
CURRENT AFFAIRS
DECEMBER 2023

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NATIONAL NEWS

1. **Indian language AI tool 'Bhashini' used to translate Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech**
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi used an AI-powered Indian language translation tool, Bhashini, during a speech in Uttar Pradesh to provide a translated version in real-time.
 - Bhashini was developed by the government, with tens of thousands of people in India adding data from their native languages to create open-source language datasets upon which others can build tools.
 - He was speaking to people at the Kashi Tamil Sangamam in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi. He began his address by requesting the Tamil-speaking audience to use their earphones to access a translation, before continuing his address to them in Hindi.
2. **Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tribute to Bhopal Gas Leak Victims on the 39th Anniversary**
 - To commemorate the 39th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan paid tribute to the victims of the disaster.
 - The tragedy occurred on December 2 and 3, 1984, in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, when a gas leak from the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) factory resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and had a lasting impact on survivors.
 - The Bhopal Gas Tragedy is known as the world's worst industrial disaster, with 5,295 deaths and injuries to almost 5,68,292 individuals.
3. **Indian railway introduces AI-based Gajraj system to prevent elephant accident**
 - The Indian Railways has introduced the 'Gajraj system' to protect elephants on railway tracks.
 - The system uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to alert train drivers of the presence of elephants, reducing the risk of collisions. It has been successfully deployed in a 150 kilometer stretch in Assam and has proven to be highly effective.
 - The system, known as the Intrusion Detection System (IDS), has an accuracy rate of 99.5% in detecting elephants.
 - It works by detecting the presence of elephants and issuing alerts to relevant stakeholders.
 - The system is integrated with the Optical Fiber Cable (OFC) network and captures vibrations caused by elephants on the tracks. Since its deployment, there have been no train-elephant collisions reported in the 11 corridors where it is in use.
 - The Gajraj system represents a significant advancement in using technology for wildlife conservation and ensures the safety of railway operations while preserving India's wildlife.
4. **PM Modi unveils Shivaji Maharaj Statue at Rajkot Fort in Maharashtra**
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj at Rajkot Fort, emphasising the importance of preserving India's maritime heritage.
 - The ceremony honored Shivaji Maharaj's contribution to India's maritime history, particularly his construction of the Sindhudurg Fort.
5. **Central government to establish subsidised staple food stores at Delhi metro stations**
 - The central government plans to open retail stores at major metro stations in Delhi to tackle high food prices.
 - The first store will be at Rajiv Chowk and supervised by the National Cooperative Consumer Federation of India (NCCF).
 - The initiative aims to alleviate the financial burden on consumers and ensure easy access to subsidised food items.
6. **Security breach on Indian Parliament as intruders throw smoke bombs at MPs**
 - Two unidentified individuals entered Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's parliament and threw smoke bombs, indicating a major security breach.
 - This incident took place on December 13, 2022, the 22nd anniversary of a deadly terrorist attack on parliament in 2001.
 - The two individuals entered the area where lawmakers were seated during the zero hour, releasing yellow smoke from smoke canisters.
 - The protesters, Neelam (42) and Amol Shinde (25) were detained outside the Parliament.

Key Points

Speaker

- Om Birla

7. **Indian Government Alerts Public on Smishing Threats**

- The Indian government has warned against a new scam called 'Smishing', which is a combination of SMS and Phishing. It uses misleading texts to reveal your confidential information. As the reliance on mobile phones grows, smishing has emerged as a significant threat, requiring individuals to stay vigilant and informed.
- Urgent messages lead victims to click on malicious links or provide personal data.
- These messages often create a sense of urgency, compelling recipients to take immediate action. They

might request personal information like credit card numbers, social security details, or login credentials, under the guise of security verification or account updates.

8. India Records 112 Deaths in 2022 from Tiger Attacks

- The Centre informed that in 2022 a total of 112 deaths took place in the country due to tiger attacks.
- In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Union Minister for Forest, Environment and Climate Change Bhupinder Yadav informed that the highest number of deaths is 85 in Maharashtra followed by 11 in Uttar Pradesh. During the past five years 302 people died in the incidents of tiger attacks.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has suggested several measures to avoid man versus wild clashes. During 2022 compensation of more than 14.78 crore rupees were given to the affected families.

9. Vice President unveiled Postal cover on Justice Reddy's centenary

- India paid tribute to Justice Konda Madhav Reddy on December 27, 2023, with a special postal cover being released by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar.
- Justice Reddy had an influential career as the Chief Justice of the High Courts in Andhra Pradesh and Mumbai, as well as holding the office of the Governor of Maharashtra.

10. Visva-Bharati researchers discover bacteria named after Rabindranath Tagore

- A team of researchers from Visva-Bharati University's botany department has discovered a new bacteria strain called Pantoea Tagorei, which has the potential to revolutionise agriculture.
- It can boost plant growth, reduce the need for commercial fertilizers, and increase crop yields. The bacteria is named after Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, who promoted sustainable farming practices.
- The Association of Microbiologists of India (AMI) has recognised the discovery, and the findings have been published in the Indian Journal of Microbiology.

11. Ayodhya Airport to be renamed Maharishi Valmiki Airport

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal to declare Ayodhya Airport as an international airport and name it 'Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham.'
- The airport's name, 'Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham', is named after Maharishi Valmiki, the sage attributed to composing the epic Ramayana. It was done to honour the revered poet who wrote the Ramayana.
- Ayodhya is strategically positioned to become a key economic hub and pilgrimage site. The airport's

potential to attract international pilgrims and businesses aligns with the city's historical prominence.

Key Points

- Uttar Pradesh's CM - Yogi Adityanath
- Uttar Pradesh's capital - Lucknow

12. 'Hump WWII' Museum inaugurated in Arunachal Pradesh with US Aircraft Wreckage on display

- India paid tribute to the hundreds of US servicemen killed during World War II with the opening of a museum near its strategic border with China honouring the dramatic Himalayan airlift dubbed 'The Hump'.
- The museum pays tribute to the brave Allied pilots who flew the perilous air route between Assam and Yunnan in China during World War II, known as 'The Hump.'
- The Hump air route was established in response to the Japanese Army blocking the Burma Road in 1942 and became the stage for a significant airlift by the US-led Allied forces.
- In recent years, efforts have been made to search for the remains of American airmen who lost their lives in the Himalayan mountains, highlighting the importance of preserving this aspect of history.

Key Points

- Arunachal Pradesh's capital- Itanagar
- Arunachal Pradesh's Chief Minister- Puma Khandu

13. Nine New Airports to be constructed in Uttar Pradesh in the next two Years

- Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia announced plans to construct nine new airports in Uttar Pradesh within the next two years, increasing the total number of airports in the state to 18.
- Among these airports, Kushinagar and Noida (Jewar) are already operational in Uttar Pradesh. There are plans to build seven more greenfield airports in Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Sonbhadra, Lalitpur, Meerut, Moradabad and Aligarh.
- The Meerut airport, identified under the UDAN scheme, requires an additional 115 acres of land to be fully operational.
- FlyBig has been awarded the Meerut-Lucknow-Meerut route under the UDAN 4.2 bidding results. The government aims to develop 100 airports nationwide by 2024 under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN, making air travel more affordable and accessible.

14. PM Modi inaugurates the World's Largest meditation centre in Varanasi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Swarved Mahamandir in Varanasi, a meditation center that can accommodate 20,000 devotees at once.

- It blends traditional and modern design elements and showcases the city's cultural heritage.
- The Mahamandir has nine highlights, including its capacity, Swarveda verses on the walls, and involvement of various ministries. The temple is named after the Swarved spiritual text authored by Sadguru Shri Sadafal Deoji Maharaj, and it promotes spiritual teachings like Brahm Vidya. The walls are adorned with pink sandstone, and there is a beautiful garden with medicinal herbs.
- The Swarved Mahamandir signifies the promotion of spirituality, culture, and technology integration in Varanasi.

15. India Joins UN's 'Race to Resilience' initiative at COP28

- India has joined the United Nations' 'Race to Resilience' campaign, reflecting their commitment to building climate resilience in urban areas. The campaign aims to enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change impacts by 2030.
- The Climate Centre for Cities (C-Cube) at the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) will play a key role in spearheading India's participation. C-Cube has developed the ClimateSmart Cities Assessment Framework (CSCAF) to assess and mitigate climate-related risks in Indian cities.
- The framework covers areas such as urban planning, green cover, energy efficiency, mobility, water management, and waste management. By focusing on sustainable development and building resilience, India aims to contribute to global efforts in combating climate change.

16. India re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation with the highest vote tally

- India has been re-elected to the IMO Council for the 2024–25 term with the highest tally, highlighting its influential role in the maritime industry and global recognition of its contributions to seaborne trade.
- India's re-election falls under the Category of 10 states with 'the largest interest in international seaborne

trade', alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

- India secured the large-scale support of the international community at the International Maritime Organisation for India to continue to serve the global maritime domain.
- IMO is the leading authority that regulates the maritime industry, which supports global trade, transportation, and all marine operations.

Key Points

Headquarters	- London, United Kingdom
Secretary General	- Arsenio Dominguez

17. ISRO launches India's first dedicated Polarimetry mission

- ISRO placed an X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) in an orbit 650 km from Earth, in a successful start to a mission to study astronomical X-ray sources and blackholes.
- This is the first mission worldwide launched to study polarised X-ray sources and the second mission after a 2021 US mission for polarisation.
- PSLV's fourth stage will be brought down to a lower orbit 350 kms away from Earth where the POEM (PSLV Orbital Experimental Module) will carry out experiments with nine onboard payloads.
- ISRO will conduct experiments with a fuel cell, which could be used in future in an Indian Space Station and other areas where power generation on board will be required.

Key Points

ISRO's Headquarters	- Bengaluru, Karnataka
ISRO's Chief	- S Somnath

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

1. Union MSME Ministry launches three sub-schemes under RAMP programme; makes ZED scheme free for women

- MSME Minister Narayan Rane launched three sub-schemes under the ministry's existing RAMP ((Raising and Accelerating MSME Productivity) programme to encourage the adoption of sustainable technology in business, boost the circular economy and address delayed payments issue.
- The MSME Green Investment and Financing for Transformation Scheme (MSE GIFT Scheme) will help enterprises adopt green technology with interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

- The MSE Scheme for Promotion and Investment in Circular Economy (MSE SPICE Scheme) is the first-ever scheme in the government to support circular economy projects which will be done through credit subsidy and support MSME sector towards zero emissions by 2070.

- The third scheme MSE Scheme on Online Dispute Resolution for Delayed Payment is a first-of-its-kind scheme to synergise legal support with modern IT tools and artificial intelligence in order to address the issue of delayed payments for micro and small enterprises.

2. National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) launches ERS Mobile App for Swift Emergency Response

- NHAI launched the ERS (Emergency Response Support System) mobile app for emergencies to expedite responses to accidents.
- Its objective is to provide a rapid and seamless response mechanism during critical situations, such as accidents or medical emergencies, by connecting road users directly to the NHAI's command and control center.

Key Points

NHAI's chairman	- Santosh Kumar Yadav
Headquarters	- Delhi

3. India launches Forest Certification scheme for Sustainable Management

- The Indian Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change has introduced the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.
- The scheme includes Forest Management certification, tree outside forest management certification, and chain of custody certification.
- The Forest Management Certification is based on the Indian Forest Management Standard, consisting of 8 criteria, 69 indicators, and 254 verifiers to ensure responsible forest management.
- The Tree Outside Forest Management Certification focuses on promoting sustainable management beyond traditional forest areas, specifically in agroforestry practices.
- The chain of Custody Certification ensures that wood and wood-based products in the supply chain comply with sustainable practices from source to consumer.
- The Indian Forest and Wood Certification Council will oversee the scheme and include representatives from various institutions. The Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal, will serve as the operating agency for the scheme, managing its implementation.
- The certification bodies accredited by the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies will conduct independent audits to assess adherence to the standards.
- The scheme aims to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry, encourage responsible practices throughout the wood supply chain, and enhance market value for entities adhering to certification standards.

Key Points

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change	- Bhupender Yadav
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4. Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya launched MedTech Mitra to advance Health Solution

- Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya recently launched 'MedTech Mitra,' a platform aimed at nurturing young innovators in the medical technology field.
- The initiative provides comprehensive support for research, knowledge, and regulatory approval. It aligns with India's vision of Viksit Bharat and aims to reduce import dependency by promoting indigenous development of medical devices.

5. Uttar Pradesh to Implement Green Hydrogen Policy to promote clean energy

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has instructed officials to implement the state's Green Hydrogen Policy-2023, as part of efforts to promote clean energy and address climate change.
- This policy aims to boost the production and use of green hydrogen, which is a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels.
- Green hydrogen is produced by splitting water using renewable energy sources like solar or wind power. It is a clean fuel that does not emit greenhouse gases when burned. This makes it an important tool for achieving net-zero carbon emissions and mitigating the effects of global warming.

6. Ministry of Panchayati Raj Launches Gram Manchitra GIS App

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has launched two tools, 'Gram Manchitra' and 'mActionSoft,' to empower Gram Panchayats and improve grassroots spatial planning.
- Gram Manchitra is a unified Geo-Spatial platform that allows Gram Panchayats to visualise and plan developmental works. It also serves as a decision support system, aiding in project site identification, asset tracking, cost estimation, and impact assessment.
- mActionSoft is a mobile-based solution that simplifies asset management through Geo-Tagging. It captures photos with GPS coordinates at different stages of a project and integrates with Gram Manchitra. These tools streamline planning, enhance transparency, and foster informed decision-making.

Key Points

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj	- Giriraj Singh
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7. Telangana introduces free bus travel for women and transgender individuals

- Telangana government has launched the 'Maha Lakshmi Scheme' to provide free travel for women, girls and transgender persons in the state.
- The scheme guarantees accessible and affordable transportation. It includes free travel on state-run buses and reimbursement for chargeable fares.

Key Points

Capital	- Hyderabad
Chief Minister	- Revanth Reddy

8. Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann launch scheme in Punjab to deliver services at doorstep

- Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal recently launched the 'Bhagwant Mann Sarkar, Tuhade Dwaar' scheme in Ludhiana.
- This initiative aims to revolutionise governance by providing doorstep delivery of essential services.
- The scheme includes the "Mobile Sahayaks," a fleet of delivery men who will play a crucial role in providing doorstep delivery of 43 critical services to the citizens of Punjab.
- The mechanics of the scheme involve citizens calling a helpline and scheduling appointments for specially trained personnel to visit their homes or offices with tablets to complete necessary paperwork. The scheme is expected to generate over 4,000 new jobs in the state.

9. Parliament passes 'Telecommunications Bill, 2023'

- The Parliament has passed the 'Telecommunications Bill, 2023' with the approval of Rajya Sabha with amendments.
- It has been brought to transform and reform the telecommunications sector, services, and its networks.
- The Bill seeks to amend and consolidate the law relating to the development, expansion, and operation of telecommunication services. It seeks to replace the 'Indian Telegraph Act, 1885'.
- It also includes regulatory measures such as transitioning from licenses to authorisation for telecom companies and reducing maximum penalties.
- The bill empowers the government to terminate unutilised spectrum assignments and requires biometric data for SIM card issuance.
- It aims to streamline administrative procedures, reduce litigation through a dispute resolution mechanism, strengthen cybersecurity measures, and promote innovation through a regulatory sandbox provision.

Key Points

Union Electronics and IT Minister - Ashwini Vaishnaw

10. Ministry of Textiles launches 'Paat-Mitro' application to facilitate jute farmers

- The Ministry of Textiles has introduced the 'Paat-Mitro' mobile app to support jute farmers. It has been developed by the Jute Corporation of India Limited (JCI) and provides information on Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and agronomy. JCI, under the Ministry of Textiles, plays a pivotal role in supporting jute cultivation and ensuring MSP.
- The app also includes information on Jute Gradation Parameters, farmer-centric schemes, weather forecasts, JCI's Purchase Centers' locations, and procurement policies.
- Farmers can track payments for their jute sales and use the chatbot feature for real-time assistance.

Key Points

Union Minister of Textiles - Piyush Goyal

11. Union Ministry of Culture launched Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar Project

- The Government of India has decided to map and document all villages under Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar (MGMD) Programme.
- This National Mission on Cultural Mapping is conducted in coordination with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) under the Ministry of Culture.
- The MGMD seeks to compile comprehensive information detailing the life, history, and ethos of Indian villages and to make the same available to virtual and real-time visitors.

Key Points

Union Minister - G. Kishan Reddy

INTERNATIONAL NEWS**1. Covid-19 JN.1 variant: New symptoms of the viral infection**

- WHO issued a warning about the JN.1 COVID subvariant and global respiratory disease surge, urging member states to prioritize sequence sharing and enhance surveillance efforts.
- JN.1 is a subvariant of Omicron BA.2.86 or Pirola, first detected in the US in September 2023. It spreads faster and can evade immunity.
- The symptoms include fever, runny nose, sore throat, headache, cough, and mild gastrointestinal issues.

- UK health authorities have identified new symptoms associated with the latest Covid-19 sub-variant, JN.1, which include anxiety and trouble sleeping
- 2. UAE Unveils \$30 Billion Fund For Global Climate Solutions At COP28**
- The United Arab Emirates has made a groundbreaking commitment of US\$30 billion to ALTERRA, a climate initiative by Lunate, aiming to mobilise US\$250 billion globally by 2030 for climate investments in emerging markets and developing economies.
 - This includes the development of over 6.0 GW of clean energy capacity in India.

Key Points

President of UAE - Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed

3. Fusion Milestone: Japan Unveils JT-60SA, the World's Largest Experimental Nuclear Fusion Reactor

- Japan has unveiled the world's largest operational experimental nuclear fusion reactor. This colossal machine, dubbed JT-60SA, is housed in a hangar North of Tokyo in Naka, and represents a pivotal moment in the quest for clean and limitless power.
- Unlike traditional nuclear fission used in power plants, which splits atomic nuclei, fusion mimics the sun's energy production by merging two nuclei, potentially offering a safer and more abundant energy source.
- It is a joint venture between the European Union and Japan and served as a precursor to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) currently under construction in France.

4. Azerbaijan to host the UN Climate Talks in 2024

- Azerbaijan will host the 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, known also as COP29, in 2024 in Baku.
- Baku, known for being home to one of the world's first oil fields developed over 1,200 years ago, will become the focal point for climate discussions in 2024.

5. UN Peacekeeping Mission in Mali officially ends after ten years

- The United Nations has ended its peacekeeping mission in Mali after ten years, in response to the government's claim that the force was not effective in dealing with the threat of violent extremism.
- This marks the deadliest peacekeeping mission in the world, with over 300 personnel casualties. Mali continues to face challenges from Islamic extremist insurgency since 2012.

6. Cyclone Jasper hits Australia

- Tropical Cyclone Jasper hit Northeast Australia with strong winds and the possibility of flash flooding. It originated from a low-pressure area in the South Pacific, moved through Fiji, and was classified as a Category 1 cyclone by the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.
- It rapidly intensified to Category 4, but weakened due to wind shear.

7. China and Egypt jointly launch Satellite MisrSat-2

- China and Egypt have achieved a breakthrough in their space partnership with the successful launch of the MisrSat-2 satellite.
- The project, worth \$72 million, originated from a 2019 agreement between the Egyptian Space Agency (EgSA) and the China National Space Administration.
- The satellite, assembled in Egypt with Chinese support, was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China.

- MisrSat-2 is equipped with a high-resolution camera for monitoring climate changes and land degradation in Egypt.
- The launch signifies deepening ties between Egypt and China, reflecting a broader trend of expanding trade and investment relations.

Key Points

Egypt's capital	- Cairo
President	- Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
China's capital	- Beijing
President	- Xi Jinping

8. Myanmar surpasses Afghanistan as World's leading Opium producer in 2023

- Myanmar has surpassed Afghanistan as the world's largest source of opium in 2023 due to a rise in cultivation and a decline in Afghanistan. - The shift has resulted in increased earnings and rising prices for Myanmar farmers.
- Opium cultivation has expanded in Myanmar's border regions, with improved farming practices leading to higher yields.

Key Points

Capital	- Naypyidaw
Acting President	- Myint Swe

9. NSDC inks MoU with Saudi govt to protect rights of Indian skilled labourers

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of Saudi Arabia to protect the rights of skilled labourers from India.
- The registration process will be free of cost and skilled labourers from all categories, including AC mechanics, and car painters, can register themselves on NSDC.

Key Points

NSDC CEO	- Ved Mani Tiwari
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10. Donald Trump deemed ineligible for US President by the Colorado Supreme Court

- In a landmark decision, the Colorado Supreme Court has declared Donald Trump ineligible for the US presidency, citing the constitution's insurrection clause.
- This is the first time Section 3 of the 14th Amendment has been used to disqualify a presidential candidate. The court ruled that Trump's involvement in the Capitol attack disqualifies him under the insurrection clause.

11. Angola announces departure from OPEC

- Angola, a major oil producer, has announced its decision to leave OPEC, effective from January 1, 2024. This follows similar moves by Ecuador in 2020 and Qatar in 2019, indicating a trend of smaller oil-producing nations distancing themselves from the influential organisation.
- Angola became a member of OPEC in 2007 and contributed around 1.1 million barrels per day to the global oil market. The entire OPEC group, founded in 1960, produces roughly 28 million barrels per day.
- During its membership, Angola actively participated in OPEC's efforts to manage the oil market and collaborate with other member nations and non-members in the OPEC+ group.

FINANCE, ECONOMY AND BANKING

1. Union Home Minister Amit Shah approves 1,658 Crore recovery and reconstruction plan for Joshimath

- The centre has approved the recovery and reconstruction plan of over ₹ 1,658 crore rupees for Joshimath which was affected by landslide and ground subsidence early this year.
- A High-Level Committee under the chairmanship of Union Home Minister Amit Shah approved the plan.
- Under it, around 1,080 crore rupees of Central assistance will be provided from the recovery and reconstruction window of the National Disaster Response Fund.
- The Uttarakhand government will provide over 126 crore rupees from its State Disaster Response Fund towards relief assistance. It will also provide around 452 crore rupees from its budget.

2. Education Loans experience 20.6% Spike from April To October

- Education loans registered a record year-on-year growth of 20.6% at ₹ 1,10,715 crore in the current financial year till October compared with ₹ 96,853 crore in the year-ago period. According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data, the spurt in education loans was the highest in the last five years.
- Several factors have driven this surge, including a low base, the revival of offline campus courses and a significant reliance on foreign education loans.

3. Air India unveils new Uniforms for Cabin, Cockpit Crew designed by Fashion Designer Manish Malhotra

- Air India recently revealed its new uniforms for cabin crew and pilots, designed by fashion designer Manish Malhotra.
- The female cabin crew will wear ready-to-wear ombre sarees, paired with blouses and blazers for a modern touch. The cockpit crew will wear classic black double-breasted suits with a print inspired by the Vista.

4. EPFO adds 28.69 lakh net women members in FY23

- The retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund of India (EPFO) recorded a net new women subscribers addition of nearly 28.69 lacks in FY23 against 15.94 lacks in 2019–20.
- The net addition in EPFO's subscriptions is an indicator of the extent of job creation and the coverage of social security benefits to the organised/semi-organised sector workforce.
- The estimated female Unemployment Rate (UR) on usual status for persons of age 15 years and above in the country declined to 2.9% in 2022–23 from 4.2% in 2019–20, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).
- It was 3.5 in 2020–21 and 3.3 in 2021–22. The data indicates that the labour force indicators in 2022–23 for women are better than the pre-COVID period.
- The estimated Female Worker Population Ratio (WPR) increased to 35.6% during 2022–23 from 28.7% in 2019–20.

5. PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Surat Diamond Bourse

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the Surat Diamond Exchange, which is now the world's largest office complex, surpassing the Pentagon.
- The complex covers 6.7 million square feet and was completed at a cost of 32 billions.
- The Surat Diamond Exchange is located within the Diamond Research and Mercantile City, inspired by Gift City. It consists of nine 15-story buildings with around 4,700 offices and offers various facilities such as a Customs Clearance House, a jewellery mall, and international banking services. Approximately 130 offices are already operational within the Surat Diamond Exchange, with plans to expand its capacity for up to 3,000 passengers during peak hours.
- It aims to become a global trading hub for rough and polished diamonds and jewellery, further enhancing India's prominence in the industry.

Key Points

Air India's CEO	- Campbell Wilson
Air India's HQ	- Gurugram, Haryana

6. Share of agriculture in India's GDP declined to 15% in FY23: Govt

- India's agriculture's contribution to GDP has declined from 35% in 1990-91 to 15% in 2022-23 due to the growth of the industrial and service sectors.
- The decline is due to the expansion of the industrial and service sector total Gross Value Added (GVA), rather than a reduction in agricultural GVA.
- Despite the decline, the agricultural sector has demonstrated an average annual growth of 4% over the last five years.
- In growth terms, agriculture and allied sectors has registered an average annual growth of 4% during the last five years. As far as global experience is concerned, share of agriculture in the world's GDP has also declined over the decades and stands at about 4% in recent years.
- The government has implemented initiatives, including the PM-KISAN scheme, to support farmers and ensure a prosperous agricultural sector.
- The PM-KISAN scheme provides ₹ 6,000 annually to eligible farmers in three instalments and has disbursed over ₹ 2.81 lakh crore to more than 11 crore farmers as of November 30, 2023.

7. Kakrapar Atomic Power Project Unit-4 achieves the first criticality

- The Unit 4 of Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP 4 – 700 MW) achieved the important milestone of Criticality (start of controlled fission chain reaction) for the first time on December 17, 2023.
- The criticality was achieved after meeting all the stipulations of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), which had issued clearance after a rigorous review of safety of the plant systems. KAPP-4 is the second in the series of sixteen indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) of 700 MW each being set up in the country.
- KAPP 3&4 (2X700 MW) are located at Kakrapar in Surat district of Gujarat, adjacent to the existing reactors KAPS 1&2 (2X220 MW).

8. ADB Allocates \$200M for improving Sanitation & Waste Management in 100 Indian cities

- The ADB has approved a \$200 million loan to support the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 in making all cities garbage-free by 2026.
- The loan will focus on improving sanitation practices and waste management facilities in 100 cities across eight states. The funding will be used to upgrade waste management facilities, construct toilets and urinals, and acquire sweeping equipment.
- The program will also prioritise climate and disaster resilience, gender equality, and social inclusion.

Key Points

ADB's Headquarters	- Mandaluyong, Philippines
ADB's President	- Masatsugu Asakawa

9. SBI Mutual Fund (MF) gets RBI nod to buy 9.99% stake in Karur Vysya Bank

- The RBI has approved SBI MF to acquire up to 9.99% of KVB's share capital. The approval comes with conditions and a one-year timeline. SBI MF must maintain its aggregate holding below 9.99% and obtain RBI approval if it falls below 5%.
- This move aligns with industry trends of financial institutions seeking to enhance their market presence.

Key Points

SBI MF's chairman	- Shamsher Singh
Headquarters	- Mumbai, Maharashtra
Karur Vysya Bank's chairperson	- Dr Meena Hemchandra
MD & CEO	- Ramesh Babu
Headquarters	- Karur, Tamil Nadu

10. HDFC Life's 'Insure India' campaign bags Guinness World Record title

- HDFC Life, a leading life insurance provider, achieved a new Guinness World Records title by creating the largest online selfie mosaic with 19,097 photos contributed by individuals as part of the Insure India campaign.
- The campaign aims to raise awareness about the significance of life insurance in India, where penetration is low.

Key Points

HDFC Life MD & CEO	- Vibha Padalkar
Headquarters	- Mumbai, Maharashtra

11. Actis unit BluPine buys Acme solar assets for an enterprise value of ₹ 1,700 cr

- London-based private equity firm Actis Llp has acquired Kolkata-based Atha Group's 404MW solar power assets through its subsidiary, BluPine Energy.
- The deal, valued at approximately 2,100 crores, strengthens Actis' commitment to driving India's energy transition and expanding BluPine's renewable energy capabilities.
- BluPine Energy secured the operating solar portfolio from Atha Group for an equity value of around \$100 million.

12. IVIS Partners with ICICI Bank to boost security with Advanced E-Surveillance Services

- Magellanic Cloud's subsidiary, IVIS, has partnered with ICICI Bank to enhance e-surveillance services in the bank's branches.
- This collaboration will focus on fortifying branch-level security operations, particularly in areas like ATMs and cash counters. iVIS will provide real-time threat management, remote security management, and automated response systems.

Key Points

ICICI Bank's HQ	- Mumbai, Maharashtra
MD & CEO	- Sandeep Bakshi

13. LIC unveils innovative framework for shareholders' director selection

- LIC has announced a new governance structure. A shareholder's director will be added to the board with a tenure of four years, extendable for another four years.
- The director will be elected through a general meeting of shareholders, initiated by a request from at least 1000 shareholders or one-tenth of the total.
- The director cannot hold a similar position in more than two companies simultaneously.

Key Points

LIC Chairperson	- Siddharth Mohanty
Headquarters	- Mumbai, Maharashtra

14. Ujjivan SFB partners with Water.org To Offer Water, Sanitation And Hygiene Loans

- Ujjivan Small Finance Bank has partnered with Water.org, a non-profit organisation focused on providing access to clean water and sanitation through affordable financing solutions.
- Under the partnership, Water.org will assist Ujjivan SFB in identifying areas that require financing for clean water and hygienic sanitation.
- Water.org will provide technical assistance, market assessment, development of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material, monitoring and evaluation support.

Key Points

MD & CEO	- Ittira Davis
Headquarters	- Bengaluru, Karnataka

15. Bharti Airtel becomes the eighth company to surpass 6 Lakh Crores Mcap

- Bharti Airtel, a major Indian telecom company, reached an important milestone on December 4, 2023 by surpassing Rs.6 lakh crore in market capitalization.

- Other companies that surpassed the Rs 6 lakh crore milestone in the past include—Reliance Industries, TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, HUL, Infosys, and ITC.

Key Points

Headquarters	- New Delhi
Sunil Mittal	- Chairman
Gopal Vittal	- MD& CEO

16. RBI Cancels License Of Kolhapur-Based Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cancelled the license of Shankarrao Pujari Nutan Nagari Sahakari Bank Limited, Ichalkaranji.
- The bank has been instructed to cease all banking operations from December 4, 2023. The RBI found that the bank lacked adequate capital and earning prospects, violating provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

17. Bajaj Group becomes the fifth conglomerate to breach Rs. 10 lakh crores in Mcap

- The Bajaj Group breached Rs. 10 lakh crores in market capitalisation and became the fifth business house to join the club, which already includes Tata, Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries, banking behemoth HDFC Bank and Adani Group.
- Bajaj Auto and Bajaj Finance were key contributors to the surge in market capitalization.

Key Points

Headquarters	- Mumbai, Maharashtra
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18. SBI to acquire 20% Stake In SBI Pension Funds held by SBI Capitals

- State Bank of India announced its intention to acquire a 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds. SBI plans to acquire the 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds held by SBI Capital Markets.
- SBI already owns a 60% stake in SBI Pension Funds. With this current transaction, the company will own an 80% stake in SBI Pension Funds. SBI will do the acquisition for 229.52 crores.
- SBI Funds Management holds the rest of the 20% stake in SBI Pension Funds.

Key Points

SBI chairman	- Dinesh Khara
SBI Capitals MD & CEO	- Rajay Sinha

19. India announces \$250 mn line of credit to Kenya in agriculture sector

- India has extended a \$250 million Line of Credit to Kenya for the modernisation of its agricultural sector. This was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the visit of Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto.

- Both countries expressed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties in agriculture, defense, counter-terrorism, and technology.
- The Line of Credit aims to support projects that advance agricultural practices and technologies in Kenya.
- The Indian community in Kenya was recognised for their contributions, and discussions were held on the case of two missing Indians.

20. ACKO and PhonePe collaborate to ensure the accessibility of insurance for millions

- ACKO General Insurance and PhonePe have collaborated to provide a range of inclusive car and bike insurance products directly to users through the PhonePe platform.
- This strategic partnership combines ACKO's customer-centric approach with PhonePe's extensive distribution network, ensuring convenient access to insurance as a readily available financial option for PhonePe users.

21. Meta and IBM launch 'AI Alliance' to promote open-source AI development

- Facebook's parent company, Meta, and IBM launched a new group called the AI Alliance advocating for an 'open-science' approach to AI development that puts them at odds with rivals Google, Microsoft and ChatGPT-maker OpenAI.
- The alliance includes industry giants Dell, Sony, AMD, Intel, and several universities and AI startups. It emphasises open scientific exchange, innovation, and the use of open-source technologies to ensure accessibility and transparency in AI development.

Key Points

Meta CEO & Chairman	- Mark Zuckerberg
Meta Headquarters	- California, US
IBM's Chairman & CEO	- Arvind Krishna
IBM's headquarters	- New York, US

22. Union Bank of India collaborates with Accenture to accelerate data-driven transformation

- Union Bank of India and Accenture have teamed up to advance digital capabilities in the banking sector. This collaboration aims to enhance operational efficiency, improve customer service, and strengthen risk management practices at Union Bank of India.
- The collaboration will benefit all aspects of Union Bank of India's business, including corporate, retail, and MSMEs banking.
- Accenture will also develop AI and machine learning models to generate actionable insights and improve business forecasting. The goal is to foster a culture of customer-centricity, agility, and innovation within Union Bank of India.

Key Points

Union Bank of India's Headquarters	- Mumbai, Maharashtra
MD & CEO	- A. Manimekhalai
Accenture's Headquarters	- Dublin, Ireland
Chair & CEO	- Julie Sweet

23. IBM unveils its latest 1,000-Qubit Quantum Chip named Condor

- IBM recently announced a significant milestone in quantum computing with the introduction of their latest processor, Condor.
- Condor boasts an impressive 1,121 qubits, marking the first time a quantum machine has crossed the 1,000 qubit threshold.
- However, IBM is now shifting its focus from qubit quantity to prioritising error resistance in their quantum machines.

24. RBI increases UPI transaction limit for education and healthcare to ₹ 5 lakh

- The RBI has increased the UPI payment limits from ₹ 1 lakh to ₹ 5 lakh.
- This will reshape financial transactions in healthcare and education. The existing UPI transaction limit is ₹ 1 lakh per transaction, with certain categories having a higher limit.
- The UPI transaction limit for IPO and Retail Direct Scheme is now ₹ 5 lakh per transaction.

25. Loans worth ₹ 9,790 crore disbursed under PM SVANidhi scheme: Govt

- A total of Rs 9,790 crore worth of loans have been disbursed so far to beneficiaries of the PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme. This scheme is available pan-India in all urban local bodies.
- The scheme was launched during the COVID-19 outbreak as a micro-credit scheme for urban street vendors that aims to provide collateral-free working capital loans up to ₹ 50,000.
- All street vendors in urban areas are eligible for benefits under the PM SVANidhi Scheme, irrespective of the date on which they started vending.

Key Points

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.
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26. RBI grants authorisation to Bandhan Bank for Pension Disbursement to Retired Railway Employees

- Bandhan Bank has received official authorisation from the RBI to provide pension disbursement for retired Ministry of Railways employees through e-PPOs.

- This authorisation allows the bank to serve around 50,000 Indian Railways retirees annually. Pensioners will have access to competitive rates and comprehensive banking services from Bandhan Bank.

Key Points

Chairman	- Dr. Anup Kumar Sinha
MD & CEO	- Chandra Shekhar Ghosh
Headquarters	- Kolkata, West Bengal

27. India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) Launched for Swift Clearance of Imported Goods

- The India-Korea Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) was launched in New Delhi. The Electronic Origin Data Exchange System is aimed at facilitating the smooth implementation of the India-Korea Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by way of the electronic exchange of origin information between the two customs administrations in respect of the goods traded under the CEPA.
- The data fields in a Certificate of Origin (CoO) shall be electronically shared by the exporting customs administration with the importing customs, as soon as the certificate is issued.
- This would facilitate faster clearance of imported goods.

28. SBI Ventures into Paper Packaging with 49.99 Crore Investment in Canpac Trends

- SBI recently invested 49.99 crore in Canpac Trends, an Ahmedabad-based paper packaging company. SBI acquired 6.35% of Canpac Trends with the objective of this investment as capital appreciation in the paper packaging sector.

29. Kotak Mahindra Bank Partners with IITK to Launch Kotak School of Sustainability

- The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT) and Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) have partnered to create the Kotak School of Sustainability, which aims to address global warming and promote sustainability education, research, and outreach.
- The collaboration is funded by Kotak Mahindra Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program and aims to offer comprehensive academic and skill-building programs focused on sustainability.

30. Asian Development Bank (ADB) approves \$250m loan for industrial corridor development in India

- The Government of India and ADB recently signed a \$250 million policy-based loan to enhance manufacturing competitiveness, fortify national supply chains, and integrate with global value chains as part of the Industrial Corridor Development Programme.
- The initiative, aligned with the National Industrial Corridor Development Program (NICDP), aims to boost the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector, strengthen national supply chains, and integrate with regional and global value chains.

31. ArSRLM inks MoU with SBI for banking services to SHGs

- Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM) has partnered with the State Bank of India (SBI) to improve banking services for self-help groups (SHGs) in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The MoU aims to provide comprehensive banking services to around 12,000 SHGs operating in the state.
- This collaboration will benefit not only the SHGs but also primary and cluster level federations. The partnership will enhance financial inclusion and promote sustainable rural livelihoods by leveraging SBI's extensive banking network.

32. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) gets a one-time exemption from the 25% minimum public shareholding rule

- The Finance Ministry has given it a one-time exemption from the 25% public shareholding rule to LIC.
- The rule says a listed entity with a market cap of more than ₹ 1 trillion needs to reach the 25% minimum public shareholding threshold within five years of listing.
- LIC listed on the bourses on May 17, 2022, meaning it had to meet the 25% MPS rule by 2027. However, it has received an extension of 10 years and would need to meet the criteria by May 2032.

33. PLI schemes attracted over ₹ 95,000 cr investment till Sep 2023: Centre

- The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for 14 sectors have attracted over ₹ 95,000 crore in investment till September 2023.
- In the Union Budget 2021–22, the government announced an outlay of Rs 1.97 trillion for the schemes.
- The sectors included electronics, telecommunication, pharma, white goods (AC and LED light components), and textiles. The aim is to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities and exports.

DEFENCE NEWS

1. Indian army organises honour run in Delhi to Commemorate Kargil War Victory

- In commemoration of the historic military victory in the Kargil War, the Indian Army conducted 'Honour Run – Indian Army Veteran's Half Marathon' in Delhi.

- The event was conducted under the theme, 'Honour Run' and was aimed at strengthening the bond between the Indian Army, Veterans and the masses, especially the Youth.

- While paying homage to the bravehearts, the participants in 'Honour Run' coming from a diverse populace, highlighted the calibre, potential and energy of our Nation.

Key Points

Union Minister of Defence - Rajnath Singh
Chief of Army Staff - Manoj Pande

2. Indian Navy Conducts Bi-annual Prasthan Exercise off Mumbai Coast

- The Indian Navy recently concluded the two-phased exercise named Prasthan in collaboration with various defense, state, and civil agencies.
- It focused on addressing contingencies in oil production platforms in the Offshore Development Area off the Mumbai coast.
- The exercise involved multiple assets from different agencies and emphasised coordination and collaboration. The exercise enhances overall security and emergency response capabilities in the area.

Key Points

Chief of Naval Staff - R. Hari Kumar
Chief of Defence Staff - Anil Chauhan

3. Defence Ministry approves ₹ 2,800 Crore rockets for Pinaka Weapon System

- In a major boost for the Indian Army, the Defence Ministry has approved a ₹ 2,800 crore proposal for buying around 6,400 rockets for Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher systems.
- The Pinaka system, developed by DRDO, showcases India's indigenous technological prowess and has been exported to other countries.
- The rockets approved for acquisition are the Area Denial Munition Type 2 and Type-3, aligning with the 'Make in India' initiative.

Key Points

Chairman of DRDO - Sameer V. Kamat

4. Defence ministry signs over ₹ 5,300 cr deal with Bharat Electronics Ltd.

- The defence ministry sealed an over ₹ 5,300 crore deal with state-run Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) for procurement of electronic fuzes for the Indian Army for a period of 10 years.

- An electronic fuze is an integral component of medium to heavy calibre artillery guns which provide sustained artillery firepower for military operations.
- The fuzes are being procured for usage in artillery guns which are capable of lethal engagements in various kinds of terrain including high-altitude areas along the Northern borders.
- The electronic fuzes will be manufactured by the BEL at its Pune and upcoming Nagpur Plant.

Key Points

Chairman & MD - Bhanu Prakash Shrivastava

5. India's Akash missile engages four targets at once at 25 km, a global first

- India demonstrated the capability of the Akash missile system to engage four aerial targets simultaneously at a range of 25 kilometres.
- India became the first country to have such a capability using a single firing unit. The capability of the home-grown missile system was displayed at the 'Astrashakti'. The exercise was held by the Indian Air Force.
- The Akash, with a range of up to 25 km, is a short-range surface to air missile primarily used for protecting vulnerable areas and points from air attacks.
- The missile system is among the key platforms that India is exporting to friendly foreign countries.
- The other key platforms that India has been exporting are Dornier-228 aircraft, 155 mm Advanced Towed Artillery Guns (ATAGs), Brahmos missiles, mine protected vehicles, armoured vehicles, ammunition, thermal imagers and various components of avionics and small arms.

6. IIT Kanpur collaborates with the Indian Navy to promote technology development

- IIT-K signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Navy to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint R&D.
- The MoU would serve as a broader framework and enable both sides to enhance capacity building, provide solutions to field-level issues and enhance training effectiveness through exchange of faculty/guest lectures.

APPOINTMENTS

Name	Designation
Colin Jackson	International Ambassador for 2023 Tata Steel Kolkatta 25KS
Air Marshal Makarand Ranade	Director General (Inspection and Safety) at Air HQ New Delhi
Narayan Seshadri	Chairman of India Debt Resolution Co Ltd (IDRCL)
Sourav Ganguly	Brand Ambassador of Bengal
Vinay Tonse	MD of SBI
Kanchan Devi	First Woman Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)
Jithesh John	Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) Executive Director
Samir Shah	Lead British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Board
Rajiv Anand	Chairman of Max Life Insurance
Manisha Padhi	India's First Woman Aide De Camp (ADC) from the Indian Armed Forces
Arvind Panagariya	Head of sixteenth finance commission
Jagdeep Dhankhar	Ex-officio Chancellor of Pondicherry University
Reuven Azar	Israel's New Ambassador to India
Anand Kripalu	Chairperson and Independent Director at Swiggy
Dong Jun	China's New Defense Minister
K.S. Reddy	Hyderabad Commissioner Of Police
Maheshwar Dayal	Director General of Prisons
Pramod Agrawal	BSE Chairman
Sanjay Singh	New Chief of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)
Vita Dani	First Indian appointed to the governing board of the International Table Tennis Federation's Foundation
Santosh Jha	India's envoy to Sri Lanka
Gopal Baglay	High Commissioner of India to Australia

Name	Designation
Bhajan Lal Sharma	Chief Minister of Rajasthan
Mohan Yadav	Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Books	Author
The Babri Masjid Ram Mandir Dilemma	Madhav Godbole
Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future	Raghuram Rajan
Zeba: An Accidental Superhero	Huma Qureshi
Welcome to Paradise	Twinkle Khanna

OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Vijayakanth	Actor and Politician
Dr. V Mohini Giri	Advocate for women's rights
Leelavathi	Veteran Kannada Actor
Dinesh Phadnis	Actor
R Subbalakshmi	Malayalam Actress And Musician
Sandra Day O'Connor	First Woman on the Supreme Court

OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Jacques Delors	Former European Commission chief
Sheikh Nawab Al-Ahmad Al-Sahab	Emir of Kuwait
Andre Braugher	American actor
Dr. Gao Yaojie	AIDS Activist
Joe Solomon	Former West Indies batter
Benjamin Zephaniah	Actor
Shaun Davis	Former Mr. Universe
Wolfgang Schaeuble	Politician
Lee Sun Kyun	Actor

DAYS AND THEMES

December 1	World AIDS Day	Let Communities Lead
December 2	National Pollution Control Day	Sustainable Development for a Clean and Healthy Planet
December 2	International Day for the Abolition of Slavery	Fighting Slavery's Legacy of Racism through Transformative Education
December 2	World Computer Literacy Day	
December 3	World Day of the Handicapped or International Day of Persons with Disabilities	United in Action to Rescue and Achieve the SDGs for, with and by Persons with Disabilities
December 4	Indian Navy Day	Operational Efficiency, Readiness, and Mission Accomplishment in the Maritime Domain
December 5	International Volunteer Day	The Power of Collective Action: If Everyone Did
December 5	World Soil Day	Soil and Water: A Source of Life
December 7	Armed Forces Flag Day	
December 7	International Civil Aviation Day	Advancing Innovation for Global Aviation Development
December 9	International Anti-Corruption Day	The UN Convention against Corruption at 20: Uniting the World against Corruption
December 9	International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide	A Living Force in World Society: The Legacy of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
December 10	Human Rights Day	Freedom, Equality and Justice for All.
December 11	International Mountain Day	Restoring Mountain Ecosystems
December 12	Universal Health Coverage Day	Health For All: Time for Action
December 14	National Energy Conservation Day	
December 16	Vijay Diwas	
December 18	International Migrants Day	Promoting Safe Migration
December 20	International Human Solidarity Day	
November 16	National Mathematics Day	
December 23	National Farmer's Day or Kisan Diwas	
December 24	National Consumer Rights Day	Empowering Consumers through Clean Energy Transitions
December 25	Good Governance Day	
December 26	Veer Bal Diwas	
December 27	International Day of Epidemic Preparedness	

REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

1. **PM Modi tops the list of most popular global leaders with 76% rating: Morning Consult Survey**
 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi retained his position as the world's most popular leader with an approval rating of 76%, as per the data released by US-based consultancy firm 'Morning Consult'.
 - Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is ranked second on the list with an approval rating of 66%.
 - Of the top ten leaders, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has the highest disapproval rating at 58%, potentially due to diplomatic tensions with India.

2. NITI Aayog releases the first Delta Ranking of Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP)

- Tiriyani Block of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district, Telangana secured the top position in the first delta rankings of the Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) announced by NITI Aayog.
- The second position was bagged by the Kaushambi block of Kaushambi District, Uttar Pradesh.
- The rankings were announced in a virtual event at NITI Aayog which saw participation of 329 districts and 500 aspirational blocks from across the country.
- The ranking of the blocks was calculated based on the performance of blocks and progress achieved in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the month of June 2023.
- This is the first time that the ranking of blocks has been calculated as part of the Aspirational Blocks Programme.

Key Points

Niti Aayog's chairperson - Narendra Modi

Niti Aayog's vice chairperson - Suman Berry

3. Tamil Nadu retains 'achiever' status in logistics infra rankings of states

- Tamil Nadu is this year's top performer in the Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) 2023 rankings by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is a central government tool ranking states and union territories in terms of logistics infrastructure.
- LEADS is a benchmark for evaluating logistics performance, initiated in 2018 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. It evaluates states and union territories on three critical dimensions: Infrastructure, services, and operating and regulatory environment, encompassing both perception-based and objective indicators

4. Bhupender Yadav launches NITI Aayog report, 'A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy'

- Shri Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change launched a G20 report, 'A Green and Sustainable Growth Agenda for the Global Economy'.
- The report was a collaborative effort between NITI Aayog, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Global Development Network (GDN).
- It was based on the discussions from the G20 international conference held in New Delhi on 28–29 July 2023, which brought together 40 experts from 14 countries.

- It summarizes the discussions from the policy conference, focusing on green and sustainable growth. It covers topics such as energy, climate, technology, policy, jobs, trade, global finance, and multilateralism. It provides recommendations for shaping dialogue and consensus among G20 member states, with key ideas incorporated into the G20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration.

5. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) fourth largest insurer in the world based on reserves: S&P Global study

- LIC is the fourth largest insurer in the world, according to a ranking based on life and accident and health reserves of companies in 2022 by S&P Global Market Intelligence.
- LIC is ranked after Allianz SE, China Life Insurance Company and Nippon Life Insurance Company.
- Germany's Allianz SE (\$750.20 billion), China Life Insurance Company (\$616.90 billion) and Nippon Life Insurance Company (\$536.80 billion) are the top three insurance companies in the world.

6. Asia's 2023 Heroes of Philanthropy: DLF's KP Singh, Infosys' Nandan Nilekani, and Zerodha's Nikhil Kamath on Forbes list

- The three prominent Indian business leaders, Nandan Nilekani, KP Singh, and Nikhil Kamath, have been recognised on Forbes Asia's Heroes of Philanthropy list.
- Nandan Nilekani, co-founder and chairman of Infosys, donated ₹ 3.2 billion to IIT Bombay over five years, celebrating his 50-year association with the institute.
- KP Singh, chairman emeritus at DLF, divested his remaining stake in the company and generated ₹ 7.3 billion for philanthropic causes.
- Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, is included on the list, highlighting the trend of business leaders engaging in philanthropy.
- The Heroes of Philanthropy list focuses on personal commitment and involvement in charitable endeavors. Forbes Asia's Heroes of Philanthropy list recognises individuals who use their fortunes for charitable causes.

7. Zepto founders top Hurun India's list of Top 100 under 30

- Kaivalya Vohra (21) and Aadit Palicha (22), the founders of the Quick Commerce app Zepto, have claimed the top spots in the Hurun India Top 100 Under 30 List 2023.
- The list showcases 100 entrepreneurs aged 30 and below who have demonstrated exceptional prowess in their respective fields.

EVENTS

1. **COP28 concludes with a historic agreement to try to tackle the climate crisis**
 - The United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP28 concluded with a historic agreement to transition away from fossil fuels and to try to rein in accelerating climate change.
 - It aims to keep alive the goal of the Paris Agreement to try to limit long-term global average near-surface temperature to 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era.
 - The agreement calls for more decisive climate action in the face of rapidly accelerating climate change and more dangerous extreme weather that is leading to massive environmental, economic and societal upheaval.
 - The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE).
2. **India and Sweden co-host the Phase-II of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition at COP-28**
 - Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi together with H.E. Mr. Ulf Kristersson, Prime Minister of Sweden, co-launched the Phase-II of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT 2.0) for the period 2024–26, at COP-28 in Dubai.
 - India and Sweden also launched the Industry Transition Platform, which will connect the governments, industries, technology providers, researchers and think tanks of the two countries.
 - India and Sweden co-launched Lead IT at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York in 2019.
3. **PM Modi proposes to host COP33 in India in 2028**
 - In a significant announcement, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed to host the UN Climate Meet (COP33) in 2028, extending India's commitment to climate action. He made this offer during his address at the World Climate Action Summit at COP28 in Dubai.
4. **Green Rising initiative launched at RewirEd summit to empower Youth-Led climate solutions**
 - UNICEF's Generation Unlimited, in collaboration with India's Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, introduced the 'Green Rising' initiative at COP28.
 - The global 'Green Rising' initiative and the 'Green Rising India Alliance' involve UNICEF, Generation Unlimited, and a diverse network of public, private, and youth partners.
 - The Green Rising initiative was formally launched at the RewirEd Summit and aims to create pathways for 10 million children and youth in developing countries.
 - The initiative aims to mobilize youth for grassroots action, green skills building jobs, and entrepreneurship.
5. **PM Modi launches Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi**
 - Prime Minister, Narendra Modi inaugurated the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
 - He also took a walk-through of the Global AI Expo. GPAI is a multi-stakeholder initiative with 29 member countries aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice on AI by supporting cutting-edge research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
 - India is the lead chair of GPAI in 2024.
6. **Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI (YUVAi) feature in GPAI Summit 2023**
 - YUVAi-Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI- a collaborative initiative of National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India and Intel India featured at GPAI Summit.
 - This programme, designed to equip the youth with essential AI skills, has garnered attention for its innovative approach and commitment to enabling a future-ready workforce.
 - YUVAi aims to foster a deeper understanding of AI, to enable school students from Class 8 to 12 across the nation with AI skills, and to empower them to become human-centric designers and users of AI.
7. **Asia's Biggest Fitness, Sports & Wellness Trade Expo 2023 FITEXPO INDIA 2023 in Kolkata**
 - The FITEXPO INDIA 2023 is a premier sports, fitness, and wellness trade expo which showcases a diverse range of products and provides a comprehensive view of the industry.
 - The expo includes a special platform for the sports industry called SPORTEXPO. It is not only India's but Asia's Biggest Fitness, Sports & Wellness Trade Expo.
 - It offers over 100 different events covering various categories such as fitness, bodybuilding, martial arts, and more. The event aims to promote collaboration and development in sports, and it has support from the Fit India Movement and Khelo India.

AWARDS

- 1. Dr. Atul Shah's Game-Changing Innovation for Leprosy Care Earns Global Recognition**

 - Plastic surgeon Dr. Atul Shah recently won the 2023 REACH Game Changing Innovator award for his groundbreaking work in leprosy care.
 - His innovative technique, 'One in Four Lasso,' simplifies the treatment of leprosy-related deformities.
 - In addition, Dr. Shah developed a 'self-care kit' to assist patients in managing foot ulcers. This kit has been integrated into India's National Leprosy Eradication Programme, benefiting over 80,000 individuals.
 - The initiative gained support from PM Narendra Modi and received the prestigious 2023 REACH award at COP-23. Dr. Shah's work emphasizes the importance of grassroots solutions and showcases the power of simplicity in healthcare.
- 2. ISRO awarded Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for South Pole Landing and Lunar Discoveries**

 - ISRO has received the Leif Erikson Lunar Prize for their Chandrayaan-3 mission. The mission successfully landed near the Moon's South Pole and utilized technological advancements to ensure a flawless descent. The lander, Vikram, carried the ChaSTE payload, which gathered valuable data on the moon's thermal characteristics.
 - On behalf of ISRO, this was received by the Indian Ambassador to Iceland Ambassador B Shyam from the Exploration Museum in Husavik (Iceland).
 - The Leif Erikson Lunar Prize is named after the Norse explorer and is reserved for significant contributions to lunar exploration.
- 3. Oscar Nominations 2024**

 - The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced the Oscar shortlists in ten categories.
 - Films like Greta Gerwig's Barbie, Christopher Nolan's Oppenheimer, and Martin Scorsese's Killers of the Flower Moon emerged as prominent contenders across various categories.
 - They feature in the lists for score and sound. Jonathan Glazer's The Zone of Interest and Yorgos Lanthimos' Poor Things also made significant strides in makeup, visual effects, and score. Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse stood out in visual effects, song and score categories.
 - The international feature category saw diverse entries from around the globe. The Zone of Interest from the United Kingdom, The Taste of Things from France, Tótem from Mexico and Fallen Leaves from Finland are among the 15 films advancing. Notably absent was Justine Triet's Anatomy of a Fall, which failed to be selected to represent France.
- India's official entry, 2018, did not make it to the final 15.
 - Jimmy Kimmel will host the 96th Oscars in 2024 and the official list of nominees will be announced on January 23.
- 4. Power Grid conferred SKOCH Gold Award 2023**

 - Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) was honored with the prestigious SKOCH Gold Award 2023 for its Pugalur Thrissur 2000 MW HVDC System.
 - The Pugalur Thrissur 2000 MW HVDC System is a cutting-edge technology that efficiently transfers 2000 MW of power to Kerala. The SKOCH Gold Award 2023 recognizes PGCIL's contributions and advancements in power transmission and distribution.
- 5. Odisha Pavilion Bags Gold At IITF 2023**

 - The Odisha Pavilion won a Gold Medal and First Place for Excellence in Display at the India International Trade Fair (IITF 2023), held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.
 - It showcased Odisha's commitment to women's empowerment and economic prosperity with tribal art and products.
- 6. Amazon India wins National Award for empowering individuals with disabilities**

 - Amazon India was honored with the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities by President Smt. Droupadi Murmu.
 - This esteemed recognition, bestowed by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DoEPwD), and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, acknowledges the company's outstanding contributions toward creating an inclusive and accessible environment for individuals with disabilities.
- 7. Poet Sukrita Paul Kumar bags Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for Salt & Pepper**

 - The sixth edition of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize was awarded to poet-critic Sukrita Paul Kumar for her book, 'Salt & Pepper: Selected Poems'.
 - An amount of USD 5,000, a Tagore statue and a certificate for contribution to literature was awarded to Paul Kumar.
 - Additionally, Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee was honored with the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize for Social Achievement, highlighting his remarkable work in social welfare.
 - The prize, founded in 2018 by Peter Bundalo, is renowned for celebrating literary excellence and advocating for human rights and world peace. It distinguishes itself through its recognition of both artistic and social impacts.

- 8. President Droupadi Murmu Awards Crompton for Energy Conservation 2023**
- Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd. (CGCEL) has received the National Energy Conservation Award 2023 for its energy-efficient storage water heater.
 - This prestigious recognition signifies the importance of creating products that meet consumer needs while promoting energy conservation.
- 9. Bhutan recognises WHO Regional Director, confers gold medal at National Day**
- Dr. Poonam Khetrupal Singh, the Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia, was honored with Bhutan's National Order of Merit (NOM) Gold Medal for her outstanding contributions to public healthcare in Bhutan.
 - The award was presented by the Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan during the country's 116th National Day celebration in Thimphu on December 17, 2023.
 - Dr. Khetrupal Singh played a crucial role in achieving milestones in public health, including the elimination of measles in 2017 and rubella in 2023.
 - She is the first Indian and first woman to be elected as the Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia.
- 10. Professor Savita Ladage wins the Royal Society of Chemistry's Nyholm Prize for Education**
- Professor Savita Ladage from Mumbai was named winner of the Royal Society of Chemistry's Nyholm Prize for Education in recognition of her contributions to chemistry education.
 - Based at Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Professor Ladage won the prize for enthusiastically advocating the importance of chemical education, through mentoring chemistry educators and initiating teacher and student programs that promote chemistry education in India.
- 11. Javed Akhtar to receive Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival**
- The veteran lyricist-screenwriter Javed Akhtar will receive the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award at the Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival.
 - This award celebrates his remarkable contributions to the Indian film industry, including iconic works like 'Zanjeer,' 'Deewar,' 'Sholay,' 'Don,' 'Kala Patthar,' and 'Mr. India.'
 - The Ajanta-Ellora Film Festival is an annual event that aims to showcase the best films from India and beyond. It provides a platform for filmmakers and promotes Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar as a cultural hub and center for film production.
- 12. Indian-Origin Novelist Meira Chand Receives Singapore's Highest Arts Award**
- Meira Chand, an Indian-origin novelist, has been awarded Singapore's highest art award, the Cultural Medallion. As part of the award, she will receive US \$58,000 to support her artistic pursuits.
 - The National Art Council (NAC) of Singapore recognised Chand for captivating readers worldwide with stories that reflect her multicultural heritage and explore themes surrounding the multiplicity of cultural identities.
 - Meira Chand, known for her award-winning novels depicting multicultural societies, is the first English-language female writer to receive the Cultural Medallion since 1997.
 - Established in 1979, the Cultural Medallion is Singapore's highest arts accolade, awarded to individuals who have shown artistic excellence and contributed to enriching Singapore's arts and culture scene. It has been bestowed upon 132 artists in various fields.
- 13. Michelle Zarate Palomec and Sebastian Mwaura recognized as Climate Champions**
- In a significant recognition of dedication and commitment to environmental advocacy, Michelle Zarate Palomec and Sebastian Mwaura have been honoured with prestigious UN Awards for their outstanding contributions as climate champions.
 - The United Nations acknowledged their relentless efforts and groundbreaking initiatives aimed at combating climate change on a global scale.
 - Michelle Zrate Palomec's work targets marginalised indigenous communities in Oaxaca, addressing water access challenges and social disparities.
 - Sebastian Mwaura's vision for sustainable transport extends to empowering women in the e-mobility sector through the HerGo program, aiming to create 12,000 jobs for women as drivers and charging station owners.

SPORTS NEWS

- 1. Rituraj Gaikwad becomes the fastest Indian to score 4,000 Runs in Mens T20**
- Rituraj Gaikwad broke KL Rahul's record to become the fastest Indian batter to score 4,000 runs in Men's T20 cricket. KL Rahul achieved the record in 117 innings.
 - Gaikwad is also the joint fourth-fastest player globally to reach 4,000 T20 runs, sharing this record with New Zealand's Devon Conway. Chris Gayle holds the record for the fastest, achieving it in just 107 innings.

2. Olympian M. Sreeshankar clinches 35th Jimmy George Foundation Award

- Olympian M. Sreeshankar has been honoured with the prestigious 35th Jimmy George Foundation Award for being the best sportsperson in Kerala.
- This recognition highlights his outstanding achievements in winning silver medals in the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

3. Footballer Viknesh banned for doping

- M. Viknesh's appeal against a two-year ban has been rejected by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) appeal panel. He received a two-year ban from the NADA Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel starting from November 12, 2022, due to a doping violation during the National Games in September–October 2022.
- The ban was a result of Viknesh's failed doping test during the National Games, where his sample showed the presence of the banned substance Terbutaline, commonly found in cough syrups.

Key Points

Ritu Sain

- DG & CEO, NADA

4. Hardik Pandya named as the captain of Mumbai Indians

- Hardik Pandya has been named as the captain of Mumbai Indians for the upcoming IPL 2024 season.
- He replaced Rohit Sharma marking the end of his successful tenure. Sharma led MI to five IPL titles, establishing them as a dominant force in the tournament.

5. Haryana wins the Vijay Hazare Trophy by defeating Rajasthan

- Haryana won the 2023 Vijay Hazare Trophy with a 30-run triumph over Rajasthan in the summit clash.
- This marked their first-ever title and a historic moment in Indian domestic cricket.

6. Mitchell Starc overtakes Cummins and gets a record 24.75 crore by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR)

- Mitchell Starc has made a remarkable comeback to the IPL, with Kolkata Knight Riders securing his services for the 2024 season after a bidding war.
- Starc now holds the record for the most expensive player in IPL history, achieving this just an hour after

Pat Cummins set a new record with his signing by SRH. Cummins will join Sunrisers Hyderabad for a fee of 20.5 crores.

7. 75th Inter State-Inter Zonal Badminton Championship 2023: Maharashtra bags women's and AAI wins men's title events in Guwahati

- In team events of the 75th Inter State-Inter Zonal Badminton Championship 2023, Maharashtra bagged women's and Airport Authority of India (AAI) won the men's title events in Guwahati, Assam.
- The prestigious national championship organised by the Badminton Association of India was held in Assam after four years.

8. Sanjay Singh was elected the New Chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI)

- Sanjay Singh was elected the new president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). Singh hails from Varanasi and is known to be a close associate of Brij Bhushan.
- He was elected after the results of the election of office-bearers, in which he got 40 votes.
- Indian wrestler Sakshi Malik, who won a bronze medal in the 2016 Rio Olympics, retired in protest of the appointment of Sanjay Singh. This came after allegations of sexual abuse were made against the former president, Brij Bhushan Singh, and his close ally, Sanjay Singh, was elected as his replacement.

9. South Africa Dean Elgar announces retirement from international cricket

- Dean Elgar, former South Africa captain, will retire from international cricket after the upcoming test series against India. His final test will take place at Newlands in Cape Town.
- This marks the end of a 12-year-long career that has made significant contributions to South African cricket.
- Elgar had a memorable test career, with over 5,000 runs and 13 centuries in 84 tests. His highest score of 199 against Bangladesh in 2017 showcases his batting skills.

10. Coca-Cola Scores secures an eight-year partnership with ICC as Global Cricket Partner

- Coca-Cola has extended its partnership with the ICC until the end of 2031, solidifying its position in the cricketing world.
- This is one of the longest collaborations between the ICC and a single brand. The agreement covers all major ICC events, ensuring Coca-Cola's continued presence in prestigious cricket tournaments.

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