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JANUARY 2024

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NATIONAL NEWS

Ayodhya Ram Mandir inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

- The 'Pran Pratishtha' of Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya's temple took place on January 22, 2024.
- The idol of Lord Ram has been placed inside the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in Ayodhya. The idol which is carved by Mysuru-based sculptor Arun Yogiraj, stands 51 inches tall and weighs 1.5 tonnes.
- It portrays Lord Ram as a five-year-old child standing on a lotus also crafted from the same stone. PM Modi performed rituals to mark the 'Pran Pratishtha' along with a team of priests led by Lakshmikant Dixit.

Key Points

Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister	– Yogi Adityanath
Uttar Pradesh's Capital	– Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh's Governor	– Anandiben Patel

World's largest lamp lit in Ayodhya ahead of opening of the Ram Temple

- The world's largest 300-foot lamp was lit in Ayodhya using 1.25 quintals of cotton and 21,000 litres of oil.
- Soil and water from different places across the country, along with cow's ghee were used to prepare this lamp. It is also unique because oil was specially brought from Sita Mata's parental homeland.

Scientists gift Surya Tilak, a Mirror and Lens System for Ram Lalla idol

- Scientists from the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee designed a special mirror- and lens-based apparatus which will ensure that every Ram Navami day at noon, a ray of sunlight falls directly on the forehead of the 'achal Ram Lalla' idol.
- It is officially called the 'Surya Tilak mechanism'. It would be fully operational when the full temple is constructed.
- A gearbox and reflective mirrors and lenses have been arranged such that sun rays from the third floor near the shikara will be brought to Garbha Griha using well-known principles of tracking the Sun's path.

- The Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru, provided technical support on the Sun's path and Optica, a Bengaluru-based company, is involved in manufacturing the lenses and brass tubes.

India celebrates its 75th Republic Day

- India celebrated its 75th Republic Day on January 26, 2024, Republic Day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution of India on January 26, 1950. On this day, India became a sovereign republic state.
- The 2024 Republic Day parade was held at Kartavya Path in Delhi and featured the Indian army, navy, air force, police and paramilitary forces.
- The Republic Day Parade at Kartavya Path showcased the themes of 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat – Loktantra ki Matraka' emphasising India's role as a nurturer of democracy.
- For the first time, an all-women tri-services contingent participated in the parade.
- The parade featured a unique installation called 'Anant Sutra,' which showcased sarees and drapes from all over India.
- A 95-member contingent and a 33-member band contingent from France participated in the parade.

Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) to build Masjid Muhammed bin Abdullah mosque in Ayodhya

- IICF has announced the start of construction on a grand mosque in Ayodhya, beginning in May.
- The mosque will be named 'Masjid Muhammed bin Abdullah' after Prophet Muhammad.
- The project is expected to take three to four years and will redefine the cityscape of Ayodhya while symbolising communal harmony.

Union Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh inaugurates the first all-girls Sainik School at Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the first all-girls Sainik School in Vrindavan, marking a significant advancement in women's empowerment and educational reform in India.
- The school, known as Samvid Gurukulam Girls Sainik School, has a capacity of nearly 870 students and is part of a broader initiative to establish 100 new Sainik

Schools across India in partnership with NGOs, private entities and state governments.

- The school is affiliated with CBSE and will provide education and training guided by ex-servicemen.
- The decision to admit girls to Sainik Schools was approved in 2019 to promote gender equality in educational and career opportunities.

ISRO launches X-ray polarimeter satellite to study black holes

- ISRO successfully launched its first mission of 2024, XPoSat, along with 10 other satellites.
- XPoSat is India's first X-ray polarimeter satellite, aims to investigate the polarisation of intense X-ray sources and study the enigmatic world of black holes.

Key Points

- ISRO's Headquarters – Bengaluru, Karnataka
- ISRO's Chairman – S. Somnath

PM Narendra Modi dedicates DFR plant in Tamil Nadu to the nation

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the Demonstration Fast Reactor Fuel Reprocessing Plant (DFRP) at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research in Kalpakkam, Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu to the nation.
- This facility is designed to reprocess fuel from Prototype Fast Breeder Reactors (PFBR), marking a significant advancement in India's nuclear capabilities.
- DFRP houses several indigenously designed and developed novel pieces of equipment.

PM Modi presented with a coffee table book on Srirangam

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was presented with a coffee table book, Srirangam – The Resplendent Kingdom of Rangaraja by BJP State President K. Annamalai during his visit to Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu.
- The book titled 'Srirangam – The Resplendent Kingdom of Rangaraja,' published by The Hindu Group of Publication, explores the wonders of the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple.
- It is divided into 11 sections, and the book delves into the temple's unique architecture, religious and cultural traditions, and various festivals celebrated there. It also

includes scholarly articles, insightful reports and rare photographs from The Hindu Archives.

India recognises Farsi as one of its nine classical languages

- In a significant development aimed at strengthening cultural bonds, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar announced that the Indian government has chosen to designate Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages in India under the New Education Policy.
- Tamil was the first language in India to receive classical language status in 2004. All the classical languages are listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.
- The Ministry of Culture provides guidelines regarding classical languages.

Key Points

- Union Minister of Culture – G. Kishan Reddy

Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Jagannath temple corridor project

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik dedicated the Srimandir Parikrama Project to the public under which a 75-metre heritage corridor has been built around the perimeter of the 12th century Jagannath temple.
- The corridor is divided into nine distinct zones, each serving a specific purpose, aimed at enhancing the visitor experience and preserving the cultural heritage of the temple.
- The corridor offers facilities like circumambulation by devotees, smoother pedestrian flow, cloakrooms, toilets and 1.5-km-long bridge that would bring people close to the temple, bypassing the crowd in the holy town.

ISRO to launch INSAT-3DS satellite from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh

- ISRO will launch its latest meteorological satellite, INSAT-3DS. This satellite will enhance weather forecasting and disaster management and is the result of thorough testing and collaboration.
- It is designed to provide continuity of services while augmenting the capabilities of previous INSAT satellites.
- INSAT is the Indian National Satellite System and it includes a series of multipurpose geostationary

satellites to meet telecommunication, search and rescue operations, broadcasting and meteorology needs.

India to start world's first (Melanistic) black tiger safari in Odisha

- Odisha will start a melanistic tiger safari near Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR). It will be a groundbreaking initiative, the first of its kind globally. The safari is set to be located near Baripada in the Mayurbhanj district, Odisha.
- Notably, STR stands as the sole habitat for melanistic tigers worldwide, as per the last All India Tiger Estimation Report released by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2018.
- This move aims to provide tourists and visitors with a unique opportunity to witness the rare and majestic species found exclusively in Odisha.
- Melanism is a genetic condition in which an increased production of melanin, a substance in the skin that produces hair, eye, and skin pigmentation, results in black (or nearly black) skin, feathers, or hair in an animal.

Key Points

Odisha's Chief Minister	– Naveen Patnaik
Odisha's Capital	– Bhubaneswar
Governor	– Raghubar Das

Investment Forum for Advancing Climate Resilient Agrifood Systems in India launched

- NITI Aayog, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW), the Government of India, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations jointly launched the 'Investment Forum for Advancing Climate Resilient Agrifood Systems in India' in New Delhi.

- This initiative aims to develop an investment and partnership strategy to advance climate-resilient agrifood systems among the government, private sectors farmers' organisations and financial institutions in India.

Key Points

FAO's Headquarters	– Rome, Italy
Director General	– Qu Dongyu
Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare	– Arjun Munda
Niti Aayog's CEO	– B.V.R. Subrahmanyam
Niti Aayog's Vice-Chairman	– Suman Bery
Headquarters	– New Delhi

Launch of 'Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality' by India at World Economic Forum, annual meeting in Davos

- The World Economic Forum's annual meeting was held at Davos, Switzerland from 15 to 19 January 2024 with the theme 'Rebuilding Trust'.
- India participated in the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", ready to shape a common future marked by global cooperation.
- One of the key takeaways from the forum meeting was the announcement of the launch of a 'Global Good Alliance for Gender Equity and Equality' with the support and endorsed by WEF and the Government of India.
- The primary and stated objective of this new alliance is to bring together global best practices, knowledge sharing and investments in the identified areas of women's health, education and enterprise.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

Health Ministry announces new treatment regimen for leprosy

- The Central government has approved a new three-drug treatment regimen for leprosy patients, aiming to stop transmission of the disease in India by 2027.
- The move seeks to make a transition from a two-drug regimen to a three-drug regimen for Pauci-Bacillary (PB) leprosy cases.

- The WHO's recommended treatment regimen consists of three drugs — dapsone, rifampicin and clofazimine. The combination is referred to as MDT. MDT kills the pathogen and cures the patient.

Key Points

Union Health Minister	– Mansukh Mandaviya
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Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana launched

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the 'Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana' under which one crore households will get rooftop solar energy across the nation to provide electricity from solar energy.
- Rooftop solar panels are the photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of a building which is connected to the main power supply unit. Thus, it reduces the consumption of grid-connected electricity and saves electricity costs for the consumer.

PAiSA Dashboard & PM SVANidhi (Street Vendor Atma Nirbhar Nidhi) mission monitoring portal launched

- Hardeep S. Puri, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, and Petroleum and Natural Gas unveiled PAiSA Dashboard & PM SVANidhi portal.
- PAiSA dashboard provides real-time updates on the PM SVANidhi mission scheme, allowing vendors to monitor loan applications, disbursements, and repayments easily, fostering transparency and accountability.
- PM SAVNidhi portal offers comprehensive data and insights on the nationwide implementation of the scheme, enabling stakeholders to monitor progress, identify challenges and ensures effective execution.

Chhattisgarh launches Shri Ram Lala Darshan scheme

- The Chhattisgarh government launched the 'Shri Ramlala Darshan scheme' in which 20,000 pilgrims will be taken for the Shri Ram Lala Darshan annually.
- The pilgrims will be natives of Chhattisgarh aged 18 to 75 who are found fit in the health examination conducted by the district medical board.

Key Points

Chhattisgarh Capital	– Raipur
Chief Minister	– Vishnu Deo Sai

Cabinet approves PRITHVI scheme

- The Union Cabinet approved the comprehensive scheme 'PRITHvi Vigyan (PRITHVI)' by the Ministry of Earth Sciences for the period from 2021 to 2026.
- It spans five sub-schemes, aiming to enhance Earth System Sciences and provide crucial services for societal, environmental and economic well-being.
- These are

- I. ACROSS: Atmosphere and Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services.
- II. O-SMART: Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology.
- III. PACER: Polar Science and Cryosphere Research.
- IV. SAGE: Seismology and Geosciences
- V. REACHOUT: Research, Education, Training and Outreach.

Uttar Pradesh government launches 'Navya Ayodhya' scheme

- The Uttar Pradesh government launched 'Navya Ayodhya' project which primarily focuses on empowering residents to provide paying guest accommodations and homestays for tourists, devotees and travellers.

Ministry of Education launches PRERANA programme

- The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India has launched 'Prerana: An Experiential Learning Program', aiming to offer a meaningful, unique and inspiring experience to all participants, thereby empowering them with leadership qualities.
- Prerana is driven by a strong commitment to integrate principles of the Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education which is a cornerstone of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- Prerana is a week-long residential programme for selected students of classes IX to XII. It is an experiential and inspirational learning programme for students with the best-in-class technology where heritage meets innovation

Key Points

Union Minister of Education	– Dharmendra Pradhan
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Mamata Banerjee launches Yogyasree for SC/ST students in West Bengal

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has recently launched the 'Yogyasree' scheme, which provides free training modules for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students.

- The initiative focuses on preparing them for entrance and competitive exams. 50 training centres have been established across the state for this purpose.
- Additionally, 46 centres will offer similar opportunities for those interested in government jobs and civil services.
- In conjunction with the Yogyasree scheme, Banerjee has introduced an anti-ragging toll-free number for students.
- The Kerala Drug Control Department is taking action against Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) through operation AMRITH.
- This initiative aims to reduce antibiotic misuse by conducting surprise raids in pharmacies and detecting over-the-counter antibiotic sales without prescriptions.
- AMR refers to bacteria and microbes becoming resistant to drugs. The Drugs Control Department plays a crucial role in optimising antibiotic use by preventing over-the-counter sales.

Key Points

West Bengal's Capital	– Kolkata
West Bengal's Governor	– C.V. Ananda Bose

Yuva Nidhi Scheme launched for jobless youth in Shivamogga, Karnataka

- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah introduced the 'Yuva Nidhi' scheme that aims to provide unemployment assistance to graduates and diploma holders who completed their degrees in 2022–23.
- The scheme offers '3,000 per month to degree holders and '1,500 per month to diploma holders who haven't found employment in the last six months.
- The benefit is only available to Karnataka residents.

Key Points

Karnataka's Capital	– Bengaluru
Karnataka's Governor	– Thawar Chand Gehlot

Kerala launches operation AMRITH to combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

Key Points

Kerala's Capital	– Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala's Governor	– Arif Mohammad Khan
Kerala's Chief Minister	– P. Vijayan

Union Minister of Fisheries Sri Parshotham Rupal launches project for artificial reefs in vizhinjam to boost fish population

- Union Minister of Fisheries Sri Parshotham Rupal launched the project of depositing artificial reefs in the seabed in Vizhinjam, Thiruvananthapuram.
- The project, a joint initiative of the Central and State governments, is aimed at increasing the income of fishermen by enhancing the fish population in the region.
- The project is being implemented under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana with a total outlay of 13.02 crore.
- These reefs create an artificial habitat on the seafloor, creating favourable conditions for fish breeding and their sustainable survival.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) signs 1.1 billion euro contract for 155 mm artillery ammunition

- NATO signed a 1.1 billion euro contract for hundreds of thousands of 155 mm artillery rounds.
- The NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) struck the deal on behalf of several allies who will either pass on the shells to Ukraine or use them to stock up their own depleted inventories.

- The contract is likely to yield about 220,000 rounds of artillery ammunition, with the first deliveries expected at the end of 2025.

Key Points

NATO's Headquarters	– Brussels, Belgium
Total Members	– 31
Secretary General	– Jens Stoltenberg

Cameroon launches world's first nationwide malaria vaccination programme

- Cameroon is set to become the first country in the world to launch the first malaria vaccination programme to be offered nationwide.
- It will be given to the children as a part of its National Immunisation Programme (NIP).
- The country's malaria vaccine programme, with a four-dose schedule, targets all children who were six months or older on December 31, 2023.

Key Points

Cameroon's Capital	– Yaounde
President	– Paul Biya

Denmark's King Frederik X Takes the Throne as Queen Margrethe II Steps Down After 52 Years

- Denmark made history on January 14 when King Frederik X became the new monarch, succeeding his mother, Queen Margrethe II, who abdicated after 52 years.
- Queen Margrethe II announced on New Year's Eve, as she revealed her plans to voluntarily relinquish the throne at the age of 83.
- The succession process was formalised as she signed the declaration of her abdication.

Key Points

Denmark's Capital	– Copenhagen
Denmark's Prime Minister	– Mette Frederiksen

Russia assumes the BRICS Chairmanship from January 1, 2024

- On January 1, Russian President Vladimir Putin officially began Russia's 2024 BRICS Chairmanship, with the motto 'Strengthening Multilateralism for Equitable Global Development and Security'.
- Russia's priorities for the BRICS Chairmanship include cooperation in various sectors like science, technology, healthcare, environment, culture, sports, youth exchanges and civil society.
- BRICS is an international intergovernmental organisation with Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates as its members. Brazil, Russia, India and China were the founding members.

Egypt unveils solar power stations at World Heritage Sites

- Egypt has taken a significant step towards sustainable energy and environmental conservation by officially inaugurating solar power stations at five renowned Egyptian world heritage sites and museums.
- This initiative, known as the Egypt PV project, aims to foster the market for rooftop small-scale photovoltaic systems in Egypt.
- This project was funded by the Global Environment Facility and the European Union in line with Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 13 and Egypt's Vision 2023.
- The solar power stations have been installed at the Giza Plateau's Visitor Centre, Manial Palace in Cairo, Sharm El Sheikh Museum and the National and Royal Jewelry Museums in Alexandria.

Key Points

Egypt's Capital	– Cairo
President	– Abdel Fattah el-Sisi

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and European Union (EU) allocate funds to Papua New Guinea

- The UNDP and EU have granted over US\$ 420,000 to combat deforestation, improve food security and address climate change impacts in Enga Province, Papua New Guinea.
- This is the second round of support for community organisations in Enga Province.

Key Points

UNDP's Headquarters	– New York
Head	– Achim Setiner

IIT Madras to establish new campus in Kandy, Sri Lanka

- IIT – Madras is expanding by establishing a new campus in Kandy, Sri Lanka.
- Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremasinghe announced the proposal for the campus, which aims to provide affordable higher education for Sri Lankan students.

UNDP and Denmark launch 'green rooms' in Zaporizhzhia

- The UNDP, in collaboration with the Government of Denmark, has introduced a groundbreaking initiative in Ukraine – the establishment of 'green rooms' at the National Police headquarters in Zaporizhzhia Oblast.
- This project aims to create a safe and supportive environment for effective communication between law enforcement officers and child survivors or witnesses of crime.
- Green rooms are specially designed spaces within police facilities that prioritise the well-being and rights of child survivors during legal processes.

Key Points

UNDP's Headquarters	– New York
Head	– Achim Setiner

Britain signs a security agreement with Ukraine

- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak signed a security accord between the two countries.
- This security accord will remain in effect until Ukraine joins NATO.

Saudi Arabia set to open first alcohol store for non-Muslim diplomats

- Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store exclusively for diplomats, marking a significant change in the country's approach to alcohol.
- This move is part of the socio-economic reforms introduced under Vision 2030, led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
- The store will only be accessible to diplomats and is seen as a way to accommodate their lifestyles and improve international relations.

Maersk reveals the world's largest ship fueled by methanol

- In a major step towards sustainability, Maersk has unveiled the Ane Maersk, a container vessel powered by green methanol derived from green hydrogen. This marks a revolutionary shift towards eco-friendly maritime transportation.
- The Ane Maersk is the world's largest container vessel fuelled by green methanol, showcasing Maersk's commitment to sustainability and a new era of container shipping.
- With a capacity of 16,000 containers, the Ane Maersk surpasses its predecessor by eightfold, demonstrating the scale and efficiency of sustainable container shipping.

France and Germany to fund India's AMRUT mission

- France's development agency AFD and Germany's KfW Bank are in talks with India to provide a €100 million loan to fund the country's urban infrastructure plan, AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) mission.
- This collaboration follows their recent partnership on the CITIIS (City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain) 2.0 program, highlighting their commitment to sustainable urban development in India.
- CITIIS 2.0 focuses on urban renewal and sustainable waste management, with both France and Germany contributing 100 million each to the programme.

India and Nepal seal 10,000 MW hydropower deal for 10 years

- India and Nepal signed agreements for the purchase of 10,000 MW of hydropower by India from Nepal. The agreement will facilitate the export of 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal to India over the next 10 years.
- This agreement signed by Foreign Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar during his visit to Nepal.

BANKING, FINANCE AND ECONOMY NEWS

Nirmala Sitharaman becomes the second Finance Minister to present six consecutive Union Budgets

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her sixth consecutive budget on Feb 1, 2024, an unprecedented achievement in Indian parliamentary history.

- This year's budget is an interim budget serving as a vote-on-account until a new administration takes over after the general elections.
- The former Prime Minister Morarji Desai holds the record for presenting 10 Budgets, including six consecutive ones.

DGCA, regulator fines Air India '1.1 cr for violating flight safety rules

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has imposed a '1.1 crore fine on Air India for violating safety rules on flights on certain long-range routes that were 'critical' in terms of terrain.
- In a complaint filed with the DGCA in October last year, a pilot accused the Tata Group-run airline of carrying insufficient emergency oxygen on its B777 aircraft operating on India-US routes. The DGCA, after an investigation, found merit in the pilot's allegations and imposed the aforementioned penalty.
- Air India is a Tata Group subsidiary.

Key Points

Union Minister of Civil Aviation	– Jyotiraditya Scindia
DGCA's Director General	– Vikram Dev Dutt
DGCA's Headquarters	– New Delhi
Air India's CEO & MD	– Campbell Wilson

IREDA releases Vigilance Journal 'Pahal'

- Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), a Government of India enterprise under the administrative control of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has unveiled 'Pahal' – the insightful house journal of its Vigilance Department.
- The initiative marks a significant step towards transparency, accountability and the promotion of renewable energy initiatives by IREDA.

Key Points

IREDA's CMD	– Pradip Kumar Das
IREDA's Headquarters	– New Delhi

Bhavish Aggarwal's AI startup Krutrim becomes India's first unicorn in 2024

- Bhavish Aggarwal, the visionary behind Ola, has raised \$50 million for his AI start-up, Krutrim.
- The funding round, led by Matrix Partners India, has propelled Krutrim to unicorn status with a valuation of \$1 billion. Krutrim's mission is to accelerate AI innovation and lead the industry globally.
- They have introduced the Krutrim Base Model and the upcoming Krutrim Pro Model to revolutionise AI solutions.

Finance Ministry releases 'The Indian Economy: A Review – January 2024' instead of 'Economic Survey 2023–24' ahead of Interim Budget 2024–25

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Interim Budget 2024–25 on February 1.
- Every year, a day before the presentation of the budget document, the central government presents an Economic Survey. However, a survey will not be presented on January 31, the budget being of an interim nature and in light of the upcoming elections.
- In the recently released mini-annual economic survey titled 'The Indian Economy: A Review,' Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran outlines India's potential to reach a \$7 trillion economy by 2030.
- This comprehensive 74-page document, a precursor to the upcoming Interim Union Budget 2024, delves into the country's real growth rate projections for the fiscal year and highlights key challenges.

CoRover.ai unveils BharatGPT a GenAI as a service

- CoRover.ai has introduced BharatGPT, India's first Large Language Model (LLM), which aims to revolutionise AI conversations in 22 Indian languages, addressing language diversity challenges.
- BharatGPT seamlessly integrates with voice and text, providing a unique solution to linguistic diversity complexities.
- It supports voice modality in 12 Indian languages and text modality in 22 languages, thanks to the collaboration with the National Hub of Language Technology under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology's National Language Translation Mission.
- CoRover.ai, already providing AI Virtual Assistants to organisations, including IRCTC, LIC, IGL and NPCI, has integrated BharatGPT into its existing platforms.
- The CoRover Conversational AI platform enables developers and business users to create text and voice-enabled multilingual virtual assistants effortlessly.

Union Rural Development Ministry signs pact with SBI to facilitate loans for SHGs

- The Rural Development Ministry and the State Bank of India signed an MoU to facilitate enterprise financing for rural Self-Help Groups (SHG).
- State Bank of India introduced a specialised financial product Svyam Siddha, exclusively tailored for SHG women entrepreneurs seeking loans up to '5 lakhs.

- This initiative is designed to alleviate the challenges associated with extensive documentation requirements for bank loan applications and reduce the turnaround time (TAT).

Key Points

Union Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj – Giriraj Singh

Bank credit expansion projected at 15% in FY24, 12% in FY25: ICRA

- ICRA has revised its bank credit growth estimates for FY24 upwards to 14.9–15.3%, surpassing the previous projection of 12.8–13.0%.
- The surge is attributed to strong performance in the retail segment and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs).
- The incremental credit is expected to reach '20.4–20.9 trillion, the highest ever recorded in bank credit growth. ICRA anticipates corporate bond issuances to reach '9.6–9.9 trillion in FY24.
- However, concerns for FY25 include deposit mobilisation challenges and weaker export demand. ICRA predicts a record incremental deposit mobilisation of '21.7–22.3 trillion in FY24.

India's ACME and Japan's IHI sign historic Green Ammonia Supply Pact

- India's ACME Group and Japan's IHI Corporation have signed a deal to supply 0.4 million metric tons per year of green ammonia from Odisha, India to Japan.
- The agreement establishes a long-term partnership for the production, logistics and supply of green ammonia in Japan.
- The green hydrogen and ammonia project in Gopalpur, Odisha, aims to start production by 2027 and contribute to a 54 million-ton reduction in CO₂ equivalent emissions.

Sony terminates \$10 billion merger deal with Zee Entertainment

- Japan's Sony Group scrapped plans for a \$10 billion merger with India's Zee Entertainment, with both sides set to challenge each other legally over failures to close a deal that was due to reshape the country's media landscape.

- The agreement was signed on December 22, 2021 and involved ZEEL and Culver Max Entertainment (formerly Sony Pictures Networks India).

Key Points

Sony's Headquarters – Tokyo, Japan
 Sony's Chairman – Kenichiro Yoshida
 Zee's CEO – Punit Goenka
 Zee's Headquarters – Mumbai, Maharashtra

ONGC receives petroleum ministry nod to form green energy subsidiary

- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has received approval from the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry for the formation of a subsidiary company for green energy and gas business.
- The subsidiary will engage in businesses related to green hydrogen, hydrogen blending, renewable energy including solar, wind and hybrid, bio-fuels and bio-gas business and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Key Points

Union Minister of Petroleum – Hardeep Singh Puri
 ONGC's Headquarters – Delhi
 ONGC's Chairman and CEO – Arun Kumar Singh

Maharashtra signs investment MoUs worth '3.53 trillion in Davos

- Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde announced the signing of 19 MoUs during his visit to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, bringing them closer to their goal of a USD 1 trillion economy.
- The MoUs amount to '3.53 lakh crore of investments across sectors like electronics, IT, data centres, gems and jewellery, agriculture, automobile and renewable energy.
- An additional expression of interest for '1 lakh crore was received, bringing the potential investment up to '4.5 lakh crore.
- This investment has the potential to create around two lakh jobs.

Key Points

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|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Maharashtra's Capital | – Mumbai and Nagpur (winter) |
| Maharashtra's Governor | – Ramesh Mais |

Atal Setu, India's longest sea bridge inaugurated by PM Modi

- PM Narendra Modi officially inaugurated the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), also known as Atal Setu.
- It is India's longest sea bridge with 21.8 km in length. The bridge, built in honour of late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, includes a 16.5 km section over the sea and a 5.5 km portion on solid ground.
- It was built at a cost of about '17,840 crore.
- The bridge will reduce travel time from Mumbai to Pune, Goa and South India, cutting it down from two hours to just 15–20 minutes.

India secures lithium blocks in Argentina

- India secured exploration and development rights for five lithium blocks in Argentina as part of its efforts to reduce its lithium import dependency.
- Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) and Catamarca Minera Y Energética Sociedad Del Estado (CAMYEN), an Argentine state-owned mining and energy company, have finalised the deal.
- This move follows a partnership with Australia in 2022.

SBI launches Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD)

- State Bank of India has introduced a special fixed deposit scheme called SBI Green Rupee Term Deposit (SGRTD) to gather funds for environmentally-friendly projects in India.
- It aligns with the government's goal of achieving net carbon neutrality by 2070.
- It offers investors the flexibility to choose from three distinct tenors: 1111 days, 1777 days and 2222 days.

Key Points

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| SBI's Headquarters | – Mumbai |
| Chairman | – Dinesh Kumar Khara |

Yes Bank introduces Veefins SmartFin for Digital Supply Chain Finance

- Yes Bank has launched SmartFin, a digital Supply Chain Finance (SCF) platform developed with Veefin

Solutions, to support MSMEs and enhance working capital efficiencies.

- The platform offers end-to-end digital solutions that improve operational and financial efficiencies across the supply chain.

Key Points

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes Bank's Headquarters | – Mumbai, Maharashtra |
| Chairman | – Sunil Mehta |
| MD & CEO | – Prashant Kumar |

MoU between India, USAID/India to help Railways achieve net-zero emissions

- The Union Cabinet approved an MoU signed between India and USAID/India to help the Indian Railways achieve net-zero carbon emission by 2030.
- It provides a platform for Indian Railways to interact and share the latest developments and knowledge in the railway sector.

Key Points

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| USAID's Headquarters | – Washington DC, US |
| USAID's Administrator | – Samantha Power |
| Union Minister of Railways | – Ashwini Vaishnav |

West Bengal secures Geographical Indication (GI) tags for Sundarban honey, Black Nunia rice, Tangail, Gorod & Kadiyal sarees

- West Bengal has obtained GI tags for various products, such as Sunderbans honey (locally known as 'Mouban'), Black Nunia rice (referred to as the 'Prince of Rice'), and Tangail, Gorod and Kadiyal sarees.
- GI tags protect the unique identity and quality of these regional products. The GI recognition benefits the 'Mouli' community that collects Sunderbans honey by providing economic opportunities.
- The 'Prince of Rice' is the unique variety of rice from Jalpaiguri district that has obtained a GI tag. Mirzapur in Murshidabad district is known for producing exclusive Kadiyal sarees, which now enjoy protection through the GI tag.
- The GI tags provide legal recognition and safeguards against unauthorised use, contributing to the economic prosperity of local communities and preserving the state's cultural and agricultural legacy.

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

- Adidas is establishing its first Global Capacity Centre (GCC) in Asia outside of China in Chennai, India.
- This strategic move allows Adidas to focus on key processes critical to its global operations and harness India's software skills.

Karnataka Bank and Clix Capital enter into a co-lending partnership via Yubi Platform

- Karnataka Bank and Clix Capital have partnered through the Yubi Co.lend Platform to provide loans to the Indian MSME sector.
- This alliance aligns with RBI guidelines on co-lending to priority sectors.
- Karnataka Bank brings financial strength and digital capabilities to the collaboration. The platform facilitating the partnership is the Yubi Co.lend Platform.

World Economic Forum signs agreement with Telangana on C4IR

- The World Economic Forum and the Telangana government are partnering to establish the 19th Centre of the WEF's Fourth Industrial Revolution Network (4IR) in Hyderabad.
- The centre, which will focus on health tech and life sciences, is set to launch in February 2024.
- This collaboration aims to advance healthcare technology and improve lifestyles and living standards. The centre will lead initiatives for healthcare and life sciences, particularly in rural areas.

Key Points

WEF's Founder	– Klaus Schwab
WEF's President	– Børge Brende
Headquarters	– Cologny, Switzerland

DLabs at ISB launches 'Build for Billions' jointly with RBI Innovation Hub, Union Bank of India

- DLabs at the Indian School of Business (ISB) launched 'Build for Billions', a startup accelerator programme, themed around financial inclusion for the informal economy, in partnership with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) and Union Bank of India.
- The programme focuses on fostering financial inclusion within the informal economy, addressing challenges faced by gig workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, street vendors, etc.

- The 50-day accelerator programme offers mentorship, capacity building, resources, networking opportunities and a chance to pitch to banks and investors.

Key Points

RBI's Headquarters	– Mumbai, Maharashtra
RBI's Governor	– Shaktikanta Das
Union Bank of India's MD & CEO	– A. Manimekhalai
Headquarters	– Mumbai, Maharashtra

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) takes the 'One Vehicle One FASTag' initiative to enhance National Highway experience

- NHAI has introduced the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative to minimise misuse of FASTags.
- NHAI is also encouraging FASTag users to complete the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines.
- FASTags with valid balances but with incomplete KYC will get deactivated/blacklisted by banks post-31st January 2024.
- NHAI has taken this initiative after the recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and FASTags being issued without KYC in violation of RBI's mandate.

Key Points

NHAI's Chairman	– Santosh Kumar Yadav
NHAI's Headquarters	– Delhi

GAIL signs long-term LNG deal with UAE's ADNOC Gas

- GAIL has signed a deal with UAE's ADNOC Gas to buy 0.5 million tonnes of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) annually for ten years.
- The ADNOC deal bridges the demand-supply gap and fosters strategic partnerships. GAIL's agreement with ADNOC is its second long-term deal in the same month, following a similar deal with Vitol.

Key Points

GAIL's Headquarters	– New Delhi
GAIL's Chairman and MD	– Sandeep Kumar Gupta

IndoSpace signs '2,000 cr MoU with Tamil Nadu govt

- IndoSpace has signed an MoU worth '2,000 crore at the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet 2024.
- This investment is expected to create around 15,000 jobs and contribute to the state's economic growth.
- IndoSpace currently has 14 Grade A industrial and logistics parks in Tamil Nadu, with a total investment of around '4,000 crore.

A Tripartite MoU signed between the National Farmers' Welfare Programme Implementation Society, IndiaAI and the Wadhvani Foundation

- A Tripartite MoU was signed between the National Farmers' Welfare Programme Implementation Society, IndiaAI under Digital India Corporation and the Wadhvani Foundation.
- This collaboration aims to revolutionise India's agriculture sector through AI-driven digital agriculture.
- Wadhvani Foundation will play a crucial role in

shaping the AI strategy for the agriculture sector, focusing on entrepreneurship, small business expansion, innovation and skill development.

- The Ministry of Electronics & IT in India advocates for the network-centric approach of the India Digital Ecosystem Architecture (InDEA) 2.0. This framework facilitates integrated services across organisations and supports digital transformation.
- InDEA 2.0 is a comprehensive framework designed to digitise various sectors with a special focus on agriculture.
- It empowers the government and private enterprises to implement large-scale IT architectures for improved efficiency and service delivery.

Key Points

Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology – Ashwini Vaishnaw

DEFENCE NEWS

Republic Day 2024: All-women tri-service contingent, armed forces marched

- The 2024 Republic Day Parade included two all-women contingents from the defence forces, marking a milestone for gender equality and empowerment in the military.
- These contingents included members from the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, showcasing the integration and bravery of the armed forces.
- Captain Sandhya, a 26-year-old officer led the all-women tri-services contingent consisting of 148 members, expressing her pride in this role.

Indian Army launches 'Operation Sarvashakti' to thwart Pak's attempts to revive terrorism in Kashmir

- The Indian Army has launched Operation Sarvashakti in response to increasing terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir.
- This operation aims to eliminate Pakistani proxy terrorist groups operating in the sensitive Rajouri Poonch sector of the Pir Panjal mountain ranges.
- It draws inspiration from Operation Sarpvishay, which was successful in eliminating terrorists from the same areas in 2003.

- Operation Sarvashakti involves high-level coordination and a multi-agency approach with troop induction and intelligence strengthening as key measures.

Key Points

Chief of Army Staff – General Manoj Pande
 Chief of Defence Staff – General Anil Chauhan
 Union Defence Minister – Rajnath Singh

Indian Army special forces contingent reaches Egypt for joint exercise 'Cyclone'

- The Indian Army contingent comprising 25 personnel reached Egypt to take part in the second edition of India-Egypt joint special forces exercise CYCLONE. The exercise will be conducted at Anshas, Egypt.
- The exercise aims to acquaint both sides with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of Special Operations in desert/semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- The exercise CYCLONE is designed to develop bilateral military cooperation and strengthen bond between two armies through the conduct of discussions and rehearsal of tactical military drills.

India and Saudi Arabia's joint military exercise 'Sada Tanseeq' commences in Rajasthan

- The inaugural edition of the India–Saudi Arabia joint military exercise 'SADA TANSEEQ' commenced at Mahajan, Rajasthan.
- The Saudi Arabian contingent was represented by the Royal Saudi Land Forces. The Indian Army contingent was represented by a Battalion from the Brigade of the Guards (Mechanised Infantry).
- The exercise aims to train troops of both sides for joint operations in semi desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- It will enable both sides to share their best practices in the tactics, techniques and procedures of conducting operations in the sub-conventional domain.

India, France, and UAE conduct joint mega air exercise 'Desert Knight' over the Arabian Sea

- India, France and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) carried out a mega air exercise over the Arabian Sea against the backdrop of rising global concerns over Houthi militants targeting several commercial vessels in the strategic waterways in the region.
- The exercise featured several frontline aerial assets and combat jets of the air forces of the three countries.

Key Points

Chief of Air Staff – Vivek Ram Chaudhari

India–UAE joint military exercise commences in Rajasthan

- The first edition of India – UAE joint military exercise 'DESERT CYCLONE' was conducted in Mahajan, Rajasthan.
- The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability in sub-conventional operations including Fighting in the Built-Up Area (FIBUA) in desert/semi-desert terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peace Keeping Operations.
- The exercise will enhance cooperation and interoperability between both sides during Peace Keeping Operations.

India's second Very Low Frequency (VLF) communication station to come up in Vikarabad, Telangana

- The Indian Navy has chosen Telangana as a key base for the second VLF communication transmission station in the country. It will be established by 2027.

- VLF communication is crucial for the Navy to maintain effective communication with ships and submarines, emphasizing the strategic role of the new transmission station.
- The INS Kattabomman Radar Station in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, served as the pioneering VLF communication transmission station and has been operational since 1990.

Key Points

Chief of the Naval Staff – Admiral R. Hari Kumar

India–Kyrgyzstan joint special forces exercise KHANJAR commenced in Himachal Pradesh

- The 11th edition of India–Kyrgyzstan joint special forces exercise KHANJAR commenced at the Special Forces Training School in Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- The exercise is to exchange experiences and best practices in counter terrorism and special forces operations in built-up area and mountainous terrain under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.
- The exercise will emphasise developing special forces skills and advanced techniques of insertion and extraction.

Defence Minister inaugurates 35 Border Road projects worth '670 crores

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 35 infrastructure projects constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), valued at '670 crores.
- Out of the 35 projects inaugurated, 29 are bridges, and six are roads. 11 of these projects are being constructed in Jammu & Kashmir, nine in Ladakh, eight in Arunachal Pradesh, three in Uttarakhand, two in Sikkim, one in Mizoram and one in Himachal Pradesh.
- One of the key projects, the Dhak Bridge, holds strategic importance, providing increased connectivity to the borders and promoting socio-economic development in the region.
- The inauguration was organised at Dhak Bridge, a 93-metre-long Class 70R bridge over Dhak Nalla. The remaining 34 were inaugurated virtually.

'Ex-Ayutthaya': First India–Thailand naval exercise

- The maiden bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy has been named 'Ex-Ayutthaya'.

- It symbolises the significance of two of the oldest cities Ayodhya in India and Ayutthaya in Thailand.
- Both these cities have rich cultural ties and shared historical narratives dating back to several centuries.
- 'Ex-Ayutthaya', which translates to 'the invincible one' or 'undefeatable'. During the maiden edition of the exercise, participating units from both navies conducted surface and anti-air exercises including weapon firing, seamanship evolutions and tactical manoeuvres.

PEOPLE IN NEWS/APPOINTMENTS

Name	Designation
Nitish Kumar	Chief Minister of Bihar
Ashwani Gupta	CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone
Arvind Panagariya	Chairman of the Sixteenth Finance Commission
Ravindra Kumar Tyagi	CMD of Power Grid Corporation
Geetika Mehta	Managing Director of Nivea India
Karan Adani	CEO of Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd.
Shashi Singh	President of All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA)
Nina Singh	First Woman Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)
Vivek Srivastava	Director General of Fire Service, Civil Defence & Home Guards in the Ministry of Home Affairs
Gwanggu Lee	MD & CEO of Kia India
Puneet Chhatwal	Chairman of Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality (FAITH)
Nadia Calvino	President of the European Investment Bank
Rashmi Shukla	Maharashtra's First Woman Director General of Police
Sanjiv Aggarwal	CEO and MD of National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Limited (NIIFL)
Vikas Sheel	Executive Director, Asian Development Bank
Raghuram Iyer	CEO of Indian Olympic Association
Indra Mani Pandey	Secretary General (SG) of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)
Tshering Tobgay	Bhutan's Prime Minister
AN Pramod	Director General Naval Operations
Hrithik Roshan	Brand Ambassador of RuPay Prime Volleyball League
Jagrut Kotecha	CEO of PepsiCo India
Daljit Singh Chaudhary	Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal
Upal Kundu	Chief of Staff at the Southern Naval Command (SNC)
Samir Kumar Sinha	Director General DG (Acquisition) In Defence Ministry
Gabriel Attal	France's Prime Minister

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Books	Authors
Sanskriti ke Ayaam	Manorama Mishra
Gandhi: A Life in Three Campaigns	M.J. Akbar and K. Natwar Singh
An Uncommon Love: The Early Life of Sudha and Narayana Murthy	Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
Ek Samandar, Mere Andar	Sanjeev Joshi

OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Ved Prakash	Professor
Ustad Rashid Khan	Musician
Munawwar Rana	Urdu Poet
Prabha Atre	Classical Singer
Vijayakanth	Tamil Superstar and Politician
Dr Nitya Anand (Made the first oral contraceptive pill 'Saheli' in India)	Scientist
R. Champakalakshmi	Historian

OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Christian Oliver	Actor
Norman Jewison	Director
KJ Joy	Director
Franz Beckenbauer	Footballer
Glynis Johns	Actor

DAYS AND THEMES

Date	Day	Theme
January 1	Global Family Day	Embracing Diversity, Strengthening Families
January 3	International Mind Body Wellness Day	Holistic Wellness: Mind, Body, and Soul
January 4	World Braille Day	Empowering Through Inclusion and Diversity
January 5	National Birds Day	Right to Fight
January 6	World Day of War Orphans	Orphan Lives Matter and Standing Up for War-Affected Children
January 8	Earth's Rotations Day	Honoring the Discovery of Our Planet's Movement
January 9	Pravasi Bharatiya Divas	
January 10-18	Startup India Innovation Week	

Date	Day	Theme
January 10	World Hindi Day	Hindi–Bridging Traditional Knowledge and Artificial Intelligence
January 11	National Human Trafficking Awareness Day	
January 12	National Youth Day	Viksit Yuva-Viksit Bharat
January 13	National Road Safety Week	
January 15	Indian Army Day	In Service of the Nation
January 16	National Startup Day	In Service of the Nation
January 19	Kokborok Day	
January 23	Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti	
January 24	National Girl Child Day	
January 25	National Voters Day	Nothing Like Voting, I Vote For Sure
January 25	National Tourism Day	Sustainable Journeys, Timeless Memories
January 26	Republic Day	Viksit Bharat (Developed India) and Bharat – Loktantra ki Matraka (India – Mother of Democracy)
January 26	International Customs Day	
	Customs Engaging Traditional and New Partners with Purpose	
January 27	National Geographic Day	
January 30	World Leprosy Day	Act Now, End Leprosy
January 30	Martyrs Day	

REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

Uttar Pradesh tops in the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)

- Uttar Pradesh has achieved the highest entry rate on the ICJS platform for three years in a row.
- ICJS is a revolutionary platform initiated by the Supreme Court's e-committee and executed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It enables the exchange of data related to crimes and criminals between courts, police, jails and forensic science laboratories through a single-window system.

Shri Bhupender Yadav releases the status report of snow leopards in India

- Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav released the report on the status of snow leopards in India during the National Board for Wildlife meeting.
- The Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Programme is the first-ever scientific exercise that reports snow leopard population of 718 individuals in India.

- The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is the National Coordinator for this exercise that was carried out with the support of all snow leopard range states and two conservation partners, the Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru and WWF-India.
- The snow leopard occupancy was recorded in 93,392 km², with an estimated presence in 100,841 km².
- Based on data analysis, the estimated population in different states are as follows: Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21) and Jammu and Kashmir (9).

Ministry of Education releases All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–2022

- The Ministry of Education, Government of India released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–2022.
- It has been conducting AISHE since 2011, covering all Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the country registered with AISHE collecting detailed information on different parameters such as student enrollment, teachers, infrastructural information, etc.

- The total enrolment in higher education has increased to nearly 4.33 crore in 2021–22 from 4.14 crore in 2020–21. There has been an increase of around 91 lakhs in the enrolment from 3.42 crore (26.5%) in 2014–15.
- The female enrolment has increased to 2.07 crore in 2021–22 from 2.01 crore in 2020–21. There has been an increase of around 50 lakhs in the female enrolment from 1.57 crore (32%) in 2014–15.
- Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of female GER to male GER is 1.01 in 2021–22.
- As per response in AISHE 2021–22, about 78.9% of the total students are enrolled in undergraduate level courses and 12.1% are enrolled in postgraduate level courses.
- Among disciplines at undergraduate level in AISHE 2021–22, enrolment is highest in Arts (34.2%), followed by Science (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%) and Engineering & Technology (11.8%).
- Government Universities constituting 58.6% of total universities, contribute 73.7% of total enrolment, private universities account for 26.3% of total enrolment.
- The total number of students enrolled in STEM in UG, PG, M.Phil. and Ph.D. levels in 2021–22 is 98.5 lakhs compared to 94.7 lakh in 2020–21.
- The total number of universities/university level

institutions registered is 1,168, colleges 45,473 and standalone institutions 12,002.

LIC overtakes SBI to become the most valuable PSU

- LIC has surpassed SBI in market capitalisation, with its share price increasing and reaching a 52-week high.
- The share price of the company touched ₹900 for the first time. It is the level which has not been witnessed by the public insurer since its listing in May 2022.

Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka lead in startup ecosystem development: DPIIT

- According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu emerged as the top-performing states in the 2022 Startup Ranking.
- The rankings were released by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and conducted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. These provide a comprehensive overview of the startup ecosystem across India.
- A total of 33 states and Union territories (UTs) participated in the exercise, which ranked them under five categories – best performers, top performers, leaders, aspiring leaders and emerging startup ecosystems.

EVENTS

2024 Vibrant Gujarat Summit

- The tenth Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGS) was held from January 10 to 12, 2024, at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- It was organised by the Government of Gujarat in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and iNDEXTb under the theme 'Gateway to the Future'
- The focus was on renewable energy, electric mobility, sustainable manufacturing, space technology manufacturing, green hydrogen and Industry 4.0.
- Narendra Modi along with the international leaders namely Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, Filipe Nyusi, President of Mozambique, Republic Petr Fiala, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic and José Ramos-Horta, President of East Timor participated in the summit.

I-STEM hosts national event 'Samavesha' to connect researchers, industry and start-ups with lab facilities

- I-STEM (Indian Science, Technology, and Engineering facilities Map), an initiative from the Office of Principal Scientific Advisor, Government of India, organised 'Samavesha', a national event to revolutionise research collaboration in India.
- The event was held at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, to connect Researchers, Industry, and Start-ups with Lab facilities. I-STEM provides a platform to provide Research infrastructure and Labs that can be availed by users across India.
- The project targets connecting researchers with scientific institutes through an online portal. This saves the researchers, industry and start-ups the prohibitive capital expenditure of purchasing advanced equipment.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur attends youth dialogue programme on the theme 'My Bharat Mera Yuva Bharat'

- Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur attended a youth dialogue programme on the theme 'My Bharat Mera Yuva Bharat' organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra at Malala Auditorium in Diu.
- He highlighted government initiatives like Khelo India, Fit India and Drug-Free India, encouraging youth to prioritise sports and fitness while staying away from drugs.

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

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 27th

National Youth Festival at Nashik, Maharashtra on January 12, and addressed the youth of the nation.

- It was the occasion of the 161st anniversary of Swami Vivekanand.
- January 12 is celebrated as National Youth Day in India.

Annual Orange festival at Rusoma village in Kohima District, Nagaland

- The fourth edition of the Rsoma Orange Festival took place in the picturesque village of Rsoma, Nagaland.
- The festival showcased organic produce, community spirit and rural entrepreneurship.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Prof B.R. Kamboj honoured with the M.S. Swaminathan Award

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

Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 conferred

- The President of India, Droupadi Murmu conferred Swachh Survekshan awards 2023 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi hosted by the Ministry of Housing and

Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

- Surat and Indore won the All India Clean City Rank 1. Indore had conquered the top spot alone for six consecutive years.
- In the category of cities with a population of less than 1 lakh, Sasvad, Patan and Lonavala secured the top three spots.
- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh won the top three awards for Best Performing state.
- Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh was adjudged the Cleanest Cantonment Board.
- Varanasi and Prayagraj won the top two awards amongst the Cleanest Ganga Towns.

Filmfare Awards 2024 winners

Category	Winner
Best Film	12th Fail
Best Film (Critics)	Joram (Devashish Makhija)
Best Actor in a Leading Role (Male)	Ranbir Kapoor (Animal)
Best Actor (Critics)	Vikrant Massey (12th Fail)
Best Actress in a Leading Role (Female)	Alia Bhatt (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Best Actress (Critics)	Rani Mukerji (Mrs Chatterjee vs. Norway), Shefali Shah (Three of Us)
Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male)	Vicky Kaushal (Dunki)
Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female)	Shabana Azmi (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Best Director	Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
Lifetime Achievement Award	David Dhawan

U.P. govt confers Gaurav Samman on Dr Ritu Karidhal Srivastava and Naveen Tiwari

- The Uttar Pradesh government conferred the 'Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman' on eminent ISRO scientist Dr Ritu Karidhal Srivastava and Naveen Tiwari.
- Dr Ritu played a crucial role in the Chandrayaan Mission as the mission director of mission moon.
- Naveen Tiwari is a noted entrepreneur from Kanpur and regularly featured on covers of magazines like Forbes and Fortune.

Former Bihar Chief Minister Karpooori Thakur to be awarded Bharat Ratna posthumously

- The Government of India recently announced that the late Karpooori Thakur, former Chief Minister of Bihar, will be posthumously honoured with the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.
- Thakur served as Bihar's Chief Minister twice and implemented progressive policies during his tenure, including land reforms and initiatives for the upliftment of marginalised groups. His legacy is characterised by his dedication to social equality and justice, which has had a lasting impact on Bihar's socio-political fabric.

Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay receives 2023 Kuvempu Award

- Renowned Bengali writer Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay was awarded the 2023 Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar, a national award celebrating writers who have made significant contributions to any Indian language.
- Mukhopadhyay, a prolific author with over 90 books in various genres, including travelogues and children's fiction, received a cash prize of ₹5 lakh, a silver medal, and a citation.

Padma Vibhushan

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
1	Ms. Vyjayantimala Bali	Art	Tamil Nadu
2	Shri Konidela Chiranjeevi	Art	Andhra Pradesh
3	Shri M Venkaiah Naidu	Public Affairs	Andhra Pradesh
4	Shri Bindeshwar Pathak (Posthumous)	Social Work	Bihar
5	Ms. Padma Subrahmanyam	Art	Tamil Nadu

Padma Bhushan

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
1	Ms. M Fathima Beevi (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Kerala
2	Shri Hormusji N Cama	Literature & Education – Journalism	Maharashtra

- The Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar is an annual literary award that recognises writers in multiple Indian languages, with the previous year's recipient being Imayam. Mukhopadhyay's work has contributed greatly to Indian literature and received acclaim from the literary community.

Padma awards announced

- Padma awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year and conferred by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan around March/April every year.
- These are one of the highest civilian Awards and are given in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri for different disciplines/ fields such as art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.
- 'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service.
- 'Padma Bhushan' is awarded for distinguished service of high order.
- 'Padma Shri' is awarded for distinguished service in any field.
- For the year 2024, the President has approved the conferment of 132 Padma Awards including 2 duo cases (in a duo case, the Award is counted as one). The list comprises 5 Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan and 110 Padma Shri Awards. 30 of the awardees are women and the list also includes 8 persons from the category of Foreigners / NRI / PIO / OCI and 9 Posthumous awardees.

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
3	Shri Mithun Chakraborty	Art	West Bengal
4	Shri Sitaram Jindal	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
5	Shri Young Liu	Trade & Industry	Taiwan
6	Shri Ashwin Balachand Mehta	Medicine	Maharashtra
7	Shri Satyabrata Mookherjee (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	West Bengal
8	Shri Ram Naik	Public Affairs	Maharashtra
9	Shri Tejas Madhusudan Patel	Medicine	Gujarat
10	Shri Olanchery Rajagopal	Public Affairs	Kerala
11	Shri Dattatray Ambadas Mayaloo alias Rajdutt	Art	Maharashtra
12	Shri Togdan Rinpoche (Posthumous)	Others – Spiritualism	Ladakh
13	Shri Pyarelal Sharma	Art	Maharashtra
14	Shri Chandreshwar Prasad Thakur	Medicine	Bihar
15	Ms. Usha Uthup	Art	West Bengal
16	Shri Vijaykanth (Posthumous)	Art	Tamil Nadu
17	Shri Kundan Vyas	Literature & Education – Journalism	Maharashtra

Padma Shri

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
1	Shri Khalil Ahamad	Art	Uttar Pradesh
2	Shri Badrappan M	Art	Tamil Nadu
3	Shri Kaluram Bamaniya	Art	Madhya Pradesh
4	Ms. Rezwana Choudhury Bannya	Art	Bangladesh
5	Ms. Naseem Bano	Art	Uttar Pradesh
6	Shri Ramlal Bareth	Art	Chhattisgarh
7	Ms. Gita Roy Barman	Art	West Bengal
8	Ms. Parbati Baruah	Social Work	Assam
9	Shri Sarbeswar Basumatary	Others – Agriculture	Assam
10	Shri Som Datt Battu	Art	Himachal Pradesh
11	Ms. Takdira Begum	Art	West Bengal
12	Shri Sathyanarayana Beleri	Others – Agriculture	Kerala
13	Shri Drona Bhuyan	Art	Assam
14	Shri Ashok Kumar Biswas	Art	Bihar
15	Shri Rohan Machanda Bopanna	Sports	Karnataka
16	Ms. Smriti Rekha Chakma	Art	Tripura
17	Shri Narayan Chakraborty	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
18	Shri A Velu Ananda Chari	Art	Telangana
19	Shri Ram Chet Chaudhary	Science & Engineering	Uttar Pradesh
20	Ms. K Chellammal	Others – Agriculture	Andaman & Nicobar Islands
21	Ms. Joshna Chinappa	Sports	Tamil Nadu
22	Ms. Charlotte Chopin	Others – Yoga	France

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
23	Shri Raghuveer Choudhary	Literature & Education	Gujarat
24	Shri Joe D Cruz	Literature & Education	Tamil Nadu
25	Shri Ghulam Nabi Dar	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
26	Shri Chitta Ranjan Debbarma	Others – Spiritualism	Tripura
27	Shri Uday Vishwanath Deshpande	Sports	Maharashtra
28	Ms. Prema Dhanraj	Medicine	Karnataka
29	Shri Radha Krishan Dhiman	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
30	Shri Manohar Krishana Dole	Medicine	Maharashtra
31	Shri Pierre Sylvain Filliozat	Literature & Education	France
32	Shri Mahabir Singh Guddu	Art	Haryana
33	Ms. Anupama Hoskere	Art	Karnataka
34	Shri Yazdi Maneksha Italia	Medicine	Gujarat
35	Shri Rajaram Jain	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
36	Shri Jankilal	Art	Rajasthan
37	Shri Ratan Kahar	Art	West Bengal
38	Shri Yashwant Singh Kathoch	Literature & Education	Uttarakhand
39	Shri Zahir I Kazi	Literature & Education	Maharashtra
40	Shri Gaurav Khanna	Sports	Uttar Pradesh
41	Shri Surendra Kishore	Literature & Education – Journalism	Bihar
42	Shri Dasari Kondappa	Art	Telangana
43	Shri Sridhar Makam Krishnamurthy	Literature & Education	Karnataka
44	Ms. Yanung Jamoh Lego	Others – Agriculture	Arunachal Pradesh
45	Shri Jordan Lepcha	Art	Sikkim
46	Shri Satendra Singh Lohia	Sports	Madhya Pradesh
47	Shri Binod Maharana	Art	Odisha
48	Ms. Purnima Mahato	Sports	Jharkhand
49	Ms. Uma Maheshwari D	Art	Andhra Pradesh
50	Shri Dukhu Majhi	Social Work	West Bengal
51	Shri Ram Kumar Mallick	Art	Bihar
52	Shri Hemchand Manjhi	Medicine	Chhattisgarh
53	Shri Chandrashekhar Mahadeorao Meshram	Medicine	Maharashtra
54	Shri Surendra Mohan Mishra (Posthumous)	Art	Uttar Pradesh
55	Shri Ali Mohammed & Shri Ghani Mohammed* (Duo)	Art	Rajasthan
56	Ms. Kalpana Morparia	Trade & Industry	Maharashtra
57	Ms. Chami Murmu	Social Work	Jharkhand
58	Shri Sasindran Muthuvel	Public Affairs	Papua New Guinea
59	Ms. G Nachiyar	Medicine	Tamil Nadu
60	Ms. Kiran Nadar	Art	Delhi

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
61	Shri Pakaravur Chithran Namboodiripad (Posthumous)	Literature & Education	Kerala
62	Shri Narayanan E P	Art	Kerala
63	Shri Shailesh Nayak	Science & Engineering	Delhi
64	Shri Harish Nayak (Posthumous)	Literature & Education	Gujarat
65	Shri Fred Negrit	Literature & Education	France
66	Shri Hari Om	Science & Engineering	Haryana
67	Shri Bhagabat Padhan	Art	Odisha
68	Shri Sanatan Rudra Pal	Art	West Bengal
69	Shri Shankar Baba Pundlikrao Papalkar	Social Work	Maharashtra
70	Shri Radhe Shyam Pareek	Medicine	Uttar Pradesh
71	Shri Dayal Mavjibhai Parmar	Medicine	Gujarat
72	Shri Binod Kumar Pasayat	Art	Odisha
73	Ms. Silbi Passah	Art	Meghalaya
74	Ms. Shanti Devi Paswan & Shri Shivan Paswan* (Duo)	Art	Bihar
75	Shri Sanjay Anant Patil	Others – Agriculture	Goa
76	Shri Muni Narayana Prasad	Literature & Education	Kerala
77	Shri K S Rajanna	Social Work	Karnataka
78	Shri Chandrashekar Channapatna Rajannachar	Medicine	Karnataka
79	Shri Bhagwatilal Rajpurohit	Literature & Education	Madhya Pradesh
80	Shri Romalo Ram	Art	Jammu & Kashmir
81	Shri Navjivan Rastogi	Literature & Education	Uttar Pradesh
82	Ms. Nirmal Rishi	Art	Punjab
83	Shri Pran Sabharwal	Art	Punjab
84	Shri Gaddam Sammaiah	Art	Telangana
85	Shri Sangthankima	Social Work	Mizoram
86	Shri Machihan Sasa	Art	Manipur
87	Shri Omprakash Sharma	Art	Madhya Pradesh
88	Shri Eklabya Sharma	Science & Engineering	West Bengal
89	Shri Ram Chander Sihag	Science & Engineering	Haryana
90	Shri Harbinder Singh	Sports	Delhi
91	Shri Gurvinder Singh	Social Work	Haryana
92	Shri Godawari Singh	Art	Uttar Pradesh
93	Shri Ravi Prakash Singh	Science & Engineering	Mexico
94	Shri Seshampatti T Sivalingam	Art	Tamil Nadu
95	Shri Somanna	Social Work	Karnataka
96	Shri Kethavath Somlal	Literature & Education	Telangana
97	Ms. Shashi Soni	Trade & Industry	Karnataka
98	Ms. Urmila Srivastava	Art	Uttar Pradesh

S.No.	Name	Field	State/Region/Country
99	Shri Nepal Chandra Sutradhar (Posthumous)	Art	West Bengal
100	Shri Gopinath Swain	Art	Odisha
101	Shri Laxman Bhatt Tailang	Art	Rajasthan
102	Ms. Maya Tandon	Social Work	Rajasthan
103	Ms. Aswathi Thirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bayi Thampuratty	Literature & Education	Kerala
104	Shri Jagdish Labhshanker Trivedi	Art	Gujarat
105	Ms. Sano Vamuzo	Social Work	Nagaland
106	Shri Balakrishnan Sadanam Puthiya Veetil	Art	Kerala
107	Shri Kurella Vittalacharya	Literature & Education	Telangana
108	Shri Kiran Vyas	Others – Yoga	France
109	Shri Jageshwar Yadav	Social Work	Chhattisgarh
110	Shri Babu Ram Yadav	Art	Uttar Pradesh

SPORTS NEWS

PM inaugurates the opening ceremony of the Khelo India Youth Games 2023 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

- Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi inaugurated the opening ceremony of the Khelo India Youth Games 2023 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. These will be played in four cities in Tamil Nadu.
- This year archery, athletics, badminton, squash and Silambam were included in the Khelo India Games for the first time.
- He laid the foundation stone of projects related to the Broadcasting sector worth about '250 crores.
- The games will witness the participation of athletes from all 36 states and union territories of India.

RuPay Prime Volleyball League onboards Hrithik Roshan as brand ambassador for Season 3

- RuPay Prime Volleyball powered by A23 has appointed Hrithik Roshan as its brand ambassador.
- Hrithik enjoys the physical nature of volleyball and described the partnership as a natural fit for him.

R. Praggnanandhaa surpasses Viswanathan Anand to become India's leading chess player

- India's chess wizard Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa defeated the World Chess Champion Ding Liren in the Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee, in the Netherlands.
- He became the second Indian after Vishwanathan Anand to defeat a reigning champion.

- Praggnanandhaa's FIDE live rating is now 2748.3, slightly higher than Anand's 2748.

India Open: Tai Tzu Ying beats Olympic champ to win women's singles title

- Tai Tzu Ying won the India Open 2024 women's singles title, defeating Chen Yu Fei in straight sets.
- She plans to retire after the 2024 season.

President of India inaugurates the fifth edition of the Meghalaya Games

- The President of India, Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the fifth edition of the Meghalaya Games in Tura, Meghalaya.
- It had 3,000 athletes competing in 23 disciplines across 16 venues and included traditional indigenous games.

At the age of 43, Rohan Bopanna becomes the oldest World No. 1 in men's doubles

- India's Rohan Bopanna created history by becoming the world No. 1 in the men's tennis doubles rankings.
- He achieved this remarkable feat after winning in the quarter-finals of the 2024 Australian Open with Matthew Ebden of Australia.

Virat Kohli wins Pubity Male Athlete of 2023 Award

- Virat Kohli emerged as the winner of the Pubity Male Athlete of The Year Award by defeating Lionel Messi

- He was the first batter to score 50 ODI centuries and a world record for most runs (765) in a single edition of the World Cup.

David Warner retires from ODI cricket before test farewell

- David Warner announced his retirement from ODI cricket while leaving the door open for a Champions Trophy return in 2025.
- He announced his decision before playing his farewell test match against Pakistan to be played at the iconic Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

ICC amends stumping review, concussion substitute rules

- The International Cricket Council (ICC) has restricted the Decision Review System (DRS) for stumping incidents, effective from December 12, 2023.
- The umpires will rely only on side-on-camera images for stumping reviews.
- The substitute players cannot bowl if the replaced player was suspended for bowling during the concussion incident.
- The four-minute time limit for on-field injury assessment and treatment.
- BCCI maintains 'Dead Ball' and two bouncers per over rules for the upcoming Ranji Trophy.

Key Points

Chairman	– Greg Barclay
Headquarters	– Dubai, UAE

Divyakriti Singh becomes the first Indian woman Arjuna Awardee for equestrian sports

- Divyakriti Singh created history in Indian sports by receiving the prestigious Arjuna Award by being the first woman from Rajasthan to achieve this honour.
- She was presented by the President of India at a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Madhya Pradesh wins inaugural Diu Beach Games 2024

- Madhya Pradesh emerged as the overall champion at the Diu Beach Games 2024, winning 18 medals, including 7 golds.

- Lakshadweep made history by winning gold in Beach Soccer, diversifying the medal tally. 1,404 athletes from 28 states and Union Territories participated in the inaugural games, showcasing widespread engagement in beach sports.

Australian cricketer, Shaun Marsh retires from professional cricket

- Renowned Australian cricketer Shaun Marsh has retired from all forms of the sport. He played a total of 38 tests, 73 ODIs, and 15 T20Is.
- In the IPL, Marsh played for Kings XI Punjab, scoring 2,477 runs in 71 games, with a remarkable performance in his debut season.

Rohit Sharma becomes the first-ever cricketer to feature in 150 T20I matches

- Rohit Sharma made history by becoming the first men's player to feature in 150 T20I matches.
- This achievement came during the second T20I against Afghanistan.

Snow leopard 'Sheen-e She' (Shan) named as the mascot of Khelo India Winter Games 2024

- In keeping with the tradition and biodiversity of the region, the mascot of the Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is a snow leopard. It has been named 'Sheen-e She' or Shan in Ladakh region.
- The logo of the games, prominent with the Indian tricolor, reflects the uniqueness of the picturesque land and the many sports that's on the cards. The Games logo is complete with a Dharmachakra (turning wheel of Dharma) on a hilltop in Chanspa in Leh, the venue of the games.
- The first part of the Winter Games, a mouth-watering event for winter sports athletes, will be held in Union Territory of Ladakh for the first time from February 2–6.
- The second portion is scheduled in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir from February 21–25.

Key Points

Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports	– Anurag Thakur
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