until the date that the results are out.
- MCC has eight provisions dealing with general conduct, meetings, processions, polling day, polling booths, observers, the party in power, and election manifestos.
- Once the MCC is in force, no policy, project or scheme can be announced that can influence voting behaviour. The political party must also avoid advertising at the cost of the public exchequer or using official mass media for publicity on achievements to improve chances of victory in the elections.
- The MCC has no statutory backing and the EC uses moral sanction or censure for its enforcement.

#### Key Points

Chief Election Commissioner	—	Rajiv Kumar
National Voter's Day (NVD)	—	January 25 (Founding Day of ECI)
The theme of NVD 2024	—	Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For sure

### Election Commission launches 'Know Your Candidate' app

- ECI has launched a new mobile application called 'Know Your Candidate' (KYC) which will enable voters to find out if any electoral candidate in their constituency has any criminal records.
- The voters can also now check for themselves the assets and liabilities that candidates with criminal antecedents hold. Candidates are required to disclose their criminal records in newspapers and on television three times. The parties nominating such candidates must explain their selection over other deserving candidates.

### Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu appointed as the Election Commissioners

- Retired bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu were appointed as Election Commissioners by a high-powered panel chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Election Commissioner Arun Goel had resigned from his position and the other Election Commissioner Anup Pandey had retired. This left the three-member Election Commission with only one member: Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar.
- Under the terms of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, the government-dominated selection committee is empowered to fill vacant slots on the ECI from candidates short-listed by a search committee headed by the Union Cabinet Secretary.
- The Act is under challenge in the Supreme Court for violating the apex court's ruling last year that ECI members be selected by a panel that is not dominated by the government – to ensure the ECI's independence.

### Meta unveils 'comprehensive' plan for tackling misinformation during upcoming Lok Sabha elections

- Meta has unveiled a 'comprehensive approach' to limit misinformation, eliminate voter interference and increase transparency and accountability on its platform during the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in India.
- It will enable an India-specific Elections Operations Centre to identify potential threats and implement appropriate measures in real time.
- Meta had signed a voluntary code of ethics with ECI in 2019. Under this code, both of them are working closely, which provides the ECI with a 'high priority' channel for flagging unlawful content.
- Meta will use keyword detection to make it easier for fact-checkers to rate misinformation. Fact-checkers will be able to flag content as 'altered', meaning that the audio, video or photo has either been 'fabricated, manipulated or transformed'. Once flagged as altered, the content will appear lower in the Facebook feed, while it will be filtered out on Instagram.
- Meta is the owner of popular social media companies like Instagram, Threads and Facebook.

**Key Points**

Chairman and CEO — Mark Zuckerberg  
COO — Javier Oliván

**ECI launches Saksham App**

- ECI has launched the Saksham App to facilitate easier voting for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and to avail facilities at Polling Stations.
- It provides several features like voice assistance for PwDs who are visually impaired. The app provides a text-to-speech feature for PwDs who are hearing impaired.
- It has several accessibility features, such as large fonts and high-contrast colours, to make it easier for PwDs to use.
- It provides information on polling stations, including the location of the polling station, the accessibility features available at the polling station, and the contact details of the polling officials.
- It allows PwDs to file complaints about any problems they face while participating in the electoral process.

**Election Commission launches 'Mission 414' campaign in Himachal Pradesh to boost voter turnout**

- ECI has launched 'Mission 414' targeting 414 polling stations in Himachal Pradesh which registered less than 60% voting in the last Lok Sabha polls.
- All identified polling stations will be transformed into model polling stations, aiming to enhance the voting experience.
- To invigorate youth participation, booth youth icons will be appointed from among the first-time voters in these polling booths, fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership towards the electoral process.

**Key Points**

Chief Electoral Officer, — Maneesh Garg  
Himachal Pradesh

**Govt amends rules to allow postal ballots for those aged 85 or above**

- The Union Law Ministry amended the Conduct of Elections Rules-1961 to change the definition of senior citizens who are eligible to choose the postal ballot facility from those 'above 80 years' to those 'above 85 years'.
- The rules enable postal ballot voting for a 'notified class of electors', which includes essential services workers, persons with disabilities, Covid-19-infected or suspected cases and senior citizens.
- In Section 27(A) (e), senior citizens had been defined as those above 80 years.

**Election Commission releases data on electoral bonds**

- ECI made public a fresh data set of electoral bonds, including their alpha-numeric numbers, which enabled matching the purchases of these bonds with the political parties that received the funds public.
- This data was furnished by the State Bank of India at the direction of the Supreme Court. SBI told the Supreme Court that a total of 22,217 electoral bonds were purchased by political parties between April 1, 2019, and February 15, 2024, out of which 22,030 were redeemed. The total amount encashed via the electoral bonds was ₹ 12,145.87 crore.
- According to the SBI data, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was the biggest beneficiary of its electoral bonds scheme followed by All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), and Congress.
- Earlier, a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by the Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud struck down the electoral bonds scheme by declaring it unconstitutional.

**Key Points**

SBI's Chairman — Dinesh Kumar Khara  
Headquarters — Mumbai, Maharashtra

**NATIONAL NEWS****PM Narendra Modi witnesses the historic 'Commencement of Core Loading' at India's first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (500 MWe) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu**

- Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi witnessed the commencement of 'Core Loading' at India's first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (500 MWe) at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- In 2003, the government approved the creation of Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI) to construct and operate India's most advanced nuclear reactor – Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR).
- Core loading is the process of placing nuclear fuel assemblies inside the core of a nuclear reactor. The Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) will initially use the uranium –

plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel. Upon completion of the core loading, the first approach to criticality will be achieved, leading to the generation of power subsequently.

- Once commissioned, India will only be the second country after Russia to have a commercially operating Fast Breeder Reactor.
- India’s nuclear programme aims to achieve the twin goals of energy- security and sustainable development.

**IAU approves ‘Statio Shiv Shakti’ as name for Chandrayaan-3 landing site**

- The International Astronomical Union (IAU) working group for Planetary System Nomenclature has approved the name ‘Statio Shiv Shakti’ for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3’s Vikram lander.
- Earlier, PM Narendra Modi had named the landing site of ‘Vikram lander’ as ‘Shiv Shakti’ where ‘Shiv’ symbolises determination for the betterment of humanity. ‘Shakti’ represents the strength to achieve these resolutions.
- Chandrayaan-3 was India’s mission to the moon. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) launched the Chandrayaan 3 mission on July 14, 2023, and it comprised Vikram lander and Pragyan rover.
- On August 23, 2023, India became the first country to successfully land on the South Pole of the moon. With this, India also became the fourth country in the world to land on the moon.

**Key Points**

IAU’s President	—	Debra Meloy Elmegreen
IAU’s Headquarters	—	Paris, France
ISRO’s Chairman	—	Sreedhara Somanath
ISRO’s Headquarters	—	Bengaluru, Karnataka

**PM Modi inaugurates Spiritual Experience Project in Chitrakoot**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the ‘Experience of Spirituality at Chitrakoot Ghat’ project in Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh. This was done via video conferencing and will be covered under the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme.
- The SD 2.0 was launched to develop sustainable and responsible destinations following a tourist and destination-centric approach. It is the revamped version of the Swadesh Darshan scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.

- Under the PRASHAD scheme, he inaugurated various development works worth ₹ 50 crore in Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. These include the development around the Narmada Temple and the expansion of tourist and public facilities in Amarkantak.
- PRASHAD scheme stands for Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive. Under this, the Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for infrastructure development at tourist destinations.

**Key Points**

Union Minister of Tourism	—	G. Kishan Reddy
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister	—	Mohan Yadav
Madhya Pradesh Governor	—	Mangubhai Chhaganbhai Patel
Madhya Pradesh Capital	—	Bhopal

**PM Modi unveils bronze statue of Ahom general in Assam**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a 125-foot bronze statue of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan at his burial site in Jorhat district, Assam.
- It is known as the ‘Statue of Valour’ and was unveiled at the Lachit Barphukan Maidam Development Project at Hollongapar near Teok. The total project cost will be ₹ 214 crore.
- The statue was built by Ram Vanji Sutar. The height of the statute is 84 feet and it is set on a pedestal of 41 feet, making the structure 125 feet tall.
- Lachit Borphukan was a legendary army commander of the Ahom kingdom (1228–1826), known for his leadership in the 1671 ‘Battle of Saraighat’. He defeated the Mughal forces, led by Raja Ramsingh-I, in this battle.
- He was buried at the ‘maidam’ — burial grounds for Ahom royals and nobles — at Hollongapar, after passing away a year after the battle at the age of 49 due to illness.

**Key Points**

Assam Chief Minister	—	Himanta Biswa Sarma
Assam Governor	—	Gulab Chand Kataria
Assam capital	—	Dispur

### North India's first Govt Homeopathic college to be established in Kathua, Jammu & Kashmir

- The first Government Homeopathic College of North India will be established in the Jasrota area of district Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir.
- It will be centrally funded at a cost of ₹ 80 crores.

#### Key Points

Jammu & Kashmir — Manoj Sinha  
Lt. Governor

### PM Modi inaugurates Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi remotely inaugurated the Sela tunnel, which is situated at an altitude of 13,700 feet in the West Kameng district on the road connecting Tezpur to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. It is the world's longest twin-lane tunnel above 13,000 feet.
- It was built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) for ₹ 825 crore.
- Sela is the country's highest tunnel providing all-weather connectivity to the strategic Tawang region and other forward areas bordering China near the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- It was built using the new Austrian Tunnelling Method and incorporating safety features of the highest standards.

#### Key Points

Capital — Itanagar  
Chief Minister — Pema Khandu  
Governor — Kaiwalya Trivikram Parnaik

### PM Modi launches India's first hydrogen-powered ferry

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually launched India's first indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell ferry, which is a 24-metre-long catamaran, which can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area.
- The vessel, manufactured by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), will be deployed for service at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
- It is built for ₹ 18 crores and will be handed over to the Inland Waterways Authority of India by the CSL after rigorous trials.
- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways met 75% of the project cost.
- As the name suggests, hydrogen fuel cell vessels run on hydrogen fuel, which is stored in cylinders. This boat has five hydrogen cylinders that can carry 40 kg

of hydrogen and support eight hours of operations. The vessel is also fitted with a 3-kW solar panel.

### Nagaland Assembly introduces resolution asking centre to reconsider decision to scrap Free Movement Regime (FMR), fence border

- The Nagaland Legislative Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution against the central government's decision to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) between India and Myanmar and to abandon the plan to fence the border.
- This resolution reflects the concerns of the Naga people regarding the disruption of historical, social, tribal, and economic ties caused by these measures.

#### Key Points

Nagaland Capital — Kohima  
Chief Minister — Neiphiu Rio  
Governor — La. Ganesan

### PM Modi lays foundation stone for India's second spaceport in Tamil Nadu

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) second spaceport in Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu.
- The new spaceport, sprawling over 2,233 acres in the villages of Padukkapathu, Pallakurichi, and Mathavankurichi in Kulasekarapattinam and Sathankulam taluks, is expected to be operational in two years.
- It will complement the existing spaceport in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, and is strategically positioned to offer geographical advantages that promise fuel savings and more efficient satellite launches.
- This ambitious project, costing ₹ 950 crore, marks a pivotal moment in India's space exploration journey, promising to enhance the nation's satellite launch capabilities, particularly for small satellites.

### PM Modi launches India's first underwater metro service in Bengal

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Howrah Maidan-Esplanade section of Kolkata Metro's East-West corridor.
- It is built for ₹ 4,965 crore and is a part of the 16.6 km of the East-West Metro corridor.
- Of the total East-West Metro corridor, nearly 10.8 km is underground, including the tunnel beneath the river. The project has been executed with enhanced safety measures, including using features like anti-collision and automatic train control mechanisms.

- It is branded as India's first underwater metro service where the metro will ply under a river – Hooghly.
- It is being executed by Kolkata Metro Rail Corporation Limited (KMRL).

### India Funds \$11M renewable energy project in Sri Lanka

- India provided a \$11 million grant project with Sri Lanka and a private partner to install hybrid renewable energy infrastructure across three islands off the Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka.
- This initiative aims to bolster Sri Lanka's energy security and aid in its economic recovery, marking the third India-backed energy project in the region.
- The effort supports India's 'neighbourhood first' policy, emphasising humanitarian assistance, connectivity, and community development cooperation during Sri Lanka's challenging transition.

#### Key Points

President	—	Ranil Wickremesinghe
Prime Minister	—	Dinesh Gunawardena
Capital	—	Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte (legislative) and Colombo (executive and judicial)

### India replaces the first batch of military in Maldives with technical personnel

- India replaced its first batch of military soldiers in Maldives with technical personnel.
- Both India and the Maldives had mutually agreed on setting up workable solutions to enable the ongoing operation of Indian aviation platforms that provide medical as well as humanitarian evacuation services to the people of the Maldives.
- Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu had set March 10 as the deadline for the withdrawal of the first group of Indian military troops from Maldives. His government had formally requested that India withdraw its troops from Male.

### Union Cabinet approves establishment of International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

- The Union Cabinet approved the establishment of the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) with its headquarters in India.
- India will provide a one-time budgetary support of ₹ 150 crore for a period of five years from 2023–24 to 2027–28.

- IBCA was conceived as a multi-country, multi-agency coalition of 96 big cat range countries and others to establish a common platform for conservation. It aims towards conserving our majestic big cats and their habitats.'
- Out of the seven big cats (tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah), five — tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard and cheetah — are found in India.

### Union Minister of Steel inaugurates India's first Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector

- Union Minister for Steel and Civil Aviation, Sh. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia virtually inaugurated India's first Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector located at Jindal Stainless Limited, Hisar, Haryana.
- It aligns with the government's vision for a cleaner and more sustainable future.
- It will be the world's first off-grid Green Hydrogen plant for the stainless steel industry and the world's first Green Hydrogen plant with rooftop & floating solar.
- This project is also a state-of-the-art green hydrogen facility with a target to reduce carbon emissions considerably by around 2,700 metric tonnes per annum and 54,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the next two decades.

### Prime Minister Modi inaugurates Dwarka Expressway's 19 km Gurgaon section

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 19-kilometre elevated section of the Dwarka Expressway, marking a significant milestone in India's road infrastructure that will reduce the commute between Dwarka and Gurgaon to just 20 minutes.
- The Dwarka expressway is a 28.5-km road, of which the 19-km Gurgaon section has been opened.
- The Gurgaon section of Dwarka Expressway costs around ₹ 4,100 crores and includes two 10.2 km long Delhi-Haryana Border to Basai Rail-over-Bridge (ROB) and 8.7 km long Basai ROB to Kherki Daula. The expressway will also provide direct connectivity to the IGI Airport in Delhi and Gurugram bypass.
- It is an architectural marvel and stands out as the widest road constructed on a single pier. It boasts eight lanes and several innovative features aimed at enhancing connectivity and traffic efficiency.

### **PM Modi inaugurates Kochrab Ashram, launches plan of Gandhi Ashram Memorial**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the redeveloped Kochrab Ashram and launched the Master plan of the Gandhi Ashram Memorial, at Mahatma Gandhi Ashram at Sabarmati, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- The Kochrab Ashram was the first Ashram established by Mahatma Gandhi after coming to India from South Africa in 1915.
- It is still preserved as a memorial and tourist space by Gujarat Vidyapeeth.

### **Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates India's first automobile in-plant railway siding**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first automobile in-plant railway siding at Suzuki Motor Gujarat (SMG), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India.
- The inauguration was done via video conferencing.
- As part of the government's Gati Shakti programme, the in-plant railway siding at SMG aims to reduce carbon footprint in logistics, bring down fossil fuel consumption and reduce road congestion.
- The SMG railway siding project is a collaboration between Maruti and Gujarat Rail Infrastructure Development (G-RIDE). Once fully operational, the facility can dispatch 3,00,000 cars annually to 15 destinations across India.

### **PM Modi inaugurates women and child hospital in Thimphu during his visit**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Bhutan for a two-day State visit to strengthen India–Bhutan ties.
- He inaugurated the Gyalsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck Mother and Child Hospital, a ₹ 140-crore hospital for women and children built in Thimphu with Indian assistance.
- It is a 150-bed hospital and was built in two phases. The first phase was built for ₹ 22 crores and has been operational since 2019. The construction of the second phase, with a cost of ₹ 119 crores, began in 2019 as part of Bhutan's 12th five-year plan and was completed recently.
- Also, India will double its assistance for Bhutan's five-year plan from ₹ 5,000 crores to ₹ 10,000 crores. The move came against the backdrop of concerted efforts by China to settle a border dispute and establish diplomatic ties with Bhutan.

### **Soma–The Ayurvedic Kitchen, India's first Ayurvedic cafe inaugurated in Delhi**

- Soma, the Ayurvedic Kitchen which is housed inside The Maharishi Ayurveda Hospital in Shalimar Bagh, Delhi is being hailed as the first Ayurvedic Kitchen in India.
- All of the food is prepared without onion and garlic and is customised according to the visitor's health.

## **GOVERNMENT SCHEMES**

### **PM Modi launches SURAJ portal to benefit marginalised sector**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) national portal and sanctioned credit support to one lakh entrepreneurs of disadvantaged sections.
- This initiative was launched during an event of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- During the same event, Ayushman health cards and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits were distributed by the ministry to sewer and septic tank workers (Safai Mitras) under the National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE).

### **Govt launches 'Chakshu' Portal to report fraudulent calls, SMS, etc.**

- The Indian government has rolled out a digital platform, Chakshu to flag fake calls and text messages by fraudsters.

- This platform will add a layer of protection against faceless criminals using tech to rob people of their money. It allows for real-time intelligence-sharing among several stakeholders.
- Chakshu is a Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) which integrates with the Sanchar Saathi portal of the Department of Telecommunications.
- Through this portal, users will be able to report mobile numbers and messages which are being used for fake calls. This will help the government to take action against them.

### **Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw launches NITI Aayog's – 'NITI for States' platform**

- Union Minister of Communications, Railways, and Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw launched the 'NITI for States' platform.
- It is a centralised and comprehensive digital repository of valuable resources, including best practices, policy



documents, datasets and NITI Aayog publications, spanning various sectors and cross-cutting themes like gender and climate change.

- The initiative is designed to empower states and union territories (UTs) in their pursuit of national development goals.

#### **Kerala launches India's first government-owned OTT platform 'Cspace'**

- Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the state's own Over-The-Top (OTT) platform- CSpace. It is India's first government-backed OTT platform and addresses challenges in selecting and distributing content.
- It is managed by the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC) and operates under the support of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Government of Kerala.
- Each submission on CSpace undergoes a meticulous evaluation process by three curators who consider its artistic, cultural, and entertainment value. Only approved content makes it to the platform.
- CSpace adopts a pay-per-view model, charging users ₹ 75 per movie.

#### **Piyush Goyal launches 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' to ease farmers' warehousing logistics**

- Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Commerce and Industry and Textiles, Piyush Goyal launched 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' (Digital Gateway) of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) in New Delhi.
- This initiative provides a simplified digital process that can ease the procedure of farmers' storage at any registered WDRA warehouse for 6 months at 7% interest per annum.
- Farmers stocking their produce at these warehouses would need to pay only a 1% security deposit instead of the earlier 3%.

#### **Central government notifies Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) rules, 2024**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs notified the rules for implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- The CAA was passed on December 11, 2019, to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955. This amendment allowed for the grant of Indian citizenship to religious minorities, including Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, who fled from Pakistan, Bangladesh,

and Afghanistan due to religious persecution or fear thereof before December 2014.

- Under the CAA 2019 amendment, migrants who entered India by December 31, 2014, were eligible for fast-track Indian citizenship. The amendment reduced the residence requirement for naturalisation from eleven years to five.
- The eligible applicants include individuals of Indian origin, spouses of Indian citizens, minor children of Indian citizens, individuals with registered Indian citizen parents, and Overseas Citizens of India Cardholders, among others.

#### **Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules, 2024**

- According to the Living Animal Species (Reporting and Registration) Rules, 2024 issued by the Union Environment Ministry, people with exotic pets such as macaws, cockatoos, or a variety of soft-shell turtles will have to register them with the state wildlife department.
- The species covered are those listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- 'Animal species' means any living specimens of any animal species listed in Schedule IV appended to the Act" which covers species under the Convention."
- These rules do not apply to other wildlife that is already protected under the Wildlife Protection Act and cannot be kept in captivity.
- Section 49 M of the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2022 provides for the registration of possession, transfer, and reporting of birth and death of living scheduled animal species which are listed in the Appendices of CITES and listed in the Schedule IV of the Act and it is the rules regarding this that have been issued on February 28 and have already come into effect.
- India is a party to the CITES, which requires that appropriate measures are taken to enforce the provisions of the convention.

#### **Government approves e-Vehicle policy to promote India as a manufacturing destination for e-vehicles**

- The Government of India has approved a scheme to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles with the latest technology can be manufactured in the country. The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufacturers.

- The minimum investment required is ₹ 4150 crores and there is no limit on maximum investment. The investment commitment made by the company will have to be backed up by a bank guarantee in lieu of the custom duty forgone.
- The timeline for setting up manufacturing facilities in India is three years and reach 50% Domestic Value Addition (DVA) within 5 years at the maximum.
- This will provide Indian consumers with access to the latest technology, boost the Make in India initiative, and strengthen the EV ecosystem by promoting healthy competition among EV players leading to a high volume of production, economies of scale, lower cost of production, reduce imports of crude oil, lower trade deficit, reduce air pollution, particularly in cities, and will have a positive impact on health and environment.

#### **Union Minister Shri Anurag Thakur launches Prasar Bharti-Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination (PB-SHABD)**

- Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Shri Anurag Singh Thakur launched PB-SHABD, a news-sharing service from Prasar Bharti and websites of DD News and Akashvani News as well as updated News on Air mobile app.
- PB-SHABD will be a single-point source of news content and is being offered free of cost for the first year as an introductory offer. It will provide news stories in all major Indian languages across fifty categories.
- PB-SHABD platform has been designed to provide daily news feeds in video, audio, text, photo and other formats to the subscribers from media landscape.
- The revamped websites of DD News and Akashvani news and revamped news on air app would provide users seamless experience and better user engagement. The websites will have a user-friendly experience and engaging has latest design elements so that users can have a seamless experience.

#### **Key Points**

CEO, Prasar Bharti — Gaurav Dwivedi

#### **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024**

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India has recently introduced amendments to the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, through the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024.
- These changes signify a significant effort to address plastic pollution in India, particularly by targeting microplastics and setting stricter criteria for biodegradable plastics.
- The updated Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024, now require that biodegradable plastics not only degrade through biological processes in specific environments but also leave no microplastics behind.
- The new amendments to the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2024, define biodegradable plastics as materials that not only degrade through biological processes in specific environments such as soil or landfills but also leave no microplastics behind.
- However, the rules do not specify which chemical tests can be used to establish the absence of microplastics or to what extent microplastics must be reduced in a sample to consider them eliminated.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

#### **Thailand passes landmark bill for marriage equality**

- Thailand's parliament passed legislation to recognise same-sex marriage. The bill will now be passed to the upper-house Senate and it will then be endorsed by the King and published in the Royal Gazette.
- This would pave the way for the country to become the first in Southeast Asia to guarantee marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.
- The bill defines marriage as a 'partnership between two individuals' rather than a woman and a man. It will also grant LGBTQ couples similar rights to numerous tax breaks, the capacity to inherit property, and the

authority to provide medical treatment permission for impaired partners.

#### **European Union to investigate tech giants under the new Digital Markets Act (DMA) tech legislation**

- The EU has launched a probe into whether Apple, Alphabet and Meta violated the Digital Markets Act (DMA).
- It will be the first probe under DMA tech legislation. DMA came into force on November 1, 2022, and aims to create a level playing field for businesses operating in the digital sector. It also prevents large platforms

from abusing their market power.

**UN adopts first global Artificial Intelligence (AI) resolution**

- The United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the first global resolution on artificial intelligence that encourages countries to safeguard human rights, protect personal data, and monitor AI for risks.
- It is a non-binding resolution and was proposed by the United States. It was co-sponsored by China and over 120 other nations and also advocates the strengthening of privacy policies.
- The resolution is the latest in a series of initiatives by governments around the world to shape AI's development and mitigate its potential harms.

**Key Points**

UN's Headquarters	—	New York, US
UNGA President	—	Dennis Francis
UN Secretary General	—	António Guterres

**Panama becomes 97th member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

- Panama has officially ratified the ISA, marking its entry as the 97th member nation.
- ISA was conceived as a joint effort by India and France. Currently, 116 countries are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement.
- ISA consists of sunshine countries which lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

**Key Points**

ISA Director General	—	Ajay Mathur
Headquarters	—	Gwalpahari, Gurugram
Founded	—	November 30, 2015

**France makes history by making abortion a fundamental right**

- France made history by becoming the first nation to enshrine the right to abortion in its constitution.
- France has legally protected abortion since a 1974 law, but recent global events, particularly the US Supreme Court's decision to reverse the Roe v. Wade ruling, prompted activists to secure explicit constitutional protection in France.

**Key Points**

Prime Minister	—	Gabriel Attal
Capital	—	Paris

**US, UK and Australia entered an agreement to build Australia's SSN-AUKUS submarines**

- The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia have entered a new agreement to build Australia's SSN-AUKUS submarines and termed it a significant milestone in the endeavour of defence cooperation.
- Under the new trilateral security partnership, Australia's ASC and the BAE systems will build the SSN-AUKUS submarines for the Royal Australian Navy.
- The SSN-AUKUS will be equipped for intelligence, surveillance, undersea warfare and strike missions, and will provide maximum interoperability among AUKUS partners.
- AUKUS is a trilateral security partnership designed to create a stronger, more resilient trilateral submarine industrial base, supporting submarine production and maintenance in all three countries.

**US President Joe Biden signs funding bill, averting government shutdown**

- US Joe Biden signed a \$1.2 trillion funding package that keeps the US government running through Sept. 30, averting a partial shutdown.
- The funding package will be used in the critical government operations – Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education, Department of State, and Legislative Branch

**Nepal declares 'Pokhara' as its official tourism capital**

- The Nepalese government has declared Pokhara as its official tourism capital. It is situated in the picturesque Gandaki province.
- Pokhara is known for its natural beauty and with this title business activities, including discos, nightclubs, and live music venues in Pokhara, will remain open all night.

**Key Points**

Nepal's capital	—	Kathmandu
Nepal's Prime Minister	—	Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'

### Iran launches Pars 1 satellite into orbit from Russia

- Iran successfully deployed the 'Pars-I' remote sensing and imaging satellite into orbit with the assistance of the Russian Soyuz-2.1b launcher. It was completely developed by Iran domestically.
- The satellite took off from the Vostochny launch base in Russia, which is located approximately 8,000 kilometres east of Moscow.

## BANKING, FINANCE AND ECONOMY NEWS

### Reliance and Disney sign mega deal to create ₹ 70,000 crores media giant

- Global media giant Walt Disney Co. and billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries announced a Joint Venture to merge their media operations in India to create ₹ 70,000 crores media giant.
- The successful completion of this deal would create the biggest firm in the Indian media and entertainment sector, with over 100 channels in several languages, two leading OTT platforms and a viewer base of 750 million across the country.
- Nita Ambani will chair the joint venture while Uday Shankar will be the Vice Chairperson.
- Reliance and its affiliates will hold a 63.16% stake in the combined entity while Disney will have the remaining 36.84% shareholding. Of the 63.16% stake, RIL will hold 16.34% and Viacom 18 will hold 46.82%. RIL's TV18 owns a majority stake in Viacom 18.
- Reliance has also agreed to invest at closing ₹ 11,500 crores into the joint venture to grow the OTT business.

### Aditya Birla Finance to merge with parent Aditya Birla Capital

- Aditya Birla Capital has decided to merge Aditya Birla Finance Ltd with itself. Aditya Birla Finance is its wholly-owned subsidiary.
- Aditya Birla Capital is listed, while its wholly-owned Aditya Birla Finance is among the 15 upper-layer non-bank lenders mandated by the RBI to go public by September 2025. Merging with the listed parent averts the need for the subsidiary to be separately listed.
- The proposed merger will simplify the group's structure, transform Aditya Birla Capital into a formidable operating Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) from a holding company, consolidate business and operational synergies, and reduce regulatory complexities.

#### Key Points

Kumar Mangalam Birla — Chairman Aditya Birla Group

### Goa-based airline FLY91 gets DGCA's air operator permit

- Goa-based regional airline FLY91 has received the Air Operator Certificate (AOC) from the regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).
- FLY91 will be the first Indian airline to use Goa's Manohar International Airport as its home base.
- The regional airline carrier aims to enhance connectivity across India's tier 2 and tier 3 towns.
- The airline has already been allocated its first set of routes under the government's UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme, which aims to upgrade regional airports and under-serviced air routes in the country.

#### Key Points

MD and CEO of FLY91 — Manoj Chacko

### PhonePe launches made-in-India Indus Appstore to take on Google, Apple

- PhonePe formally launched its mobile app marketplace, Indus Appstore, in an attempt to rival the Google Play store and Apple's App Store. PhonePe is a Walmart-owned payments company.
- Indus Appstore will allow developers to employ video-led app discovery and run custom-targeted ads in Indian languages to differentiate itself from the global competitors.
- Indus Appstore hosts more than 2 Lakh apps across 45 categories including brands such as Zomato, Myntra, Flipkart, and Dream11.

#### Key Points

Co-founder & CEO — Sameer Nigam  
Co-founder & CTO — Rahul Chari  
Headquarters — Bengaluru, Karnataka

### Union Minister Hardeep Puri launches ETHANOL 100 fuel

- Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Housing and Urban Affairs, launched ETHANOL 100, a revolutionary automotive fuel at Indian Oil Retail.
- ETHANOL 100 fuel will be made available in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, New Delhi, and Tamil Nadu. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to increase ethanol blending in petrol.
- ETHANOL 100 stands as a cleaner, greener alternative to gasoline, boasting lower emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants, thus aiding in combating climate change and enhancing air quality in our communities.
- With its high-octane rating, typically between 100-105, ETHANOL 100 proves ideal for high-performance engines, ensuring improved efficiency and power output all while minimising environmental impact.
- With the launch of ETHANOL 100 fuel, the government is close to achieving the target of 20% ethanol blending by 2025–26.

### Reliance acquires 26% Stake in Mahan Energen power unit for ₹ 50 crores

- In a landmark collaboration, Reliance Industries and Adani Group, have joined forces to propel the nation's energy sector forward.
- Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has acquired a significant 26% stake Mahan Energen Ltd (MEL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Adani Power Ltd. for ₹ 50 crores.
- They have signed a pact to use the plant's 500 MW of electricity for captive use.

### International Telecommunication Union (ITU) elects India as co-chair of its Digital Innovation Board

- Dr Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, was unanimously elected as co-chair of the Digital Innovation Board of ITU.
- It was formed under the aegis of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development and comprises Ministers and Vice Ministers of Telecom/ ICT of 23 Member Countries of ITU spanning Asia, Europe, Africa, North and South America.

#### Key Points

ITU Headquarters	—	Geneva, Switzerland
Secretary-General	—	Doreen Bogdan-Martin

### YES Bank partners with the Indian Olympic Association for the Paris Olympics 2024

- YES Bank partnered with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as the official banking partner for Team India at the Paris Olympics 2024.
- As part of the collaboration, the bank launched the campaign 'Milkar Jitayengey' and introduced the 'YES Glory Debit Card,' specially designed for India's Olympic athletes.
- The bank also unveiled the 'YES Glory' savings account proposition, extending benefits to athletes and their immediate family members.

#### Key Points

YES Bank Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra
MD & CEO	—	Prashant Kumar
Chairman	—	Sunil Mehta

### Adani ports acquires 95% stake in Gopalpur Port in ₹ 3,350 cr deal

- India's largest port operator Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has expanded its presence on India's coastline after buying 95% in Odisha's Gopalpur Port Ltd (GPL) at an enterprise value of ₹ 3,080 crores.
- The Adani group company will purchase 56% from the Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group and 39% from Odisha Stevedores Ltd, which will continue as the JV partner post the acquisition.
- The deal is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2024–25 (FY25). In addition to the enterprise value of ₹ 3,080 crores, there is a contingent consideration of ₹ 270 crores estimated to be payable after 5.5 years, taking the total to ₹ 3,350 crores.

### CCI approves 100% acquisition of Lanco Amarkantak Power Limited by Adani Power Limited

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the 100% acquisition of Lanco Amarkantak Power Limited by Adani Power Limited.
- Adani Power Limited is engaged in the business of thermal power generation in India and operates its thermal power plants across multiple states in India.
- The Lanco Amarkantak Power Limited is a part of the Lanco Group and is engaged in the business of thermal power generation in India.
- Lanco Amarkantak Power Limited is currently undergoing Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).

**Key Points**

CCI Chairperson	—	Ravneet Kaur
Headquarters	—	New Delhi

**GRID-INDIA is now a Miniratna Company**

- Grid Controller of India Limited (GRID-INDIA) achieved a significant milestone by being conferred with the status of Miniratna Category-I Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE).
- This recognition was bestowed upon by the Ministry of Power. GRID-INDIA was established in 2009 and manages the All India synchronous grid through five Regional Load Despatch Centres (RLDCs) and the National Load Despatch Centre (NLDC).

**Key Points**

Chairman and MD	—	S.R. Narasimhan
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**Tata Sons to sell 0.6% stake in TCS for over ₹ 9,300 crores**

- Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group, will be selling 2.34 crores shares or 0.65% equity of Tata Consultancy Services through a block deal for ₹ 9,362.3 crores.
- JP Morgan and Citigroup are joint book runners to the deal.

**HDFC Bank receives RBI approval for sale of 90% stake in HDFC Credila**

- Private sector lender HDFC Bank has received approval from RBI for the divestment of a stake in HDFC Credila, the education loan subsidiary arm of HDFC Bank.
- HDFC Bank will sell a 90% stake in HDFC Credila to a consortium of private equity firms, including BPEA EQT and ChrysCapital group.

**Key Points**

HDFC Chairman	—	Atanu Chakraborty
CEO	—	Sashidhar Jagdishan
Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra

**RBI, Bank of Indonesia sign MoU promoting use of local currencies for trade**

- RBI and the Bank of Indonesia signed an MOU establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions.
- The MoU covers all current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries.

- The framework will enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies – the Indian rupee and the Indonesian rupiah.
- In turn, this will facilitate the development of a rupee-rupiah foreign exchange market

**Key Points**

RBI Governor	—	Shaktikanta Das
Established	—	April 1, 1935
RBI Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra
Bank of Indonesia Governor	—	Perry Warjiyo

**IRDAI approves eight principle-based regulations**

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has approved eight principle-based regulations including the much-awaited Bima Sugam marketplace.
- The IRDAI (Bima Sugam – Insurance Electronic Marketplace) Regulations, 2024, aims to establish a digital public infrastructure named Bima Sugam towards universalisation and democratisation of insurance as well as empowering and safeguarding policyholders' interests and achieve the vision of 'Insurance for all by 2047'.
- The IRDAI (Corporate Governance for Insurers) Regulations, 2024 aims to establish a robust governance framework for insurers, defining the roles and responsibilities of the board and management.
- The IRDAI (Insurance Products) Regulations, 2024 merge six regulations into a unified framework aimed at enabling insurers to swiftly respond to evolving market demands, enhancing the ease of conducting business and boosting insurance penetration.
- The IRDAI (Registration and Operations of Foreign Reinsurers Branches & Lloyd's India) Regulations, 2024 consolidate two regulations and aims to foster the systematic development of the reinsurance sector in India by promoting orderly growth and harmonising the existing legal and regulatory framework.

**Key Points**

IRDAI's Headquarters	—	Hyderabad, Telangana
Chairperson	—	Debasish Panda

**The government allocates ₹ 6200 crores to boost Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)**

- The central government has allocated ₹ 6212.03 crores to Regional Rural Banks as a part of the recapitalisation

scheme, aimed at supporting RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed capital-to-risk (weighted) assets ratio of 9%.

- Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are commercial banks owned by the Indian government operating at the regional level across various states. RRBs were established in 1975 to provide basic banking and financial services to rural areas, particularly to small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans, and small entrepreneurs.

**SIDBI secures the first green climate fund project worth \$120 million**

- In a significant development aimed at bolstering India’s climate tech landscape, the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has successfully secured \$24.5 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for its debut anchored sustainability and climate-focused fund, the Avaana Sustainability Fund (ASF).
- This funding marks a significant milestone in climate finance and sustainability initiatives within India.
- GCF is established within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

**Key Points**

GCF’s Headquarters	—	Incheon, South Korea
SIDBI’s Headquarters	—	Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
SIDBI’s Chairman and MD	—	Sivasubramanian Ramann

**NIPL and Fonepay Payment Service Ltd sign a pact for facilitating cross-border transactions between India and Nepal.**

- NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL) and Fonepay Payment Service Ltd have signed a pact for facilitating cross-border transactions between India and Nepal.
- In its initial phase, this partnership allows Indian consumers to make instant, secure, and convenient UPI payments at various business establishments in Nepal using UPI-enabled apps. Merchants affiliated with the Fonepay Network can readily accept UPI payments from Indian customers.
- NPCI is the National Payments Corporation of India that operates retail payments and settlement systems in India. NIPL is a wholly owned subsidiary of NPCI.

**Key Points**

Chief Executive Officer of NIPL	—	Ritesh Shukla
MD & CEO of NPCI	—	Dilip Asbe
Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra

**Paytm discontinues inter-company agreements with Paytm Payments Bank**

- Paytm and its associate entity Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) have ‘mutually agreed’ to discontinue various inter-company agreements to reduce dependencies.
- The development comes after RBI’s recent crackdown on Paytm Payments Bank, barring it from accepting new deposits and providing banking services after an extended deadline of March 15, for alleged non-compliance.
- PPBL housed Paytm’s digital wallet business. It also issued Unified Payments Interface (UPI) handles and FasTag toll-collection RFID stickers to Paytm’s customer base.

**Key Points**

Paytm CEO and Founder	—	Vijay Shekhar Sharma
Headquarters	—	Noida, Uttar Pradesh

**PolicyBazaar establishes a wholly owned subsidiary ‘PB Pay Private Limited’ for its expansion into payment aggregation services**

- PolicyBazaar has formed a wholly-owned subsidiary called ‘PB Pay Private Limited.’ to carry out its payments aggregator business.
- PB Pay Private Limited will be a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) which will venture into the payment aggregation business, catering to both domestic and cross-border markets, subject to approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

**Infibeam Avenues gets RBI’s authorisation for payment aggregator licence**

- India’s first listed AI-powered fintech company, Infibeam Avenues received the final authorisation from the RBI to operate as a payment aggregator for its payment gateway brand, CCAvenue.
- It was granted in-principle approval in October 2022.
- In March 2020, the RBI introduced the PA framework, which necessitates payment gateways to secure an aggregator licence for acquiring merchants and delivering digital payment acceptance solutions.

### Tata Power Solar completes India's largest solar-BESS project in Chhattisgarh

- Tata Power Solar Systems Limited (TPSSL), a subsidiary of Tata Power Renewable Energy Limited (TPREL), completed India's largest Solar and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) project in Chhattisgarh.
- It comprises a 100 MW Solar PV Project and a 120 MWh Utility Scale Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). TPSSL secured the ₹ 945 crores project from SECI in December 2021, handling engineering, construction, and commissioning.
- The project anticipates generating 243.53 million energy units annually, cutting carbon emissions by 4.87 million tonnes over 25 years, aligning with India's renewable energy targets. Tata AutoComp Systems Limited supplied the BESS, reflecting a commitment to excellence and collaboration.

### Reliance to buy Paramount's 13% stake in Viacom18 for ₹ 4,286 crores

- US film and television giant Paramount Global would sell its stake in Indian media venture Viacom18 to Reliance.
- It will be a \$517 million deal where Paramount would transfer its entire 13% stake to Reliance. The completion of the transaction remains subject to regulatory approval.
- Viacom18 is a subsidiary of TV18, owned by Reliance, which means Reliance will therefore hold, directly or indirectly, a majority stake in the joint venture.

### Numaligarh Refinery opens its first-ever overseas office in Bangladesh

- Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) opened its liaison office in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This is the first overseas office of the NRL.
- This signals NRL's commitment to international expansion and stronger regional ties.
- NRL is a division of Oil India Limited which is under the ownership of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India. Its headquarters are in Golaghat, Assam, India

### CCI approves the merger of a financial technology company, Garagepreneurs Internet Private Limited with the North East Small Finance Bank

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved the merger of a financial technology company, Garagepreneurs Internet Private Limited with the North East Small Finance Bank.
- GIPL operates under the brand name 'slice' and focuses on facilitating payments and credit products through digital means in India. It primarily focuses on enabling access to financial services for underbanked customers through affordable and transparent cost solutions and structures.
- NESFB is a private sector small finance bank (SFB). It is headquartered in Guwahati, Assam and has branches in the North Eastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim), and West Bengal.

## DEFENCE NEWS

### Rajnath Singh launches ADITI scheme to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.
- Under the scheme, start-ups are eligible to receive a grant-in-aid of up to ₹ 25 crores for their research, development, and innovation endeavours in defence technology.
- The ADITI scheme worth ₹ 750 crores for the period 2023–24 to 2025–26 falls under the iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) framework of the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence.
- It aims to develop about 30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies in the proposed timeframe.

It also envisages to creation of a 'Technology Watch Tool' to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the modern Armed Forces and the capabilities of the defence innovation ecosystem.

### Rajnath Singh inaugurates Indian Navy's new headquarters in Delhi

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the Indian Navy's new headquarters, Nausena Bhawan, at Delhi Cantt.
- It is the first independent headquarters for the service in the capital. The navy was thus far operating from 13 different locations in the national capital region.

#### Key Points

Chief of Naval Staff — Admiral R. Hari Kumar



### Andaman & Nicobar Command conducts first all-woman maritime surveillance mission

- On the occasion of International Women's day and the 40th anniversary of INAS 318, the Andaman & Nicobar Command conducted a maiden all-women maritime surveillance mission.
- INAS 318 is the Andaman & Nicobar Command's elite Naval Air Squadron, which has been continually engaged in surveillance since its commissioning on March 8, 1984.
- The occasion highlighted the critical role performed by women combatants in all aspects of the Naval Air Arm, including pre-flight briefings, meteorological briefings, medical check-ups, and Air Traffic Control (ATC) briefings, all of which were conducted by female officers.
- Lt Cdr Shubhangi Swaroop, Lt Cdr Divya Sharma, and Lt Vaishali Mishra, all based at INS Utkrosh, made up the crew. The squadron began its journey with the induction of Islander aircraft, which were replaced in 1999 by Dornier aircraft capable of conducting long-range maritime surveillance utilising cutting-edge Maritime Patrol Radars.

### First crash in 23 years of the history of Tejas fighter aircraft

- For the first time, the indigenous fighter jet LCA Tejas crashed in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.
- This is the first-ever crash of the indigenous fighter in 23 years of its history which began with the first test flight in 2001.
- The Light Combat Aircraft Tejas is an indigenous supersonic aircraft used by the Indian Airforce and Navy.
- The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme was started by the Government of India in 1984 when they established the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).
- The LCA Tejas was developed by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. It succeeded the ageing Mig 21 fighter jets. In 2003, the Light Combat Aircraft programme was named as 'Tejas' by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

### India-US tri-services conduct joint exercise 'Tiger Triumph 2024'

- In a major step towards military-to-military relations, India and the US conducted the second edition of the Tri-Services India-US amphibious exercise 'Ex Tiger Triumph 2024'.

- The exercise was conducted in two phases – the harbour phase at Visakhapatnam followed by the Sea Phase at Kakinada.
- The exercise highlights the strong strategic bond between India and the US, focusing on sharing best practices and procedures for multinational Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.

### PM Modi witnesses tri-service 'Bharat Shakti' exercise in Pokhran

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi witnessed the integrated tri-service 'Bharat Shakti' firepower and manoeuvre exercise, in Pokhran, Rajasthan.
- It was a 50-minute mega exercise that demonstrated the prowess of indigenously manufactured defence equipment of the three services.
- 'Bharat Shakti' demonstrated the prowess of indigenously manufactured defence equipment of the three services.

#### Key Points

Chief of the Defence Staff	— General Anil Chauhan
Chief of the Army Staff	— General Manoj Pande
Chief of the Air Staff	— Vivek Ram Chaudhari
Chief of the Naval Staff	— Admiral R. Hari Kumar

### Exercise Samudra Laksamana—India–Malaysia bilateral maritime exercise

- The bilateral exercise Samudra Laksamana between India and Malaysia was conducted at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- It was the third edition of this exercise which had harbour professional interactions followed by the operational phase at sea.
- The exercise aims to strengthen bonds and enhance interoperability between the Indian and Royal Malaysian Navy.

### INAS 334 'Seahawks', the first MH 60R Squadron Commissioned, at INS Garuda, Kochi

- INAS 334 'Seahawks', the Indian Navy's first MH 60R Squadron was commissioned in the presence of Adm R Hari Kumar, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), at INS Garuda, Southern Naval Command, Kochi.
- This marked the formal induction of these versatile and capable helicopters in the first MH 60R Naval Air Squadron.

### Indian Navy commissions INS Jatayu at Minicoy Island, Lakshadweep

- Indian Navy commissioned INS Jatayu at Minicoy Island, Lakshadweep. This milestone event strengthened the Indian Navy's foothold in Lakshadweep Island while extending capacity building, operational reach and sustenance in the region.
- It will augment connectivity with the mainland focusing towards the comprehensive development of the islands.
- INS Jatayu will be functioning under the operational control of the Naval Officer in Charge (Lakshadweep), Southern Naval Command.

### Union Defence Minister inaugurates 'Chola' Building At Naval War College, Goa

- Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the new Administrative & Training building at the Naval War College (NWC), Goa.
- The modern edifice, named the 'Chola', pays homage to the mighty maritime empire of the Chola dynasty of ancient India.

### DRDO successfully flight tests Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)

- DRDO conducted two successful flight tests of a Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile from a ground-based portable launcher off the coast of Odisha from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur.
- These tests were carried out against high-speed unmanned aerial targets under different interception scenarios.
- VSHORADS is a Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) designed and developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian Industry Partners.
- VSHORADAS missile incorporates many novel technologies including miniaturised Reaction Control System (RCS) and integrated avionics which have been successfully proven during the tests.

#### Key Points

DRDO Chairman	—	Samir V. Kamat
Headquarters	—	New Delhi

## PEOPLE IN NEWS/APPOINTMENTS

Name	Designation
Daljit Singh Chaudhary	Director General of National Security Guard (NSG)
Anurag Agarwal	Head of Parliament Security
Brajesh Mehrotra	Chief Secretary of Bihar
Suman Kumari	First woman sniper of the Border Security Force (BSF).
Nayanthara	Brand Ambassador of Slice
Manish Prasad	President and Managing Director of SAP
Rajendra Prasad Goyal	Chairman and MD of NHPC Limited (Additional Charge)
Devendra Jhajharia	President of Paralympic Committee of India
Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora	Pakistan's First Sikh minister in Punjab
AS Rajeev	Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission
Kishor Makwana	Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes
Deepak Ballani	Director General, Indian Sugar & Bio-energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA)
Sanjay Kumar Singh	Director (Projects) of NHPC Limited
Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Sandhu	Election Commissioners
B Sairam	Chairman and Managing Director of NCL
Sheetal Devi	National Icon in the PwD category for the Election Commission of India.
Navneet Sehgal	Chairman of Prasar Bharti Board

Jaideep Hansraj	President of 'One Kotak'
Arvind Kapil	MD & CEO of Poonawalla Fincorp
Rahul Singh	Chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)
Vinay Kumar	India's Ambassador to Russia
CP Radhakrishnan	Additional Governor of Telangana
Kumar Venkatasubramanian	CEO of P&G India
Sanjay Mukherjee	Director General of Police (DGP) of West Bengal
Naveen Jindal	President of the Indian Steel Association (ISA)
Mustafa Suleyman	Head of Microsoft's AI division
Mariam Mammen Mathew	Chairperson of the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA)
Govind Dholakia	Chairman of Surat Diamond Bourse
Abhay Thakur	India's envoy to Myanmar
Neeraj Chopra	Brand Ambassador of Eveready
Luis Montenegro	Prime Minister of Portugal
Hansha Mishra	Director in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
Kamal Kishore	Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction
Mohammad Yousuf Wani	Additional Judge of J&K and Ladakh High Court
Arnab Banerjee	Chairman of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA)
Pavan Davuluri	Head of Microsoft's Windows and Surface Teams
Bhupesh Sushil Rahul	CMD of United India Insurance
Girija Subramanian	Chairperson and MD of Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC)
Nidhu Saxena	Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of Bank of Maharashtra (BoM)
Pankaj Dwivedi	Executive Director (ED) at Union Bank of India (UBI)
Bassirou Diomaye Faye	President of Senegal
Nayab Singh Saini	Chief Minister of Haryana
Madhu Nair	CEO of Union Asset Management Company Private Limited
Asif Ali Zardari	Pakistan's President

## BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Books	Authors
Swallowing the Sun	Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri
The Gems of Indian Art	Harish Khullar
The Conspiracy	Gotabaya Rajapaksa
Phool Bahadur	Originally written in Maghi by Jayanath Pati Translated in English by Abhay K
From A Car Shed To The Corner Room & Beyond	S. Raman
Code Dependent: Living in the Shadow of AI	Madhumita Murgia

### OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Lakshmi Narayanan Seshu	Actor
Lama Lobzang	Buddhist Monk
Sadi Mohammad	Renowned Rabindra Sangeet Singer
Laxminarayan Ramdas	Indian Navy Chief
Kapildev Prasad	Artisan
Arun Sharma	Archaeologist
Aziz Qureshi	Politician

### OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Paul Alexander	Author and Lawyer
Daniel Kahneman	Economists
Louis Gossett Jr.	Actor
Brian Mulroney	Politician

### DAYS AND THEMES

Date	Day	Theme
March 1	Zero Discrimination Day	To protect everyone's health, protect everyone's rights
March 1	Self-Injury Awareness Day (SIAD)	
March 3	World Hearing Day	Changing mindsets: Let's make ear and hearing care a reality for all
March 3	World Wildlife Day	Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation
March 4	National Safety Day	Focus on Safety Leadership for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Excellence
March 8	International Women's Day	Invest in women: Accelerate progress
March 10	CISF Raising Day	
March 14	Pi Day	Engineering Solutions for a Sustainable World
March 14	International Day of Action for Rivers	Water for all
March 15	World Consumer Rights Day	Fair and responsible AI for consumers
March 15	World Sleep Day	Sleep Equity for Global Health
March 16	National Vaccination Day	Vaccines for all
March 18	Ordnance Factory Day	Operational Efficiency, Readiness, and Mission Accomplishment in the Maritime Domain

March 20	World Sparrow Day	Sparrows: Give them a tweet-chance!, I Love Sparrows and We Love Sparrows
March 20	International Day of Happiness	
March 20	World Oral Health Day	
March 21	World Forestry Day	Forests and innovation: new solutions for a better world
March 21	World Down Syndrome Day	End the stereotypes
March 21	World Poetry Day	Standing on the Shoulders of Giants
March 21	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent
March 22	World Water Day	Water for Peace
March 23	World Meteorological Day	At the frontline of climate action
March 24	World Tuberculosis (TB) Day	Yes! We can end TB
March 24	International Day for the Right to the Truth	

## REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

### India becomes the second-largest mobile phone producer globally

- According to the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), India has become the second largest mobile-producing country as locally made mobile phone shipments crossed the 2 billion cumulative mark in the 2014–2022 period, registering a 23% growth compounded annually.
- India produced 2.45 billion units of mobile phones worth ₹ 4.1 Lakh Crores compared to ₹ 18,900 Crores in 2014–15.
- China is the largest mobile phone producer globally.

### India TB Report 2024

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the India TB Report 2024, which highlights that the mortality rate due to Tuberculosis (TB) had declined from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 23 per lakh population in 2022.
- The majority of the TB cases are still reported by the government health centres, even as there has been an uptick in notifications by the private sector.
- Nearly 33% or 8.4 lakh of the 25.5 lakh cases reported in 2023 came from the private sector.
- The estimated incidence of TB in 2023 increased slightly to 27.8 lakh from the previous year's estimate of 27.4 lakh.

- The mortality due to the infection remained the same at 3.2 lakh. India's TB mortality dropped from 4.94 lakhs in 2021 to 3.31 lakhs in 2022.
- India reached its 2023 target of initiating treatment in 95% of patients diagnosed with the infection.

### Shri Bhupender Yadav releases report on status of leopards in India

- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav released the report on the status of leopards in India.
- The fifth cycle leopard population estimation was carried out by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India, in collaboration with State Forest Departments, as part of the quadrennial "Monitoring of Tiger, Co-predators, prey and their habitat" exercise in tiger range States.
- India's leopard population is estimated at 13,874 (Range: 12,616–15,132) individuals, representing stable population in comparison to the similar area being sampled in 2018 with 12852 (12,172–13,535) individuals.
- Madhya Pradesh houses the largest (3907) population of leopards in the country followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- The Tiger Reserves or sites with the highest leopard population are Nagarjunasagar Srisailam (Andhra Pradesh), followed by Panna (Madhya Pradesh), and Satpura (Madhya Pradesh).

### **Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport awarded the 'Best Airport' in the Asia-Pacific region**

- Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport has occupied the prestigious title of the 'Best Airport' in the Asia-Pacific region for the sixth consecutive year for its excellence.
- Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) is the airport operator.
- The Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Best Airport award for 2023 in the category of over 40 Million Passengers Per Annum (MPPA) was conferred by the Airports Council International (ACI).

### **India remains the world's largest arms importer, and Russia is its top supplier**

- According to the data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India continues to hold the title of the world's largest arms importer. Between 2019 and 2023, India accounted for a significant 9.8% of the total global arms imports.
- During this period, Russia remained India's main arms supplier, accounting for 36% of its imports. However, it is the first five-year period since 1960–1964 when deliveries from Russia (or the Soviet Union before 1991) made up less than half of India's arms imports.
- Nine out of the ten biggest arms importers in 2019–2023 were from Asia, Oceania, or the Middle East.
- The United States is the world's largest arms supplier and saw a 17% growth in arms exports between 2014–2018 and 2019–2023.
- Simultaneously, France emerged as the world's second-largest arms supplier, with its exports growing by 47%.

### **India ranked 108 on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index with a score of 0.437**

- The Gender Inequality Index 2022 was released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in their Human Development Report 2023/2024.
- On the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022, India stands at rank 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437. India stood at rank 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021.
- The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite measure that evaluates gender inequality across three dimensions – Reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation.

### **India ranks 126 on the World Happiness Report 2024**

- India ranked 126 out of the 143 countries on the 2024 World Happiness Report. Finland was named

the happiest country in the world for the seventh consecutive year. Afghanistan is the unhappiest country.

- The report also delved into happiness trends among different age groups. Lithuania emerged as the happiest country for individuals under 30, while Denmark claims the top spot for those over 60.
- The annual report evaluates happiness levels across more than 140 nations, considering factors such as social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and the absence of corruption.
- The report is published annually in celebration of the International Day of Happiness on March 20.
- Collaborators include the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Gallup, and the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre.

### **Hurun Global Rich List 2024 – Mumbai overtakes Beijing to become Asia's billionaire capital for the first time**

- According to Hurun Research Institute's global rich list, Mumbai is now the Asian billionaire capital with 92 billionaires.
- India added a staggering 94 new billionaires, the highest of any nation except the United States, bringing the total to 271 ultra-high-net-worth individuals.
- This surge is the highest since 2013.
- The pharmaceutical sector in India leads the pack with 39 billionaires, followed by the automobile and auto components industry (27), and the chemicals sector (24).
- Collectively, the wealth of Indian billionaires amounts to a staggering \$1 trillion, accounting for 7% of the global billionaire wealth, emphasising the nation's substantial economic influence.

### **India Employment Report 2024**

- The Institute for Human Development (IHD) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) have released a report titled- 'India Employment Report 2024', which highlights that India's youth continue to grapple with soaring unemployment rates.
- The report is primarily based on analysis of data from the National Sample Surveys and the Periodic Labour Force Surveys between 2000 and 2022, with a postscript for 2023.
- India's youth account for almost 83% of the unemployed workforce and the share of youngsters with secondary or higher education in the total unemployed has almost doubled from 35.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022.

- The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and the Unemployment Rate (UR) showed a long-term deterioration between 2000 and 2018 but witnessed an improvement after 2019.
- The improvement coincides with periods of economic distress, both pre and post-Covid-19 except for two peak Covid-19 quarters.

#### **World Air Quality Report 2023 – Begusarai in Bihar is the ‘world’s most polluted city in 2023’**

- According to the World Air Quality Report 2023 by the Swiss organisation IQAir, Bihar’s Begusarai topped the list as the ‘most polluted metropolitan area in 2023’, while Delhi has been identified as the capital city with the ‘poorest air quality’ among global nations.
- India ranked third worst out of 134 countries in terms of average annual PM2.5 concentration.
- IQAir’s annual report illustrates the international nature and inequitable consequences of the enduring air pollution crisis.

#### **Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh released the compilation ‘Decade of Science’**

- The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, MoS PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh released the compilation ‘Decade of Science’ under PM Narendra Modi.
- The compilation ‘A decade of Science & technology Panorama for Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ was prepared by ‘The Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor’ to the Government of India in collaboration with Foundation of Advancing Science and Technology (FAST) India and 22 Line Ministries, Departments and Organisations.
- The report is a comprehensive collection of the technological advancements made by various

Ministries and Departments of the Government of India over the past decade.

#### **India ranked 134 in the UN Human Development Index, with an HDI of 0.644**

- According to the 2023/24 Human Development Report titled, ‘Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarised World’, India ranked 134 out of 193 countries with an HDI value of 0.644.
- India’s Human Development Index (HDI) score saw an increase from 0.633 to 0.644 in 2022.
- The HDI is a composite index computed based on three parameters — life expectancy, mean years of schooling and average incomes — in contrast to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is a gauge only of incomes or output in an economy.
- In 2022, India saw improvements across all HDI indicators — life expectancy, education and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. Life expectancy rose from 67.2 to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57 and GNI per capita saw an increase from \$6,542 to \$6,951.

#### **DHL Global Connectedness Report 2024**

- India ranked 62nd on the DHL Global Connectedness 2023 Index while it was ranked 67th in the 2022 Index. It is an annual report published since 2011 and is commissioned by the German logistics company DHL and prepared by the New York University Stern School of Business.
- Singapore was the most globally connected country, followed by the Netherlands and Ireland.
- A country’s connectedness to the world is measured by the global movement of trade, capital, information, and people. Based on these indicators, the report ranks 181 countries and territories.

## EVENTS

#### **Startup Mahakumbh Event 2024**

- Startup Mahakumbh was a three-day event showcasing India’s startup ecosystem, which began at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on March 18.
- This event aimed at connecting startups with a spectrum of inventors including venture capitalists, investors and potential corporate partners.
- It is an initiative of industry giants such as ASSOCHAM, Nasscom, Bootstrap Incubation & Advisory Foundation,

TiE, and Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association, and was supported by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

- The Central Theme of the event was ‘Bharat Innovates’.

#### **Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal inaugurates Digital exhibition ‘Subhash Abhinandan based on the life of Subhash Chandra Bose**

- The National Archives of India celebrated its 134th Foundation Day on March 11, 2024.

- On this occasion, Minister of State for Law & Justice (Independent Charge), Parliamentary Affairs and Culture Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal launched a digital exhibition 'Subhash Abhinandan', based on the life of Subhash Chandra Bose.
- Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's personal records are

preserved in the National Archives of India and can be accessed on Netaji Portal and Abhilekh Patal. In these records, letters written by him, diary of his father Shri Janaki Nath Bose, documents of Azad Hind Fauj and many government documents related to him are available.

## AWARDS AND HONOURS

### Sunil Bharti Mittal becomes the first Indian to get an honorary Knighthood from King Charles III

- Bharti Enterprises Chairman and founder Sunil Bharti Mittal became the first Indian citizen to be conferred an honorary Knighthood by Britain's King Charles III 'for services to UK and India business relations'.
- He received a Knighthood of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE) – one of the highest honours conferred by a British monarch.

### Oscars 2024

Category	Winner
Best Actor	Cillian Murphy for Oppenheimer
Best Actress	Emma Stone for Poor Things
Best Picture	Oppenheimer
Best Director	Christopher Nolan for Oppenheimer
Best Song	What Was I Made For? from Barbie
Best Supporting Actor	Robert Downey Jr. for Oppenheimer
Best Supporting Actress	Da'Vine Joy Randolph for The Holdovers
Best Animated Short	War is Over
Best Animated Feature	The Boy and the Heron
Best Original Screenplay	Anatomy of a Fall
Best Adapted Screenplay	American Fiction
Best Makeup and Hairstyling	Poor Things
Best Cinematography	Oppenheimer
Best Documentary (Short Subject)	The Last Repair Shop

### India receives 'Measles and Rubella Champion' Award for exemplary efforts in measles and rubella disease prevention

- India was bestowed with the prestigious Measles and Rubella Champion Award by The Measles and Rubella Partnership at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C., USA.
- The Measles and Rubella Partnership comprises a multi-agency planning committee, including the American Red Cross, BMGF, GAVI, US CDC, UNF, UNICEF, and WHO, all dedicated to reducing global measles deaths and preventing rubella illness.

- This accolade celebrates India's unwavering commitment to public health and its outstanding leadership in curbing the spread of these infectious diseases among children.
- It further recognises India for providing regional leadership to the measles and rubella elimination programme by using 'measles as a tracer' to strengthen routine immunisation under the country's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

### Ratan Tata was awarded PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award for philanthropy work

- Ratan Tata, former chairman of Tata Sons, was bestowed with the prestigious PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award for his outstanding philanthropic contributions.



- The PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award, named after the former Prime Minister of India, is an award of recognition for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to social welfare and humanitarian causes.

#### **Dr. Sultan AL Jaber honoured for Sustainable Energy Leadership**

- Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, the President of COP28 (the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference), received the 'CERAWeek Leadership Award for Building Global Consensus towards a Sustainable Energy Future' from CERAWeek by S&P Global.
- This prestigious award recognised his extraordinary leadership in delivering the UAE Consensus, a groundbreaking agreement that outlined concrete pathways for countries and industries to transition to sustainable energy systems and keep global warming within 1.5°C.

#### **Krystyna Pyszkova from Czech Republic crowned the Miss World 2024**

- Krystyna Pyszkova from the Czech Republic was crowned as the new Miss World 2024. Miss Lebanon Yasmina Zaytoun was named the first runner-up.
- The ceremony took place at the Jio World Cinema in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

#### **Michel Talagrand awarded the 2024 Abel Prize**

- The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters awarded the Abel Prize for 2024 to Michel Talagrand of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, France.
- He received the prestigious prize 'for his groundbreaking contributions to probability theory and functional analysis, with outstanding applications in mathematical physics and statistics.'

#### **Riken Yamamoto Wins 2024 Pritzker Architecture Prize**

- Japanese architect and social advocate, Riken Yamamoto, was selected as the 2024 Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate.
- It is the highest international award in the field, and is sometimes referred to as the 'Architecture Nobel'.
- The Pritzker Architecture Prize was instituted by Jay A Pritzker, the late founder of the Hyatt Hotels chain, and his wife Cindy, in 1979.

#### **Amitav Ghosh awarded prestigious Erasmus Prize 2024**

- Indian writer Amitav Ghosh won the Erasmus Prize 2024 for his writings on the planetary crisis and climate change.
- The Praemium Erasmianum Foundation in the Netherlands awards the prize annually for an

organisation or individual's 'exceptional contributions' in the fields of the humanities, social sciences or arts in Europe and the rest of the world.

#### **PM Modi honoured with Bhutan's 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' award**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, Bhutan's highest civilian decoration, by His Majesty the King of Bhutan in a public ceremony at the Tendrelthang, Thimphu.
- He is the first foreign leader to be given this prestigious award.
- The award was conferred to Prime Minister Modi in recognition of 'his outstanding contribution to the growth of India-Bhutan relations and for his distinguished service to the Bhutanese nation and people.'

#### **Bina Agarwal and James Boyce awarded the first 'Global Inequality Research Award'**

- The 2024 GiRA prize is jointly awarded to Bina Argawal and James K. Boyce for their groundbreaking work in the field of social and environmental inequalities.
- The World Inequality Lab (WIL) and Sciences Po's Centre for Research on Social Inequalities (CRIS) have joined forces for the first edition of the Global Inequality Research Award (or GiRA), which aims to recognize every two years researchers from all disciplines who have made a significant contribution to the understanding of global inequalities.

#### **Dr. Pradeep Mahajan honoured with Maharashtra Bhushan Award 2024**

- Dr. Pradeep Mahajan, the Founder and CMD of StemRx Hospital and Research Centre, and StemRx Bioscience Solutions Pvt Ltd, received the esteemed Maharashtra Bhushan Award 2024.
- This recognition celebrates his pioneering work in regenerative medicine, highlighting his significant contributions to the field.

#### **PM Narendra Modi presents the first-ever National Creators Award**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented the first-ever National Creators Award at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- It is an effort to recognise excellence and impact across domains, including storytelling, social change advocacy, environmental sustainability, education, and gaming among others.
- The award is envisioned as a launchpad for using creativity to drive positive change. It was presented across 20 categories.

Name	Award
Ranveer Allahbadia (BeerBiceps)	Disruptor of the Year
Kabita Singh (Kabita's Kitchen)	Best Creator in Food Category
Drew Hicks, Kili Paul, Cassandra Mae Spittmann	Best International Creator
Jaya Kishori	Best Creator for Social Change
Kamiya Jani	Favourite Travel Creator
RJ Raunac (Bauaa)	Most Creative Creator – (Male)
Shraddha Jain	Most Creative Creator (Female)
Nishchay	Best Creator in Gaming Category
Aridaman	Best Micro Creator
Ankit Baiyanpuria	Best Health and Fitness Creator
Aman Gupta	Celebrity Creator
Keerthika Govindasamy	Best Storyteller
Pankhti Pandey	Favourite Green Champion
Gaurav Chaudhary (Technical Guru ji)	Best Creator in Tech Category
Malhar Kalambe	Swachhta Ambassador
Jahnvi Singh	Heritage Fashion Icon
Naman Deshmukh	Best Creator in Education Category
Maithili Thakur	Cultural Ambassador of the Year
Abhi and Niyu	New India Champion Award
Lakshay Dabas	Most Impactful Agri creator
Piyush Purohit	Best Nano creator award

## SPORTS NEWS

### India's first Indoor Athletics and Aquatic Centre inaugurated at Kalinga Stadium, Odisha

- In a major boost to Indian athletics and swimming, Chief Minister Shri Naveen Patnaik inaugurated India's first Indoor Athletics Centre and Indoor Aquatic Centre at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- He also laid the foundation stone for the Indoor Diving Centre.
- This world-class facility will be a training ground for the Odisha Reliance Foundation Athletics High Performance Centre, which was established in association with Reliance Foundation, and has been producing young athletics champions.

### Khelo India medal winners eligible for government jobs

- The Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT) of the Government of India, in collaboration with the Department of Sports, has introduced comprehensive

reforms in the recruitment, promotion, and incentives framework for athletes.

- Under the revamped regulations, individuals who excel in events such as the Khelo India Youth Games (for participants aged 18 and above), Khelo India Winter Games, Khelo India Para Games, and Khelo India University Games will now qualify for government employment opportunities.
- Furthermore, achievers in the School Games Federation of India will also maintain their eligibility for such positions.
- Additionally, individuals who have represented the nation or a state in either international or national events, or demonstrated success in junior national tournaments, will be eligible for employment.
- The Secretaries of National Sports Federations (for international events), Secretaries of State Associations (for national competitions) and Deans or Sports Officers

of Universities (for inter-university tournaments), among others, will have the authority to issue such certificates validating the eligibility of sportspersons for recruitment.

### **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme launched**

- Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated the unique Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme.
- It is aimed at school children between 9 and 18 years old and is a nationwide scheme.
- It has two main objectives – to hunt talent from every nook and corner of the country and to use sports as a tool to curb addiction towards drugs and other gadgetry distractions.

### **Virat Kohli becomes the first Indian to score 12,000 T20 runs**

- Indian cricket captain Virat Kohli has become the first Indian cricketer to score 12,000 runs in the T20 format.
- He accomplished this remarkable feat during the opening match of the 2024 Indian Premier League (IPL) between Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

### **PR Sreejesh and Camila Caram appointed Co-Chairs of FIH Athletes Committee**

- The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has appointed former Indian men's hockey team captain and goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and Chile's Camila Caram as co-chairs of the FIH Athletes Committee.

### **MS Dhoni becomes the first wicketkeeper to record 300 dismissals in T20 cricket**

- Mahendra Singh Dhoni continued to script history as the legendary wicketkeeper batter registered a big record during the Indian Premier League match between Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings.
- He became the first wicketkeeper to execute 300 dismissals in the T20Is.

### **Sharath Kamal will be India's flag bearer at Paris Olympics 2024**

- Ace table tennis player Sharath Kamal will be the Indian team's flagbearer for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics.
- He is ranked no. 88 in the world and has won the national table tennis championship a record ten times. He is a three-time bronze medalist at the World Championships.

### **The third edition of North-East Games 2024 begins in Nagaland**

- The third edition of the North East Games 2024 kick-started with a glittering opening ceremony at the Regional Centre for Sporting Excellence, Sovima, Nagaland.
- The games will be held across Chumoukedima, Dimapur, and Kohima in 12 venues.

### **Mumbai wins Ranji Trophy 2024 after defeating Vidarbha**

- Mumbai won the Ranji Trophy 2024 after beating Vidarbha by 169 runs at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai.
- This was their 42nd Ranji Trophy title which they won after eight years. Ajinkya Rahane is the captain of Mumbai.

### **Santosh Trophy 2023–24 – National Football Championship**

- In the final of the Santosh Trophy 2023–24, Services beat Goa by a goal to lift the trophy.
- This is the seventh time they have won the championship. Shafeel PP scored the winning goal.

### **Jacintha Kalyan is India's first female pitch curator**

- Jacintha Kalyan has been named as India's first female pitch curator.
- She is overseeing pitch preparations for the Women's Premier League at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.
- This marks a significant milestone for gender inclusivity in the sport.

### **Sathiyam Gnanasekaran makes history in Beirut, wins first-ever WTT Feeder title**

- Sathiyam Gnanasekaran, a renowned Indian table tennis player, has made history by becoming the first Indian to win the men's singles title at a WTT Feeder Series event in Beirut, Lebanon.

### **Anurag Thakur inaugurates Sansad Khel Mahakumbh 3.0 in Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh**

- Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated the Sansad Khel Mahakumbh 3.0 at the Luhnu Cricket Ground in Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh.
- Village or Panchayat level teams will participate in all sports disciplines and the third edition will see the participation of 75,000 players.
- The MP Khel Mahakumbh has become the biggest platform for players from the Hamirpur parliamentary constituency to showcase their talent.

### **Tiger Woods won the highest United States Golf Association (USGA) honour – Bob Jones Award**

- Tiger Woods received the Bob Jones Award, the highest honour from the USGA that recognises his commitment to sportsmanship and respect for golf's traditions.
- Woods was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2022, and he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from Donald Trump in 2019.
- Woods is a nine-time USGA champion, winning three straight U.S. Junior Amateurs, followed by three straight U.S. Amateurs, and then the U.S. Open at Pebble Beach (2000), Bethpage Black (2002) and Torrey Pines (2008).

### **Paul Pogba banned for four years for doping**

- Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba has been suspended for four years from football due to doping allegations.
- He tested positive for testosterone, leading to his provisional suspension in September. He has the option to appeal against the decision at the Court of Arbitration for Sport, based in Switzerland.

### **Puneri Paltan emerges as the Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 champions**

- The Puneri Paltan won the Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 title by defeating the Haryana Steelers.
- Pankaj Mohite was named as the player of the match in the final. Mohammadreza Shadlouei of Puneri Paltan was named the top defender.

### **Asian River Rafting Championship 2024**

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu inaugurated the Asian River Rafting Championship near Basantpur on the Sutlej River near the Ridge Shimla.

- The event hosted 20 teams from nations including Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia.

### **Sai Praneeth announces retirement from international badminton**

- World Championships bronze medallist B Sai Praneeth announced his retirement from his international badminton career to pursue a coaching career in the USA.
- He decided to quit after battling nagging injuries since the Tokyo Games, ending a successful career during which he won the 2017 Singapore Open.
- He will join as head coach of Triangle Badminton Academy in the US.

### **Spain wins the first UEFA Women's Nations League**

- Spain won the inaugural UEFA Women's Nations League title after beating France 2-0. This holds importance as it is Spain's first-ever win over France in senior women's football.
- Aitana Bonmati was named as the MVP (Most Valuable Player) of the Finals tournament.

### **Hockey India Awards: Hardik and Salima win Player of the Year awards**

- Salima Tete received the Hockey India Balbir Singh Senior Award for Player of the Year 2023 in the women's category, and Hardik Singh won the award in the men's category.
- Additionally, Olympian and World Cup winner Ashok Kumar was honoured with the Major Dhyan Chand Lifetime Achievement Award 2023.
- The 2023 Hockey India annual awards were presented at a glamorous ceremony in New Delhi.