
CURRENT AFFAIRS

APRIL 2024

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LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2024

Punjab launched Booth Raabta website

- Punjab's Malerkotla district has launched the 'Booth Raabta' website to increase voter involvement and facilitate access to election-related information.
- The 'Booth Raabta' website provides simple access to critical election-related information, giving voters the tools that will help them make informed decisions. The website allows young voters to download certificates and provides a forum for voters to assess polling places, which increases openness and accountability in the voting process.
- This initiative was launched by District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner of Malerkotla, Dr. Pallavi.

Key Points

Punjab's Capital	—	Chandigarh
Chief Minister	—	Bhagwant Mann
Governor	—	Banwarilal Purohit

People of Andaman's vulnerable Shompen tribe vote for the first time

- Seven members of the Shompen tribe, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of Great Nicobar Islands exercised their voting rights for the first time for the lone Lok Sabha seat in the union territory.
- They exercised their voting rights at a polling station 411 named 'Shompen Hut' built inside the forest staff quarters.

- They were assisted in their language by an interpreter known as 'Mathiyas' (a Nicobari tribal youth).
- According to the 2011 Census data, there are 229 individuals belonging to the Shompen tribe.

Key Points

Capital of Andaman and Nicobar	—	Port Blair
Lt. Governor	—	Devendra Kumar Joshi

IIT Guwahati unveils 3D printed dummy ballot unit

- The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation Cell (SVEEP) of Kamrup Election District in Assam has partnered with the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati to develop an innovative 3D-printed dummy ballot unit.
- The 3D-printed dummy ballot unit aims to dispel any apprehensions, anxiety or uncertainties associated with the voting process. It will offer a hands-on experience and foster maximum voter participation.
- The dummy ballot unit is fabricated from PLA (polylactic acid), a biodegradable and eco-friendly material derived from corn starch. This device was designed and manufactured within 48 hours.
- This initiative marks the first-of-its-kind endeavour in India by the IIT Guwahati team to develop a 3D-printed dummy ballot unit.

NATIONAL NEWS

Ministry of Commerce and Industry asks e-commerce websites to remove Bournvita from health drinks category

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has asked all e-commerce websites to remove drinks and beverages, including Bournvita from the health drinks category on their portals.
- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) after its inquiry under Section 14 of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act (CRPC) 2005, concluded that there is no 'health drink' defined under the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA) 2006, rules and regulations.
- The order comes days after the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had also advised

e-commerce platforms to ensure that dairy-based beverage mixes, cereal-based beverage mixes, or malt-based beverage mixes like Bournvita are not listed under the 'health drinks' or 'energy drinks' categories.

- The term 'Energy' Drinks is permitted to be used only on the products licensed under Food Category System (FCS) 14.1.4.1 and 14.1.4.2 (carbonated and non-carbonated water-based flavoured drinks), standardised under sub-regulation 2.10.6 (2) of the Food Product Standards and Food Additives Regulations 2011 (Caffeinated Beverage).
- Further, 'health drinks' are not defined anywhere under the FSS Act 2006 or rules/regulations made thereunder.

Key Points

FSSAI's Headquarters	— New Delhi
FSSAI's Chairperson	— Apurva Chandra
FSSAI's CEO	— Ganji Kamala V. Rao

Centre forms a six-member panel to examine issues faced by the queer community

- The Indian government has constituted a six-member committee to examine various issues related to the queer community.
- Rajiv Gauba, the Union Cabinet Secretary will head the committee.
- The panel will examine measures that can be taken to ensure there is no discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in access to goods and services and measures that can be taken to ensure that the LGBTQ+ community does not face any threat of violence, harassment or coercion.
- The development follows months after the Supreme Court refused to grant legal recognition to the same-sex marriages and referred the decision to Parliament.

Delhi High Court appoints former judge Justice Najmi Waziri to head the committee on protection of forests

- Delhi High Court has appointed its former judge, Justice Najmi Waziri, as the chairperson of an internal departmental committee of city officials dealing with the protection of forests in the national capital.
- Justice Waziri, known as the 'green judge' of Delhi for his efforts to enrich the greenery of the national capital by asking litigants to plant 3.7 lakh trees in several cases.
- The committee will ensure that concrete steps are taken to protect, preserve, reclaim and enhance both protected and deemed forests.

Lakshmana Tirtha River dries up due to shortage of rainfall

- The Lakshmana Tirtha River in the Kodagu District, Karnataka has dried up due to severe drought conditions and intense heat.
- The river originates from dense forests in Kutta of Ponnampet taluk. It stretches 180 km before merging into the Cauvery River through Piyapatna and Hunsur in Mysore, eventually flowing into the Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) reservoir.

President of India launches India's first home-grown gene therapy for cancer

- The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, launched India's first home-grown gene therapy for cancer at Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.
- India's first CAR-T cell therapy was developed through collaboration between the IIT Bombay, the Tata Memorial Hospital and industry partner ImmunoACT.
- India has successfully made CAR-T cell therapy accessible and affordable. This therapy has been available in developed nations for some time, but it is extremely costly and beyond the reach of most patients.

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi inaugurates Param Vir Chakra Garden

- Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi inaugurated the Param Vir Chakra Garden and Ayyam exhibition at Kanchi Mahaswamy Vidya Mandir in Tambaram.
- The garden showcases the history and statues of the 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees, India's highest military decoration for valor.

Key Points

Tamil Nadu's Capital	— Chennai
Tamil Nadu's Governor	— R. N. Ravi
Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister	— M.K. Stalin

SJVN inaugurates India's first Multi-purpose Green Hydrogen Pilot Project

- SJVN Limited has inaugurated India's first Multi-purpose Green Hydrogen Pilot Project at its 1,500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Station (NJHPS) in Jhakri, Himachal Pradesh.
- The green hydrogen produced will be used for the High-Velocity Oxygen Fuel (HVOF) coating facility at NJHPS, as well as for generating electricity through a 25 kW capacity fuel cell.
- The project will produce 14 kilograms of green hydrogen daily during 8 hours of operation.
- The hydrogen produced will be stored at a pressure of 30 bars, in six storage tanks, with a total storage capacity of 12 m³.

Key Points

Chairman & MD of SJVN	—	Nand Lal Sharma
Headquarters	—	Shimla, Himachal Pradesh
Owner	—	Government of India (59.92%) and Government of Himachal Pradesh (26.85%)

Indian Historical Records Commission (IHRC) adopts a new logo and motto

- The Indian Historical Records Commission (IHRC) has adopted a new logo and motto.
- The logo's shape resembles lotus petals, representing the resilient nodal institution for maintaining historical records.
- The central element of the logo is the Sarnath pillar, evoking India's ancient heritage. The logo's brown color emphasizes IHRC's mission to preserve, study, and honor India's historical records.
- The motto of IHRC is 'Where history is preserved for the future.' It emphasises IHRC's role in identifying, collecting, cataloguing and maintaining historical documents, manuscripts, and other historical sources.
- Shaurya Pratap Singh designed the logo and motto.
- IHRC is an apex advisory body on archival matters and was established in 1919.
- It acts as an all-India forum of creators, custodians and users of records to advise the Government of India on managing records and their use for historical research.
- The Union Minister of Culture heads IHRC.

Meta partners with PTI to expand fact-checking program in India

- Social media giant Meta collaborated with the Press Trust of India (PTI) under its third-party fact-checking program in India.
- The partnership will enable PTI to identify, review, and rate content as misinformation across Meta platforms.
- Meta's fact-checking program in India includes partnerships with independent fact-checking organizations to help users identify and prevent the spread of misinformation on its platforms.
- Now Meta has 12 fact-checking partners in India, making it the country with the most third-party fact-checking partners globally across Meta.

Key Points

PTI's Headquarters	—	New Delhi
PTI's Chairman	—	K.N. Shanth Kumar
Meta's Chairman & CEO	—	Mark Zuckerberg
Meta's Headquarters	—	California, U.S.

India's First AI-based film 'IRAH' trailer launched in Mumbai

- The trailer and song launch of India's first Hindi film focused on Artificial Intelligence, "IRAH," took place in Mumbai. The movie showcases the misuse of AI technology, shedding light on its negative aspects.
- 'IRAH' features Rohit Bose Roy, Rajesh Sharma, Karishma Kotak, and Rakshith Bhandarry in prominent roles.

India aims to generate 1 lakh MW of nuclear power by 2047

- India aims to produce 100,000 MW of nuclear power by 2047, a massive increase from the current production of over 8,000 MW.
- A vision document for 'Amrit Kaal' is being prepared by the Department of Atomic Energy which envisages reaching a nuclear capacity of about 100 GW by 2047.
- The breeder reactors would contribute 3 GW of nuclear power, while 17.6 GW would come from light water reactors built with international cooperation and another 40–45 GW would come from the pressurised heavy water reactors.

Excavation of 5,200-year-old Harappan civilisation settlement

- Recently, archaeologists from Kerala University unearthed a 5,200-year-old Harappan settlement at Padta Bet, around 1.5 km away from Juna Khatiya, an Early Harappan necropolis, in Kutch district, Gujarat.
- The expedition uncovered crucial evidence shedding light on the cultural formation of Early Harappan settlements in the region.
- The excavation unearthed evidence of a Harappan settlement dating back to circa 3200 BCE to 1700 BCE, including circular and rectangular structures made of locally available sandstone and shale.
- Unique pottery traditions, semi-precious stone beads, terracotta spindle whorls, copper, lithic tools and animal bone fragments were among the finds.

Glass Skywalk Bridge inaugurated in Chitrakoot, Uttar Pradesh

- The first glass skywalk bridge in Uttar Pradesh was inaugurated at the enchanting Tulsi (Shabari) Waterfall in Chitrakoot. The site is the birthplace of Goswami Tulsidas in Rajapur and the presence of Lord Shri Ram's shrine makes it a popular tourist destination.
- The bridge is designed to resemble Lord Rama's bow and arrow, constructed in the Kodand forest area at a cost of ₹ 3.70 crore. The arrow's length towards the abyss measures 25 metres and the width of the bow between the two pillars spans 35 metres.
- The bridge is engineered to withstand a load capacity of 500 kg per square metre, ensuring visitors' safety and security.
- The Forest and Tourism Department, along with the Pawan Sut Construction Company of Ghazipur, led the construction of the Glass Skywalk Bridge. Last year, the state government renamed it Tulsi Water Falls.

ISKCON collaborates with NSDC for skill development

- The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) have partnered to provide vocational training to tribal and underprivileged youth across multiple states.
- The strategic partnership focuses on skilling youth from tribal and marginalised communities in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, with plans to expand to other regions in future.
- The participants will receive industry-recognised certifications via the Skill India Digital Hub platform, enhancing their employability prospects.
- Upon completion of the training programmes, the skilled youth will have access to employment opportunities within the country.

Key Points

NSDC's Headquarters	—	New Delhi
CEO	—	Ved Mani Tiwari

India to stop importing urea by end of 2025

- By the end of 2025, India will stop importing urea as a massive push for domestic manufacturing has helped bridge the gap between supply and demand.

- The government is promoting alternate fertilisers like nano-liquid urea and nano liquid Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP).
- The urea imports fell to 7.58 million tonnes in 2022–23 from 9.136 million tonnes in the previous year.

Three new archaeological discoveries unveiled in Telangana

- A team of archaeologists has claimed to have discovered a unique Iron Age megalithic site at Ooragutta near Bandala village in SS Tadvai mandal of Mulugu district, Telangana.
- Among these discoveries are over 200 megalithic monuments nestled within dense forests, an exceptional Iron Age megalithic site displaying unique architectural styles, and two rock art sites revealing ancient artistic expressions.
- The team comprised K.P. Rao and Ch Praveen Raju.
- These findings underscore the significance of Telangana's rich heritage and its integral role in shaping India's historical narrative.

Key Points

Telangana's Governor	—	CP Radhakrishnan
Chief Minister	—	Anumula Revanth Reddy
Capital	—	Hyderabad

PM Modi inaugurates 2550th Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav in Delhi

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 2550th Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. He also released a commemorative stamp and coin on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti.
- Mahavir Jayanti marks the birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism.
- Bhagwan Mahavir illuminated the path of peaceful co-existence and universal brotherhood through Jain principles like Ahimsa (Non-Violence), Satya (Truthfulness), Asteya (Non-Stealing), Brahmacharya (Chastity) and Aparigraha (Non-Attachment).
- Jains celebrate five Kalyanak's (major events) of every Tirthankar including Mahavir Swami Ji: Chyavana/Garbha (Conception) Kalyanak; Janma (Birth) Kalyanak; Diksha (Renunciation) Kalyanak; Kevaljnana (Omniscience) Kalyanak and Nirvana (Liberation/Ultimate Salvation) Kalyanak.

Central government grants NOC to rename eight Amethi railway stations

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved the renaming of eight railway stations in Amethi district, Uttar Pradesh. This move aims to strengthen the connection between the railways and the region's cultural heritage.
- The MHA granted a No Objection Certificate (NOC) to the Uttar Pradesh government's proposal submitted in February 2024. This paves the way for renaming stations like Kasimpur Halt to Jais City and Jais to Guru Gorakhnath Dham.

Key Points

Union Home Minister	—	Amit Shah
Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister	—	Yogi Adityanath
Governor	—	Anandiben Patel
Capital	—	Lucknow

Tamil Nadu conducts Nilgiri Tahr Survey with IUCN Observer

- The Tamil Nadu government conducted a three-day synchronised survey of the Nilgiri Tahr (*Nilgiritragus hylocrius*) to estimate the population of the Tahrs.
- Nilgiri Tahr is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Tamil Nadu has collaborated with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Wildlife Institute of India for population estimation. An observer from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) also participated in the exercise.
- While the bounded-count method was used in all the areas, the double observer method was adopted additionally in large contiguous landscapes having a major population in two areas like Grass Hills National Park and Mukurthi National Park and one block in Silent Valley National Park and two blocks in Eravikulam National Park.
- The Nilgiri Tahr is the only mountain ungulate in southern India amongst the 12 species present in India.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

'One Vehicle, One FASTag' norm implemented

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has enforced the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' rule since April 1, 2024.
- The 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' concept aims to deter the practice of using a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or associating multiple FASTags with one vehicle.
- NHAI's decision to implement the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' policy stems from concerns over the misuse of FASTags.
- Reports indicated that vehicles were being equipped with multiple FASTags or FASTags were being issued without adhering to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements. Additionally, there were instances of FASTags not being properly affixed to the vehicle's windscreen, leading to delays at toll plazas and inconveniencing other users of National Highways.

Key Points

NHAI's Chairman	—	Santosh Kumar Yadav
Headquarters	—	Delhi

NTPC Ltd. launches new edition of Girl Empowerment Mission

- NTPC Limited has launched the latest edition of Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM), its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility initiative.
- The programme aligns with the Government of India's Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao initiative and aims to tackle gender inequality by nurturing girls' imaginations and fostering their ability to explore opportunities. The workshop focuses on health, hygiene, safety, fitness, sports and yoga.
- The GEM was initiated as a pilot project in 2018 with just three locations and 392 participants, has flourished into a nationwide movement.

Key Points

NTPC's Chairman & MD	—	Gurdeep Singh
Headquarters	—	New Delhi

Union Health Ministry launches myCGHS iOS app

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched the myCGHS app for the iOS devices.

- It empowers the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) beneficiaries with convenient access to essential healthcare features right at their fingertips.
- This initiative aligns with the government's vision of leveraging technology to enhance the quality and accessibility of healthcare services.
- The app was developed by the technical teams of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) Himachal Pradesh and NIC Health Team.
- The app features security features like two-factor authentication and functionality of mPIN ensuring the confidentiality and integrity of users' data.

RuPay launches 'Link it, Forget it' campaign at IPL 2024 to promote credit cards on UPI.

- The 'RuPay – Link it, Forget it' campaign was launched by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) during the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024.
- The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness about RuPay Credit cards, which can be seamlessly linked to a UPI ID, enabling secure and convenient payments.

Key Points

NPCI Headquarters	—	Mumbai, Maharashtra
MD & CEO	—	Dilip Asbe

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Zimbabwe launches new currency ZiG in an attempt to resolve money crisis

- Zimbabwe has launched a new currency, Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG), which is backed by the country's gold reserves.
- The ZiG was introduced electronically in early April, but people can now use banknotes and coins.
- The government had previously floated various ideas to replace the Zimbabwe dollar, including introducing gold coins to stem inflation and even trying out a digital currency.
- The ZiG is the sixth currency Zimbabwe has used since the spectacular 2009 collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar amid hyperinflation of 5 billion%, one of the world's worst currency crashes to date.

Key Points

Zimbabwe's Capital	—	Harare
President	—	Emmerson Mnangagwa

G7 discusses Coal Phase-Out by 2035

- The Group of Seven (G7) developed economies, in the recent meeting of its Climate, Energy, and Environment Ministerial, decided to phase out unabated coal during the first half of the 2030s by 2035.
- This decision sets the tone for the upcoming global dialogues on energy transition at COP29 (Conference of the Parties) in Baku and the Group of Twenty (G20) in Brazil later this year.
- The G7 also reiterated its commitment to mobilise more climate finance towards renewable energy solutions.
- The G7 or the Group of 7 are the seven major industrial countries. These consist of Canada, France, Germany,

Italy, Japan, the UK and the US. Additionally, the European Union (EU) is a 'non-enumerated member.' All the G7 countries are IMF-advanced economies.

IMF approves disbursement of \$1.1 Billion loan tranche to Pakistan

- The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) executive board has given the green light for a USD 1.1 billion loan tranche for Pakistan, signalling the conclusion of the second bailout package.
- This marks the third and final installment of a USD 3 billion standby arrangement with the IMF.
- Last month, Pakistan and the IMF reached a staff-level agreement on the final review of the USD 3 billion bailout package.
- The country has already received two tranches totalling USD 1.9 billion, with USD 1.2 billion disbursed in July and an additional USD 700 million in January 2024.

Key Points

IMF's Headquarters	—	Washington DC, US
Managing Director	—	Kristalina Georgieva
Pakistan's Capital	—	Islamabad
Prime Minister	—	Shehbaz Sharif

Kuwait launches the first Hindi radio broadcast

- Kuwait began its first-ever Hindi radio broadcast with its Ministry of Information launching a Hindi programme on Kuwait Radio, airing on FM 93.3 and AM 96.3 every Sunday.
- It will be a weekly broadcast and aims to cater to the sizeable Indian expatriate community residing in Kuwait.

Key Points

Prime Minister	—	Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah
Capital	—	Kuwait City
Official Language	—	Arabic

'Artificial Sun'- Korean Fusion Reactor sets records for sustaining plasma at 100 million degrees Celsius

- South Korean scientists have set a new world record using the Korea Superconducting Tokamak Advanced Research (KSTAR) device, an 'artificial sun' nuclear fusion reactor.
- The team generated plasma temperatures of 100 million degrees Celsius for 48 seconds during tests between December 2023 and February 2024. This temperature is seven times that of the Sun's core, which is 15 million degrees Celsius.
- The facility's previous record, set in 2021, was just 30 seconds.
- The scientists will now aim to sustain plasma temperatures of 100 million degrees Celsius for 300 seconds by 2026.
- Nuclear fusion seeks to replicate the reaction that makes the sun and other stars shine, by fusing two atoms to unleash huge amounts of energy. Fusion has the potential to provide limitless energy without planet-warming carbon pollution.
- The KFE scientists managed to extend the time by tweaking the process, including using tungsten instead of carbon in the 'diverters,' which extract heat and impurities produced by the fusion reaction.

Key Points

Director of the KSTAR Research Centre	—	Si-Woo Yoon
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Japanese astronaut to be first non-American to set foot on moon

- Japan will become the first nation after the United States to land an astronaut on the moon as part of the Artemis lunar exploration campaign under an agreement between the two countries.
- NASA Administrator Bill Nelson and Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Masahito Moriyama signed an agreement regarding an additional Japanese contribution to Artemis, a pressurised lunar rover called Lunar Cruiser.
- NASA will deliver the rover to the moon ahead of the Artemis 7 mission, scheduled for no earlier than 2031.

NASA will also provide two seats on future Artemis lunar landing missions to astronauts from the Japanese space agency JAXA, the first agency other than NASA to secure spots on landing missions.

Germany legalises cannabis possession for personal use from April 1

- Germany became the biggest European Union (EU) country to legalise recreational cannabis.
- The new law, which still prohibits possession and use of the drug for anyone under 18, will leave Germany with some of the most liberal cannabis laws in Europe. The law makes it legal to obtain up to 25 grams of the drug per day for personal use through regulated cannabis cultivation associations, as well as to have up to three plants at home.
- Malta and Luxembourg legalised recreational use of the drug in 2021 and 2023, respectively.
- The Netherlands, known for its liberal cannabis laws, has been cracking down on sales to tourists and non-residents in recent years.

Israel deploys C-Dome defence system for the first time

- Israel has deployed its ship-mounted defence system, known as the C-Dome, for the first time against a suspicious aerial target that violated the country's airspace near the southern city of Eilat.
- The incident occurred following an alert in the area, which had previously been targeted by missile fire from Yemen's Houthi rebels.
- The C-Dome, a naval adaptation of the Iron Dome, successfully intercepted the target, marking its maiden operational use.

Romania and Bulgaria partially join Europe's Schengen travel zone, but checks at land borders remain

- Romania and Bulgaria partially joined Europe's ID-check-free travel zone marking a new step in the two countries' integration with the European Union.
- After years of negotiations to join the Schengen area, there is now free access for travellers arriving by air or sea from both countries. However, land border checks will remain in place due to opposition primarily from Austria which has long blocked their bid over illegal migration concerns.
- The Schengen Area was established in 1985. Before Bulgaria and Romania's admission, it comprised 23 of the 27 EU member countries, along with Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

- Austria vetoed Romania and Bulgaria's admission into the Schengen zone at the end of 2022 but allowed Croatia full accession. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007 and Croatia in 2013.

U.S. and Britain ally to enhance Artificial Intelligence (AI) Safety

- The Joe Biden Presidency-led US administration and Rishi Sunak-led British government will be working together to standardise AI testing and ensure that AI models are safe for the public.
- Both countries will also establish government-led AI safety institutes.
- Under the formal partnership, Britain and the United States plan to conduct joint testing exercises on publicly accessible AI models.

Romania unveils world's most potent laser

- Romania unveiled the world's most potent laser, utilising Chirped-Pulse Amplification (CPA) technology pioneered by Nobel laureates Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland, promising groundbreaking applications in various sectors.
- With a peak power of 10 petawatts and femtosecond duration pulses, this laser sets a new standard in intensity, offering immense potential for advancements in fields such as healthcare, space exploration, and industrial processes.
- The laser's capabilities span numerous domains, including advanced precision instruments for corrective eye surgery, compact particle accelerators for cancer treatment, and innovative solutions for addressing global challenges like nuclear waste disposal and space debris cleanup.
- The laser is developed in partnership with the French company Thales.

Nigeria becomes the first country to roll out new Meningitis vaccine

- In a historic move, Nigeria has become the first country in the world to roll out a new vaccine (called Men5CV) recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The vaccine protects people against five strains of the meningococcus bacteria.
- The vaccine and emergency vaccination activities are funded by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which funds the global meningitis vaccine stockpile and supports lower-income countries with routine vaccination against meningitis.

- Nigeria is one of the 26 meningitis hyper-endemic countries of Africa, situated in the area known as the African Meningitis Belt. Last year, there was a 50% jump in annual meningitis cases reported across Africa.
- Meningitis is a serious infection that leads to the inflammation of the membranes (meninges) that surround and protect the brain and spinal cord. There are multiple causes of meningitis, including viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic pathogens. The symptoms often include headache, fever and stiff neck.
- Bacterial meningitis is the most serious, can also result in septicaemia (blood poisoning) and can seriously disable or kill within 24 hours those that contract it.

Russia launches Angara-A5 Space Rocket at the third attempt

- Russia successfully launched its Angara A5 space rocket from the Vostochny Cosmodrome after two aborted liftoff attempts.
- This launch comes after a series of technical setbacks that led to the cancellation of two previous attempts, pointing to the challenges faced in the high-stakes realm of space technology.
- The Angara family of rockets was developed to replace the Soviet-designed Proton rockets.
- It is central to Russia's strategy to secure its independence in accessing outer space and to reduce reliance on the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

China launches three-member Shenzhou-18 crew to its Tiangong space station

- China launched a team of three astronauts aboard a Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China. This rocket is headed towards the Tiangong space station in low earth orbit.
- The trio will require approximately six and a half hours to reach Tiangong after the spacecraft reaches orbit and conducts an automated rendezvous to dock with the space station, which orbits some 400 km (250 miles) above the Earth. The Shenzhou-18 spacecraft is also known as the 'Divine vessel'.
- Throughout their six-month tenure in orbit, the Shenzhou-18 crew's primary responsibilities will include conducting scientific experiments, performing spacewalks and undertaking routine maintenance and management duties for the space station.

India gifts 35 ambulances, 66 school buses to organisations in Nepal

- India donated 35 ambulances and 66 school buses to various organisations across Nepal, enhancing the local infrastructure in the health and education sectors.
- This donation underscores the deep-rooted partnership between India and Nepal.
- It will foster development and strengthen bilateral relations through improved access to essential services.

U.S.- Japan-Philippines hold first trilateral

- The first-ever trilateral summit among the U.S., Japan and the Philippines was held at the White House.
- The meeting underscored the commitment of the United States to support its allies, Japan and the Philippines, amid escalating territorial disputes with China.

Scientists discover the deepest blue hole in the world-Mexico's Taam Ja' Blue Hole

- The researchers unveiled the true extent of Mexico's Taam Ja' Blue Hole (TJBH), now officially known as the deepest blue hole on earth.
- TJBH is located in Chetumal Bay off the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico and it is 1,380 feet (420meters) below sea level — nearly the height of the Trump Tower in Chicago, US.
- The blue hole surpasses the previous record holder, the Sansha Yongle Blue Hole, also known as the Dragon Hole in the South China Sea, by 480 feet.
- Blue holes, also known as Karst formations, are geological wonders formed by the gradual dissolution of soluble bedrock such as limestone or gypsum, resulting in the creation of vertical caverns submerged beneath the ocean's surface. However, the Taam Ja' Blue Hole's immense depth presents a unique challenge, pushing the limits of scientific exploration to new frontiers.

BANKING, FINANCE AND ECONOMY NEWS

Uttar Pradesh has the maximum GI tagged items in the country

- Six products from Uttar Pradesh received the GI tag. These are Kashi's Tirangi Barfi, which was first made by a local sweet maker during the revolutionary movement, metal casting craft of Kashi, Bareilly zardozi, Bareilly cane bamboo craft, Tharu embroidery and Pilkhua handblock print textile.
- With these additions, UP has the highest number of GI products at 75. Of the 75 GI products of Uttar Pradesh, 34 are from the Kashi region.
- It is followed by Uttarakhand-24, Arunachal Pradesh-18, Madhya Pradesh-8, Meghalaya-Assam-8, Jammu and Kashmir-8, Rajasthan-5, Gujarat-4, Tripura-3, Odisha-2, Ladakh-1 and Chhattisgarh-1.
- 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. These tags protect the unique identity and quality of these regional products.

Matabari Pera and Pachra from Tripura gets coveted GI tag

- Matabari Pera and Pachra have received the GI tag.
- Matabari Pera is a dairy-based confectionary item traditionally served as prasad at the Tripurasundari temple in Gomati district.

- Pachra is a handwoven cloth used by the state's Indigenous communities.
- The Matabari Mahila Cluster Level Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited applied for the GI tag for Matabari Pera while the Dewanbari Mahila Cluster Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited had made a similar application for Pachra or Rignai textile in April last year.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ's) Vizhinjam Port gets the nod to run as India's first transshipment hub

- The Central government has approved Adani's Vizhinjam Port in Kerala to operate as the first transshipment port in the country.
- A transshipment port is a hub where cargo is transferred from one big vessel to several smaller ones before they reach the final port of discharge.
- This approval paves the way for customs to set up an office at Vizhinjam port. It will be India's first full-fledged deep-water transshipment port.
- A final nod from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) is expected in the coming three months.

TASL successfully deploys India's First privately built Sub-Metre Resolution Surveillance Satellite

- Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL), in collaboration with Satellogic, has successfully launched India's

inaugural private sector-built sub-metre resolution earth observation satellite, TSAT-1A.

- SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket launched TSAT-1A satellite from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, in the US.
- A wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Sons, TASL is a significant player in aerospace and defence solutions in India.

India aims for first strategic petroleum reserve with a private company by 2029–30

- India plans to build its first privately managed Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) by 2029–30, granting the operator the freedom to trade all of the stored oil.
- India plans to build two new SPRs - the first an 18.3 million barrels cavern at Padur in southern Karnataka state, and then a 29.3 million barrels SPR in eastern Odisha state - with private partners allowed to trade all of the oil locally.
- The government will have the first right to the oil in the event of a shortage.
- So far, India has allowed only partial commercialisation for its three existing SPRs in southern India, which have a combined capacity of 36.7 million barrels.
- Expanding oil storage capacity would also help India join the International Energy Agency (IEA), which requires its members to hold a minimum of 90 days of oil consumption.

India secures rights to operate Sittwe Port in Myanmar

- India has gained the right to operate a second overseas port, Sittwe, in Myanmar. This is part of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport project, which aims to provide alternate connectivity from the eastern coast of India to the northeastern states through the Sittwe port.
- The port is located on the Kaldan River. India Ports Global (IPGL) will take over the operations of the entire port.
- IPGL is a joint venture between Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Deendayal Port Trust (Erstwhile Kandla Port Trust).
- This is India's second overseas port acquisition after Chabahar port in Iran.

India's pharmaceuticals exports rise 10% to \$28 billion in FY24

- India's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports increased 9.67% year-on-year to USD 27.9 billion in 2023-24.

- The top five export markets, for the sector during the last fiscal, are the US, the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa and Brazil. The US accounts for over 31% of India's total pharma exports, followed by the UK and Netherlands (about 3% each).
- Experts have predicted that India's pharmaceutical business may exceed USD 130 billion by 2030, supported by expanding market opportunities and heightened demand in the overseas markets. The business stood at over USD 50 billion for the 2022–23.

EU-India collaborate to advance EV battery recycling technologies through the Trade and Technology Council

- The European Union (EU) and India launched an Expression of Interest (EoI) for startups working in Battery Recycling Technologies for Electric Vehicles (EVs).
- This initiative was launched under the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and aims to enhance cooperation between European and Indian Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and startups in the clean technology sector.
- The India-EU Trade & Technology Council (TTC) was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen in April 2022.

Central Government grants AEO status to the gem and jewellery sector

- The Ministry of Finance has assigned the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status to the gem and jewellery sector.
- It was introduced as a pilot project for export-oriented industries to promote ease of doing business.
- The AEO programme was instrumental in simplifying export operations across various sectors, resulting in significant time and cost savings for exporters.

KABIL and CSIR-IMMT sign MoU for Technical and Knowledge cooperation for Critical Minerals

- Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) has signed an MoU with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) for Technical & Knowledge cooperation for Critical Minerals.
- Under the MoU, KABIL will leverage the technical expertise and services of CSIR-IMMT to undertake various projects, including the design and analysis of metallurgical test work-plans, development and review of process flowsheets, and the selection of process technologies for mineral processing, beneficiation and metal extraction.

- Furthermore, the agreement will also embark on joint research and facilitate the exchange of scientific information between the two entities.

Adani family invests ₹8,339 cr more in Ambuja Cements; stake rises to 70.3%

- The Adani family, led by billionaire businessman Gautam Adani, has infused ₹8,339 crore into the group's cement subsidiary Ambuja Cements Ltd.
- With this, the Adani family has infused a total of ₹20,000 crore into Ambuja Cements and increased its stake further by 3.6% to around 70.3%.
- The latest capital infusion follows an investment of ₹5,000 crore into Ambuja on 18 October 2022 and then ₹6,661 crore on 28 April 2024.
- Ambuja Cement is the country's second-largest listed cement maker.

Canara Bank and Society for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay sign an MoU

- The Society For Innovation & Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay and Canara Bank entered into an MoU to provide financial support to startups.
- Under its Canara Start-Up Scheme, Canara Bank is providing financial support for the creation, promotion, diversification, and modernisation of industrial units across India.
- SINE, as a technology business incubator, offers comprehensive incubation and acceleration support from start to finish for technology startups.

BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover ventures into fintech with ZeroPe app

- BharatPe co-founder and former managing director Ashneer Grover has launched a new venture in the fintech space with ZeroPe, an app designed for medical loans.
- ZeroPe, currently in its testing phase, has been developed by Third Unicorn. It will provide instant pre-approved medical loans of up to ₹ 500,000 in collaboration with Delhi-based Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) Mukut Finvest.
- The service is exclusively available at partnered hospitals, as mentioned on the ZeroPe app website.

Adani Group builds the world's largest renewable energy park in Gujarat

- Adani Green Energy Limited has built the world's largest renewable energy park in the Khavda region, Kutch district, Gujarat.

- Adani Group will invest ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in this project.
- Currently, 2 GW of renewable energy is being produced from this park, and 4 GW capacity will be added by April 2025. Thereafter, 5 GW capacity will be increased every year.
- Gujarat Industries Power Company Limited (GIPCL) has been appointed as the nodal agency for the Hybrid Renewable Energy Park.

French automaker Citroen becomes the first MNC to export EVs from India, ships 'Made in India' e-C3 electric cars to Indonesia

- French automaker Citroën has become the first multinational car manufacturing company in India to export Electric Vehicles (EVs) to the international market.
- Citroen commenced the export of 500 units of 'Made in India' e-C3 electric cars to Indonesia from Kamarajar Port near Chennai,

Mahindra Group to invest nearly ₹ 1,200 cr in renewable energy projects

- Mahindra Susten will foray into the hybrid renewable energy segment by setting up a ₹ 1,200-crore 150-megawatt solar wind energy project in Maharashtra.
- The project includes the installation of a 101-megawatt (MW) wind and 52 MW solar capacity.
- The facility is expected to generate 460 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of clean energy, offsetting 420,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.
- Mahindra Group will develop a 150 MW hybrid RE (Renewable energy solar + wind) project at a total project cost of about ₹ 1,200 crore.
- The project also marks Mahindra Susten's foray into the 'hybrid RE' segment and will be one of the largest co-located solar + wind hybrid projects in Maharashtra to deliver clean energy to commercial and Industrial (C&I) customers.

Vedanta's BALCO: First Indian Company certified with ASI Performance Standard

- Chhattisgarh-based Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO), a unit of Vedanta Aluminium, has emerged as the first Indian company to achieve the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) Performance Standard V3 Certification for the manufacture and supply of a wide range of primary aluminium products at its facility in Korba.

- The ASI Certification program was developed through an extensive multi-stakeholder consultation process and is the only comprehensive voluntary sustainability standard initiative for the global aluminium value chain.
- The ASI Performance Standard V3 defines 11 principles and 62 criteria under three sustainability pillars — Environment, Social, and Governance - with the aim to address sustainability areas in the aluminium value chain, such as biodiversity, indigenous peoples' rights, circularity and greenhouse gas emissions.

IREDA granted the prestigious 'Navratna' status

- IREDA was granted 'Navratna' status by the Department of Public Enterprises. IREDA is a non-banking financial institution under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- It is engaged in promoting, developing and extending financial assistance for setting up projects related to new and renewable sources of energy.
- The Indian government grants Navratna status to premier Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), empowering them to execute significant investments of up to ₹1,000 crore without requiring approval from the central authority.
- These firms are permitted to allocate up to 30% of their net worth annually, provided it remains under ₹1,000 crore. Additionally, they have the option to participate in joint ventures, forge partnerships, and set up overseas subsidiaries.
- To qualify for Navratna status, a company must first attain the Miniratna Category-I designation and be included in Schedule A of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).

Key Points

IREDA's Chairman and MD	—	Pradip Kumar Das
Headquarters	—	New Delhi

Razorpay and Airtel Payments Bank roll out the 'UPI switch.'

- Razorpay launched its own UPI infrastructure with UPI Switch, a next-generation cloud-based innovation, in partnership with Airtel Payments Bank.
- The 'UPI Switch' will also enable five times faster access to UPI (Unified Payments Interface) innovations for businesses.

Key Points

Razorpay CEO	—	Harshil Mathur
MD & CEO of Airtel Payments Bank	—	Anubrata Biswas

CRED receives in-principle approval for Payment of Aggregator License

- CRED has received the in-principle approval for a payment aggregator license.
- This license allows fintech companies to process payments directly, reduce costs, gain greater control over payment flow and onboard merchants directly.
- Additionally, payment aggregators with licenses can settle funds directly with merchants.

Key Points

CRED's Headquarters	—	Bengaluru
CRED Founder & CEO	—	Kunal Shah

PayU granted RBI's in-principle approval to operate as a payment aggregator

- Prosus-backed fintech PayU received an in-principle approval from RBI to operate as a payment aggregator.
- It will now function as a Payments Aggregator (PA) under the Payment Settlements Act, 2007.

RBI releases guidelines for ETPs

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a draft Master Direction for Electronic Trading Platforms (ETPs) and also invited comments and feedback from operators, banks, market participants and other interested parties by May 31.
- The aim is to facilitate market makers' access to offshore ETPs offering permitted Indian Rupee (INR) products.
- ETPs are digital systems that facilitate the trading of various financial instruments. They operate outside of traditional stock exchanges. They provide a platform for buyers and sellers to trade directly with each other.
- According to the draft, an entity seeking authorisation as an ETP operator must maintain a minimum net worth of ₹ 5 crore and maintain the minimum net worth prescribed herein at all times.
- In October 2018, the RBI had introduced a framework for the authorisation of Electronic Trading Platforms to facilitate transactions in financial market instruments under its regulation. Under the 2018 framework of RBI, 13 ETPs operated by 5 operators have since been authorised. The framework was designed to ensure

fair access through transparent, safe and efficient trading processes, and robust trading infrastructures and prevent market abuse.

Microsoft and OpenAI plan \$100 billion supercomputer called 'Stargate'

- Microsoft and OpenAI are working together on building an artificial intelligence supercomputer called 'Stargate' that could cost as much as \$100 billion.
- Stargate will be the biggest in a series of supercomputers that Microsoft and OpenAI plan to build over the next six years.
- The supercomputer plan is currently in the middle of the third phase with Stargate being part of the fifth and final phase. A significant part of the cost for the upcoming phases will come from acquiring AI chips.

DEFENCE NEWS

IAF conducts Gagan Shakti- 2024

- The Indian Air Force conducted a ten-day mega exercise 'Gagan Shakti' with all air force bases and assets scattered across the country.
- 'Gagan Shakti' was last held in 2018 when the IAF clocked more than 11,000 sorties during the two-phase air manoeuvres.
- It sought to test the IAF's readiness for a two-front war with China and Pakistan.
- From deep strikes to air dominance, and maritime operations to air defence, the IAF practised every manoeuvre in the book to prepare for a short and intense war.

Key Points

Chief of Air Staff	—	Vivek Ram Chaudhari
Chief of the Defence Staff	—	Anil Chauhan

Army conducts training exercise of Anti-Tank Guided Missile in Sikkim

- The Trishakti Corps of the Indian Army conducted an Anti-Tank Guided Missiles training exercise in a super-high altitude region in Sikkim.
- The training was conducted at super-high altitude area of 17,000 feet and it encompassed comprehensive continuity training and live firing from different platforms on moving as well as static targets depicting battlefield conditions.
- Missile Firing Detachments from Mechanised, Infantry Units participated in training.

DRDO and India's Strategic Forces Command (SFC) launched a new generation Ballistic Missile Agni-Prime

- Strategic Forces Command (SFC), along with the Defence Research and Development Organisation

(DRDO), conducted the successful flight test of New Generation Ballistic Missile Agni-Prime from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

- The test met all the trial objectives validating its reliable performance, as confirmed from the data captured by several range sensors deployed at different locations, including two downrange ships placed at the terminal point.

Key Points

DRDO's Chairman	—	Samir V Kamat
DRDO's Headquarters	—	New Delhi

DRDO & Indian Army conduct successful trials of indigenous Man Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile Weapon System

- The Indian Army has successfully carried out field trials of indigenously developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MPATGM) weapon system.
- This will pave the way for its induction into the Indian army.
- It is designed and developed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO).

Key Points

Chief of the Army Staff	—	Manoj Pande
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India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka hold 'Dosti' exercises in the Indian Ocean

- The Coast Guard personnel from India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka embarked on a four-day trilateral exercise to identify emerging maritime challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.
- This exercise aims to enhance maritime security and interoperability.

- The Indian Coast Guard ship Samarth and ICGS Abhinav along with Sri Lanka Naval Ship Samudura participated in the exercise.
- Bangladesh participated as an observer state.

Indian Army inducts indigenous Akashteer system to boost its air defence capabilities

- The Indian Army has started the induction of control and reporting systems under 'Project Akashdeep' to bolster its air defence capabilities. These are developed by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- The project is aimed at significantly enhancing the operational efficiency and integration of the Indian Army's air defence mechanisms.
- The Indian army has declared 2024 as the 'Year of Tech Absorption' and is undertaking various initiatives to induct niche technology and systems in its inventory.
- The Akashteer Project is a cutting-edge initiative designed to automate Air Defence Control and Reporting processes by digitising the entire process.

Army chief General Pande inaugurates state-of-the-art IT lab at Uzbek Academy of Armed Forces

- Indian Army Chief Gen. Manoj Pande inaugurated a state-of-the-art IT laboratory facility that also boasts a cutting-edge cybersecurity lab at the Uzbek Academy of Armed Forces during his ongoing visit to Uzbekistan.
- The development signifies a milestone in defence cooperation between the two nations, following a commitment made during the Defence Ministers' meeting in September 2018.

Indian Coast Guard inaugurates Aquatic Centre at Mandapam, Tamil Nadu

- Indian Coast Guard Director General Rakesh Pal inaugurated the Indian Coast Guard Aquatic Centre at ICGS Mandapam near Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu.
- The Indian Coast Guard works under the Union Ministry of Defence.

Coastal security exercise 'Sagar Kavach' conducted off Lakshadweep Islands

- A two-day exercise involving all maritime security agencies of India was conducted off the Lakshadweep Islands from April 1–2.
- During the exercise, validation of the effectiveness of coastal security mechanisms while dealing with asymmetric threats emanating from the sea was undertaken.
- The exercise witnessed enhanced preparedness, response mechanism, surveillance capabilities and coordination between the coastal security stakeholders.

India-Uzbekistan joint military exercise DUSTLIK conducted

- The fifth edition of the 'Dustlik' Joint Military Exercise between India and Uzbekistan was conducted in Termez District, Uzbekistan.
- During the exercise, soldiers from the Indian Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan will undergo comprehensive joint training sessions.
- Exercise DUSTLIK is a yearly event conducted alternatively in India and Uzbekistan. The last edition was conducted at Pithoragarh (India) in February 2023.
- The inaugural edition of this exercise was held in Uzbekistan in November 2019.

APPOINTMENTS

Name	Designation
Dinesh Kumar Tripathi	Chief of the Naval Staff
Sanjana Sanghi	Brand Ambassador of SPACE India
Vandita Kaul	Secretary, Department of Posts
Nalin Negi	CEO of BharatPe
Nalin Prabhat	Director-General of NSG
Amitabh Chaudhry	MD & CEO of Axis Bank (Reappointment)
Gita Sabharwal	UN Resident Coordinator in Indonesia
Gopi Thotakura	First Indian pilot to venture into space as a tourist, joining Blue Origin's NS-25 mission
Naima Khatoon	First Woman Vice-Chancellor of AMU
MS Dhoni	Brand ambassador of Citroen India

Santosh Viswanathan	Vice President and Managing Director for Intel, India
Anurag Kumar	Joint Director of CBI
Sushil Sharma	CMD of SJVN Limited
Jagjit Pavadia	Member of International Narcotics Control Board
Sachidananda Mohanty	Member, University Grants Commission (UGC)
Tarun Bajaj	Head of US-India Tax Forum
Rakesh Mohan	Member of World Bank Economic Advisory Panel
Meenesh Shah	Chairman of National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India Ltd. (NCDFI)
Najmi Waziri	Head Committee for Delhi Forest Protection
Srinivas Pallia	CEO & MD of Wipro
Love Kumar	Inspector General (IG) in the Special Protection Group (SPG)
Jayaraj Shanmugam	Head of Global Airport Operations, Air India
Narsingh Yadav	Chairman of WFI Athletes Commission
Rabi Sankar	Deputy governor of RBI (Reappointment)
Yuvraj Singh	ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 Ambassador
Arun Alagappan	Executive Chairman of Coromandel International
Sarvadanand Barnwal	Director in Department of Land Resources
Sunil Yadav	Director of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs
Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al Sabah	Prime Minister of Kuwait
Vivek Agarwal	Director of FIU-India
Lawrence Wong	Prime Minister of Singapore
Kristalina Georgieva	Managing Director of IMF (Second term)
Aniruddha Bose	Head of the National Judicial Academy
Simon Harris	Youngest Prime Minister of Ireland
Dr. Meenesh Shah	Chairman of the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India (NCDFI).
Shefali Sharan	Principal Director General of the Press Information Bureau (PIB)
Abdel Fattah al-Sisi	President of Egypt (Third term)
Judith Suminwa Tuluka	First female Prime Minister of Democratic Republic of Congo
General JS Sidana	Director General of the Department of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (DGEME)
Nidhu Saxena	MD & CEO of Bank of Maharashtra
Santosh Kumar Jha	CMD of Konkan Railway Corporation
Rajeev Singhal	MD of Tata International
Joyshree Das Verma	President of FICCI Ladies Organisation
Sanjay Nayar	President of Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM)
Atul Mehra	MD & CEO of Axis Capital

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

Books	Authors
The Idea of Democracy	Sam Pitroda
India — the Road to Renaissance: A Vision and an Agenda	Bhimeswara Chall
Heavenly Islands of Goa	P.S. Sreedharan Pillai
Law and Spirituality: Reconnecting the Bond	Editor- Professor Raman Mittal and Professor Seema Singh
“Knife”: A Harrowing Tale of Resilience and the Fight for Free Speech	Salman Rushdie
The Winner’s Mindset	Shane Watson
Just a Mercenary?: Notes from My Life and Career	Duvvuri Subbarao

OBITUARIES (NATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Visheshwara Rao	Tamil actor
Gangu Ramsay	Cinematographer
R.M. Veerappan	Politician
KG Jayan	Carnatic Musician
Sudhir Kakar (Father of Indian Psychology)	Writer and Cultural Critic
Subrahmanya Dhareshwar	Theatre Artist

OBITUARIES (INTERNATIONAL)

Name	Occupation
Barbara Rush	Actress
Peter Higgs	British physicist
O.J. Simpson	Footballer
Jack Clarke	Cricketer
Jack Alabaster	Cricketer
Raman Subba Row	Cricketer
Joe Kinnear	Footballer
Bernd Hölzenbein	Footballer
Derek Underwood	English cricketer
Juan Vicente Pérez Mora	World’s oldest verified living man

DAYS AND THEMES

Date	Day	Theme
April 1–7	Prevention of Blindness Week	
April 1	RBI foundation day	
April 2	World Autism Awareness Day	Empowering Autistic Voices
April 4	International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action	Protecting Lives, Building Peace
April 5	National Maritime Day	Navigating the future: safety first!
April 5	International Day of Conscience	Promoting the Culture of Peace with Love and Conscience
April 6	International Day of Sports For Development And Peace	Sport for the Promotion of Peaceful and Inclusive Societies
April 7	World Health Day	My health, my right
April 10	World Homeopathy Day	Homeoparivar: One Health, One Family
April 11	National Safe Motherhood Day	
April 11	World Parkinson's Day	
April 14	World Chagas Disease Day	Tackling Chagas disease: detect early and care for life
April 15	World Art Day	A Garden of Expression: Cultivating Community through Art.
April 17	World Haemophilia Day	Equitable access for all: recognising all bleeding disorders
April 18	World Heritage Day	Discover and Experience Diversity
April 19	World Liver Day	Be vigilant, get regular liver check-ups, and prevent fatty liver diseases
April 21	National Civil Service Day	
April 22	World Earth Day	Planet vs. Plastics
April 23	World Book and Copyright Day	Read Your Way
April 23	English Language Day	
April 24	National Panchayati Raj Day	
April 24	World Day For Animals in Laboratories	
April 24	International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace	
April 24-30	World Immunization Week 2024	Humanly Possible: Immunisation for All
April 25	World Malaria Day	Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world
April 25 (Fourth Thursday in April)	International Girls in ICT Day	
April 25	International Delegate's Day	Together, we challenge those in power
April 26	World Intellectual Property Day	IP and the SDGs: Building Our Common Future with Innovation and Creativity

April 26	International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day	
April 27	World Veterinary Day	Veterinarians are essential health workers
April 27	World Design Day	
April 28	World Day for Safety and Health at Work	
April 29	International Dance Day	
April 30	Ayushman Bharat Diwas	

REPORTS, RANKINGS AND INDEX

Forbes World's Billionaires List 2024 sees entry of 25 new Indians

- Forbes unveiled its 2024 'World's Billionaires' list, revealing a notable surge in the number of Indian billionaires.
- Of the 200 Indians listed, 25 individuals made their debut appearance, marking their first inclusion on the roster of the world's wealthiest individuals.
- Collectively, these Indian billionaires have amassed an impressive \$954 billion, reflecting a remarkable 41% surge from the previous year's total wealth of \$675 billion held by 169 billionaires.
- Zerodha founders Nithin and Nikhil Kamath, and Flipkart founders Sachin and Binny Bansal have emerged as India's youngest billionaires. 37-year-old Nikhil Kamath leads the list with a net worth of \$3.1 billion according to the Forbes Billionaires List 2024.
- Meanwhile, Mukesh Ambani remains the country's richest individual with a net worth of \$116 billion. He is followed by Gautam Adani who ranks 17th with a net worth of 84 billion.

UPI transactions surge by 56% in India

- According to a report by a payment service provider Worldline, UPI transactions in India surged by 56% year-on-year (YoY) in the second half (H2) of 2023, while card transactions saw a modest growth of 6%.
- The volume of UPI transactions surged to 65.77 billion from 42.09 billion in H2 2023.
- Additionally, transaction value witnessed a 44% increase, rising from ₹ 69.36 trillion to ₹ 99.68 trillion during the same period.
- However, the average ticket size (ATS) for UPI transactions, experienced an 8% decline from Rs 1648 to ₹ 1515.

- This indicates an increasing integration of UPI in smaller transactions, particularly person-to-merchant (P2M) transactions, and reflects the evolving preferences of consumers towards digital payment methods.
- The report also highlights the enhancement of payment acceptance infrastructure across the country, with the use of Point of Sale (PoS) terminals rising by 26% to 8.56 million.

Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024- India's unicorn count down for the first time since 2017

- According to the Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2024, India's startup ecosystem has slowed, with the number of unicorns declining for the first time since 2017.
- The slowdown came despite the recent stock market record highs while one factor was that Indian founders produced more offshore unicorns than any other country.
- India in 2023 had 67 unicorns, which is one less than 68 such startups last year.
- The US led the list with 703 unicorns, up 37 from 2022, and China worth 340 unicorns. UK and EU ranked fourth and fifth in the list, respectively.
- The total value of the world's unicorns has reached US\$5 trillion, equivalent to last year's GDP of Japan.
- The slowdown is mainly due to a lack of investment in start-ups despite the recent stock market record highs.
- The report, however, noted that India produced more offshore unicorns than any other country, co-founding 109 unicorns outside of India compared to 67 in India.

India is among 12 nations responsible for 60% of mismanaged plastic waste

- According to the report Plastic Overshoot Day, India is among the twelve countries responsible for 60% of the planet's mismanaged plastic waste. The

twelve countries responsible for 60% of the world's mismanaged plastic waste are: China, India, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, the United States and Turkey.

- India's mismanaged plastic waste will be less than one-fifth of China and one-third of the US.
- The global plastic waste generation has risen by 7.11% since 2021.
- The world is estimated to have generated 220 million tons of plastic waste this year, 70 million tons of which will end up polluting the environment.
- The report also claimed India is estimated to release an average of 3,91,879 tons of microplastics into the environment and 31,483 tons of chemical additives into waterways.
- The report classifies India as a 'low-waste-producing' polluter due to its low per capita plastic waste production (8 kg per capita per year). However, the expected mismanaged waste in 2024 will be 7.4 million tons, which is 'very high'.

Only 57 Companies account for 80% of the World's Carbon emissions

- According to a new report released by the think tank InfluenceMap, 57 companies and nation-states were responsible for generating 80% of the world's CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels and cement over the last seven years.
- This suggests that the net zero targets set by the Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2015 are yet to make a significant impact on fossil fuel production.
- The report uses the Carbon Majors database, established in 2013 by Richard Heede of the Climate Accountability Institute, to provide fossil fuel production data from 122 of the world's largest oil, gas, coal and cement producers.

India is the fourth largest exporter of digitally delivered spaces: WTO report

- According to the Global Trade Outlook and Statistics report by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India's exports of digitally delivered services reached \$257 billion in 2023, marking a 17% increase compared to the previous year.
- India has secured its place as the world's fourth-largest exporter of digitally delivered services, contributing more than a fifth to the global trade in services.
- This growth outpaced that of Germany and China, which saw 4% growth each.

- Globally, the exports of digitally delivered services surged to \$4.25 trillion in 2023, marking a 9% year-on-year increase. This accounted for 13.8% of world exports of goods and services.
- While global trade in goods declined across all regions, exports of digitally delivered services continued to flourish. Europe and Asia, holding a combined global share of 76.2%, witnessed export increases of 11% and 9%, respectively.

Apollo Hospital releases flagship Health of Nation Report

- According to the Apollo hospital report, on average, at least one in three Indians were pre-diabetic, two in three were pre-hypertensive and one in ten were depressed.
- There was a significant growth in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) across the nation. The report sheds light on the concerning rise of NCDs in India, including cancer, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health issues, all of which significantly impact the nation's overall health.
- There was a potential surge in healthcare burdens due to conditions such as pre-diabetes, pre-hypertension, and mental health disorders manifesting at increasingly younger ages.
- The report underscores the role of health screening in reducing Blood Pressure (BP) and Body Mass Index (BMI) levels, thereby lowering the risk of cardiac-related ailments.

World Cybercrime Index

- India ranked tenth in cybercrime, with frauds involving people making advance fee payments being the most common type.
- Russia topped the list and was followed by Ukraine, China, the US, Nigeria and Romania. North Korea was in the seventh position, while the UK and Brazil were in the eighth and ninth positions, respectively.
- The World Cybercrime Index is compiled by an international team of researchers. It ranks roughly 100 countries and identifies key hotspots according to various categories of cybercrime, including ransomware, credit card theft and scams.
- The research was published in the journal PLoS ONE. The researchers had through the survey asked the experts to consider major types of crime in the virtual world and nominate countries that they thought contributed significantly to each of them.

- The major categories that the researchers identified were - technical products and services such as malware and compromising systems; attacks and extortion including ransomware; data and identity theft including hacking, compromising accounts and credit cards; scams such as advance fee fraud; and cashing out or money laundering involving illegitimate virtual currency.

India's population double in 77 years- UNFPA report

- According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA's) report, India's population has reportedly soared to an estimated 144 crore, with approximately 24% falling within the 0-14 age bracket.
- 17% are aged between 10-19. Furthermore, the age group of 10-24 is estimated to constitute 26%, while those aged 15-64 make up 68%. Additionally, 7% of India's population is aged 65 years and above, with men having a life expectancy of 71 years and women 74 years.
- Despite 30 years of progress in sexual and reproductive health, marginalized communities worldwide have been mostly overlooked. It also notes that child marriage rates in India stood at 23% between 2006-2023.
- Maternal deaths in India have fallen considerably, accounting for 8% of all such fatalities worldwide. However, Tirap district in Andhra Pradesh exhibits alarmingly high maternal mortality rates, reaching 1,671 deaths per 100,000 births.
- India takes the lead globally with an estimated population of 144.17 crore, with China following closely at 142.5.
- The report is titled 'Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope: Ending Inequalities in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.'

India ranks fourth in global military spending at \$83.6 bn in 2023- SIPRI

- India was the world's fourth-largest military spender in 2023, making an expenditure of \$83.6 billion to modernise a range of weapons and combat systems.
- The United States (US), China, and Russia were the top three spenders in that order.
- India's military spending saw a 4.2% increase compared to 2022.
- This growth reflects India's strategic focus on enhancing its defence capabilities and bolstering

military infrastructure, particularly along the China border following the Ladakh standoff that began in May 2020.

- India's modernisation efforts include investments in fighter jets, helicopters, warships, tanks, artillery guns, rockets, missiles, unmanned capabilities, and other combat systems.
- India also held the fourth position in 2022, when military spending reached \$81.4 billion. This marked a 6% increase from 2021 and a substantial 47% rise since 2013.

Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2024

- GRFC analysed a population of 1.3 billion in 2023 across 59 countries. Nearly 282 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity.
- 2023 was the fifth consecutive year of rise in the number of people suffering acute food insecurity, defined as when populations face food deprivation that threatens lives or livelihoods, regardless of the causes or length of time.
- This study shows a global increase of 24 million from the previous year, with 1 in 5 people assessed as requiring critical urgent action.
- 36 million children under 5 years of age are acutely malnourished across 32 countries.
- Acute malnutrition worsened in 2023, particularly among displaced populations.
- 36 countries have been consistently featured in GRFC analyses since 2016, representing 80% of the world's most hungry.
- 705,000 people were at risk of starvation (IPC/CH Phase 5) in 2023, the highest number in GRFC's reporting history.
- The Gaza Strip accounts for 80% of those facing imminent famine, along with South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia, and Mali.
- The ten countries with the world's largest food crisis in 2023 were the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar.
- GRFC is released annually by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN). It is launched by the Global Network Against Food Crises, a multistakeholder initiative that includes United Nations agencies, the European Union, the United States Agency for International Development and non-governmental agencies working to tackle food crises.

Karnataka and Gujarat lead India's clean energy transition race

- According to the report released by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), and clean energy think tank Ember, Karnataka and Gujarat continue to lead the race to clean energy transition.
- Both the states continue their strong performance across dimensions, effectively integrating renewable energy sources into their power sectors, and making strong strides in decarbonisation.
- It evaluates the clean electricity transition preparedness at the sub-national level.
- States like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh need to improve. These states are in the early stages of their transition, they now need to focus on increasing renewable energy deployment, enhancing short-term market participation and strengthening their distribution companies.
- Several states are exhibiting preparedness to embrace the electricity transition. They perform well in the "Readiness and Performance of the Power Ecosystem" and "Market Enablers" dimensions but need to improve in the "Decarbonisation" dimension.
- State-level decarbonisation can be further accelerated by strengthening the power ecosystem and having the right enablers.
- Kerala, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra all exhibited considerable progress in certain aspects but also lower performance in other aspects.

Indian passport 'second cheapest' in the world, next only to UAE's

- In a recent study, Australian firm Compare the Market AU conducted comparison of passport acquisition costs across various countries.
- It evaluated their cost-effectiveness per year of validity and their value based on the number of nations offering visa-free access.
- The UAE passport clinches the top spot as the most affordable passport globally, surpassing all others in terms of both acquisition cost and the number of countries offering visa-free access.
- The Indian passport ranks as the second cheapest passport to obtain worldwide. It holds the distinction of being the most cost-effective in terms of "cost per year" of validity.
- An Indian passport holder can travel to 62 nations visa-free.

Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) for 2023 released

- S. Somanath, Chairman, ISRO, released the Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) for 2023 compiled by ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM).
- ISRO conducted 23 Collision Avoidance Manoeuvres (CAMs) to safeguard its satellites.
- The report detailed that ISRO received approximately 1,37,565 close approach alerts from the US Space Command (USSPACECOM), with about 3,033 alerts involving satellites coming within 1 km of each other. Despite these frequent close encounters.
- The year 2023 also saw a peak in the number of CAMs executed by ISRO, although specific interventions were not necessary for high-profile missions like Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1. Chandrayaan-3 moon mission faced a 4-second launch delay to avoid potential collisions with debris and satellites. The delay was based on Collision Avoidance Analysis (COLA) to prevent close approaches between debris objects and injected satellites in their orbital phase.
- This highlights the effectiveness of ISRO's monitoring and coordination efforts, which involve a meticulous reassessment of USSPACECOM data using more precise orbital information of Indian satellites.
- A total of 3143 new objects were added in 2023, compared to 2533 in 2022, due to launches and on-orbit break-up events.
- There were five major on-orbit break-up events in 2023, resulting in a net addition of 69 fragmented objects to the space debris population.
- Since the beginning of the Indian space era, a total of 127 Indian satellites have been launched, including those from private operators and academic institutions.
- As of December 31, 2023, India has 22 operational satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and 29 in Geosynchronous Earth Orbit (GEO).
Three deep space missions were active: Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter, Aditya-L1, and the Propulsion Module of Chandrayaan-3.
- A total of 21 Indian satellites have re-entered the atmosphere, including a controlled re-entry of Megha-tropics-1 in 2023.
- Out of 82 rocket bodies launched by India, 35 have re-entered the atmosphere, with 5 re-entries occurring in 2023.

EVENTS

Nepal leads inaugural Rainbow Tourism Conference, pledges safe destination for all

- The first International Rainbow Tourism Conference was held in Nepal as it offered itself as a safe and respectful destination in South Asia for the sexual minority community.
- It was a single-day international conference and was organised by Mayako Pahichan Nepal, a non-governmental organisation. This event was organised in collaboration with the Nepal Tourism Board.

16th World Future Energy Summit in Abu Dhabi

- The 16th World Future Energy Summit commenced in Abu Dhabi.
- It saw global leaders, policymakers, and experts in sustainable energy and climate initiatives.
- The summit aims to foster dialogue on key issues like global climate action, renewable energy, energy security, and sustainable development.

International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) 2024 held in New Delhi

- The sixth edition of the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure was held in New Delhi.
- ICDRI was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019 at the UN Climate Action Summit. It is a global partnership of national governments, UN agencies, multilateral development banks, the private sector, and knowledge institutions that aims to promote the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks.

President of India Inaugurates Homoeopathy Symposium

- The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu inaugurated a two-day Homoeopathy Symposium, organised by the Central Council for Research in Homoeopathy, in New Delhi.
- The theme of the symposium was 'Empowering Research, Enhancing Proficiency'.

Thrissur Pooram 2024

- Thrissur Pooram is one of the largest temple festivals celebrated all over the world.
- Thrissur, the cultural capital of the state of Kerala, is dressed up and decorated during this time to celebrate Thrissur Pooram. The temple festival is celebrated with a lot of pomp and grandeur all over the state. People deck up in new clothes and visit the temple Maidanam to witness the great festival.
- The temple festival was started by Shakthan Thampuran, the King of Cochin, in the 1700s. Thrissur Pooram is witnessed by people from all walks of life, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, colour and age.

Khihlang festival concluded in Wahiajer, Meghalaya

- The 34th Seng Khihlang festival was held in Wahiajer, Meghalaya.
- The festival is significant to followers of the Khasi Indigenous Faith and culminated with the ceremonial reception of the Monolith, a symbol of unity.
- Under the stewardship of the Seng Khasi Sein Raij, the festival has provided a unifying platform for all Khasi Indigenous Faith adherents.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Professor Meena Charanda honoured with 'International Culture Award' 2024

- Professor Meena Charanda has been honoured with the prestigious International Culture Award for 2024 in the field of education and social service.
- She has taught in the Political Science Department of Kalindi College for more than two decades. She has published more than 50 articles in various newspapers and magazines.

Jain Acharya Lokesh Muni honoured with American President's Volunteer Award 2024

- Ahimsa Vishwa Bharati and World Peace Centre founder Jain Acharya Lokesh were honoured with the American Presidential Award at Capitol Hill in Washington.
- He is the first Indian monk to be honoured with the American Presidential Award.
- He was honoured with the Presidential Award, Golden Shield, Certificate of Honour and a citation bearing the signature of President Biden.

Chandrayaan-3 mission receives prestigious US Space Exploration award

- India's Chandrayaan-3 mission team was recently awarded the prestigious 2024 John L. 'Jack' Swigert Jr. Award for Space Exploration, acknowledging their efforts to elevate the standards of space exploration.
- With the successful Chandrayaan-3 mission in August last year, India became the first country to land on the south pole of the moon.
- John L 'Jack' Swigert Jr. Award for Space Exploration is an honour bestowed by the United States' National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in recognition of outstanding contributions to space exploration.
- It is named after John L. 'Jack' Swigert Jr., an American astronaut who flew on the Apollo 13 mission in 1970.
- Swigert played a critical role in the safe return of the Apollo 13 crew after an oxygen tank explosion aborted their planned lunar landing.

REC wins SKOCH ESG Award 2024 in Renewable Energy Financing Category

- REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been bestowed with the SKOCH ESG Award 2024 in the 'Renewable Energy Financing' category.
- The award underscores REC's dedication to sustainable financing, paving the way for a greener future and accelerating the transition to renewable energy.
- REC Ltd. provides loans of various maturities to State, Central and Private Companies for the creation of infrastructure assets in the country.

Dr. Gagandeep Kang awarded the prestigious John Dirks Gairdner Global Health Award

- Dr. Gagandeep Kang, an Indian researcher, has been awarded the John Dirks Canada Gairdner Global Health Award for her achievements in global health research.
- The John Dirks Award in global health is awarded by the Gairdner Foundation in Canada.
- She is the first Indian woman to get this award and says it is a huge honour for all the work that she and her colleagues did while at Christian Medical College, Vellore. The focus of Dr Kang's work has been on childhood diarrhoea disease and comprehensive studies, including the work on vaccines.

WEF recognises seven Indians as Young Global Leaders for 2024

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) has announced its Young Global Leaders Community Class of 2024.
- This year's cohort comprises nearly 90 changemakers from various fields, including politics, business, civil society, the arts and academia.
- These individuals are united in their drive to make a lasting impact on their communities and beyond.
- Shashwat Goenka, Vice Chairman of the RPSG Group, Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Non-Executive Director at Vedanta; Richa Bajpai, Founder and CEO of Campus Fund; Arjun Bhartia, Joint Managing Director at Jubilant Group; Adwaita Nayar, Chief Executive Officer, FSN E-Commerce Ventures (NYKAA); Sharad Vivek Sagar, Founder and Chief Executive Officer at Dexterity Global, India; and Actress Bhumi Pednekar are among the Indians who have joined the WEF's Forum of Young Global Leaders.

Ratan N. Tata receives the prestigious Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences Humanitarian Award 2021

- Mr Ratan N Tata, Chairman of Tata Trusts, has been conferred with the prestigious KISS Humanitarian Award 2021, in recognition of his unwavering commitment to social development and exemplary leadership.
- It was established in 2008 by Dr Achyuta Samanta, the KISS Humanitarian Award is the highest honour bestowed by KIIT and KISS. It recognises individuals and organisations worldwide who embody the spirit of humanitarian work. Previous recipients of this prestigious award include a distinguished group of global leaders, Nobel laureates and prominent figures from various sectors.

Vineet Jain Honoured with ENBA Lifetime Achievement Award 2023

- Vineet Jain, Managing Director of The Times Group was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award 2023 by the exchange4media News Broadcasting Awards (ENBA) for his 'immeasurable contributions to the Indian television news landscape'.
- He was instrumental in founding the group's TV platform, the Times Network, which includes the channels Times Now, ET Now, Mirror Now, Times Now Navbharat and ET NOW Swadesh.

GAIL wins prestigious 15th CIDC Vishwakarma Award for Barauni – Guwahati pipeline

- Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL) won the prestigious 15th Construction Industry Development Council (CIDC) Vishwakarma Award in the 'Achievement Award for Best Construction Projects' category for its Barauni – Guwahati Natural Gas Pipeline Project (BGPL).
- The BGPL project, an integral part of the Jagdishpur – Haldia & Bokaro – Dhamra Pipeline project, has connected North-East India with National Gas Grid for the first time.
- The 718 km long pipeline will act as the gateway for access to environmental-friendly fuel Natural Gas for the entire North-East through Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL).

- The CIDC Vishwakarma Awards inspired by the spirit of construction and creation patronised by Lord Vishwakarma, the ruling deity of construction practices in India.

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) won the prestigious 'Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia 2024' award

- GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) has won the prestigious 'Best Airport Staff in India & South Asia 2024' award by Skytrax.
- Hamad International Airport (DOH), located in Doha, Qatar, has been awarded the 'World's Best Airport' title.

SPORTS NEWS

Laureus World Sports Awards 2024

- The Laureus World Sports Awards is an annual event that celebrates great and inspiring sporting achievements.
- It was started in 2000 and awards the sportsperson in seven categories.

Category	Winner
Laureus World Sportsman of the Year	Novak Djokovic
Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year	Aitana Bonmatí
Comeback of the Year	Simone Biles
Breakthrough of the Year	Jude Bellingham
Team of the Year Award	Spain Women's Football Team
Action Sportsperson of the Year Award	Arisa Trew
Laureus Sport for Good Award	Fundación Rafa Nadal
Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability Award	Diede de Groot

Harendra Singh appointed as coach of Indian Women's Hockey team

- Former Indian Hockey player and Dronacharya awardee Harendra Singh has been selected by Hockey India as the coach of the senior national women's hockey team.
- Until recently, he served as coach of the USA men's hockey team.
- Janneke Schopman quit as the head coach of the Indian women's hockey team.

Hockey India announces inaugural National Women's Hockey League 2024 – 2025

- Hockey India unveiled the National Women's Hockey League 2024 – 2025, marking a significant milestone in the nation's sporting landscape.
- The league is structured into two phases, with the inaugural phase set to take place in Ranchi, Jharkhand. All matches during this phase will be hosted at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro turf Hockey Stadium, Ranchi, Jharkhand.

- The National Women's Hockey League is the first domestic women's league of its kind in India, promising an exhilarating showcase of talent and skill.

Maharashtra clinch India's 56th National Kho-Kho Championship

- Maharashtra emerged victorious in both the men's and women's categories at the 56th National Kho Kho Championships.
- The championships took place at the Indira Gandhi National Stadium in Delhi, showcasing the prowess of Kho Kho players from across the country.

Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee hits T20Is 6 sixes in an over.

- Nepal's Dipendra Singh Airee joined an elite list of cricketers hitting 6 sixes in an over in international cricket.
- India's Yuvraj Singh and West Indies' Kieron Pollard had hit 6 sixes in an over in a T20 international.

Bindyarani Devi wins bronze in women's 55kg

- Bindyarani Devi, the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022 silver medallist, won a bronze medal at the IWF World Cup 2024, held in Phuket, Thailand.
- The IWF World Cup 2024 is being organised by the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) from March 31 to April 11, 2024 in Phuket, Thailand. Both men and women weightlifters are participating in the World Cup.

Bilquis Mir- First Indian women jury member in the Paris Olympics

- Bilquis Mir from Jammu and Kashmir made history as the first woman from India to serve as a jury member at this year's Summer Olympics in Paris, scheduled from July 26 to August 11, 2024.
- Gir's appointment as a jury member for the Paris Games was officially conveyed through a letter from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to the Jammu and Kashmir administration.

India tops list of doping offenders in 2022: WADA anti-doping report

- According to the 2022 testing figures released by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), India has emerged as the country with the highest percentage of doping offenders.
- The report revealed that out of 4,064 samples collected from Indian athletes (including urine, blood, and

athlete biological passports), 127 individuals tested positive for banned substances, constituting 3.26% of the sample size.

- WADA report also found a 6.4% increase in the total number of samples analysed and reported in its Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS) in 2022, compared to the previous year. The percentage of Adverse Analytical Findings (AAF) also increased to 0.77% in 2022, from 0.65% in 2021.
- Samples in India were tested at the National Anti-Doping Laboratory (NDTL) at the JLN stadium. The analysis was based on failed drug tests among nations, with more than 2000 samples being tested by their respective testing laboratories.

Sumit Nagpal makes history at the Monte Carlo Masters

- In a historic moment for Indian tennis, Sumit Nagpal becomes the first Indian player to win an ATP Masters 1000 match on clay courts, marking a significant milestone in his career.

D Gukesh wins 2024 FIDE Candidates Chess Tournament

- Dommaraju Gukesh has made history by winning the FIDE Candidates tournament, becoming the youngest-ever challenger at the age of 17 years in the history of the World Chess Championship.
- He has become the youngest challenger ever for the World Chess Championship, surpassing the record set by Garry Kasparov in 1984.
- The 2024 FIDE Candidates Chess Tournament was held in Toronto, Canada.

Dharamsala to get India's first 'hybrid pitch'

- India's first-ever 'hybrid pitch' was unveiled at the picturesque Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) stadium in Dharamsala, marking a significant milestone for the sport in the country.
- The introduction of the SISGrass hybrid pitch is expected to lift the quality of the sport played on Indian pitches.
- SISGrass designs, constructs and supplies hybrid and synthetic cricket match pitches and practice net areas for a wide variety of organisations, including international cricket venues, local cricket clubs, schools and universities. It also offers comprehensive aftercare and maintenance services.
- SISGrass pitches are already successful at Lord's and The Oval. 'The Universal' machine, used in Dharamsala

for the hybrid pitch, will be taken to Ahmedabad and Mumbai to create further such pitches.

- The 'Universal Machine', used in Dharamshala to install the hybrid surface, was first developed by SISGrass in 2017.

Usain Bolt named ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 ambassador

- Usain Bolt, the fastest man on earth and Olympics legend, has been named as an ambassador for the upcoming Men's T20 World Cup.
- The World Cup will be co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States from June 1 to 29, 2024.

Saurav Ghosal retired from professional Squash

- India's finest men's squash player Saurav Ghosal, announced his retirement from the professional circuit after completing a glittering 22-year journey. Although he would continue representing the country at multi-discipline events for some more time.
- He is a winner of 10 Professional Squash Association (PSA) titles and a 13-time National men's singles

champion. He etched his name in the history books as the only Indian man to break into the top 10 in the World rankings.

- Besides winning two gold medals in team events of the Incheon and Hangzhou Asian Games, Ghosal has three Commonwealth Games medals and also bagged the yellow metal in the 2022 World Doubles Championships in mixed doubles in Glasgow.

2024 Asian U20 Athletics Championships

- The 2024 Asian U20 Athletics Championships is an international athletics competition for Asian under-20 athletes. It was organised by the Asian Athletics Association at the Dubai Police Club Stadium, United Arab Emirates.
- It served as a qualifying tournament for the 2024 World Athletics U20 Championships to be held in Lima, Peru.
- China led the medal tally with a total of 27 medals, followed by Japan at 21 and India at 29.
- India won seven gold, eleven silver and eleven bronze medals.