



Current Affairs Supplement

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NATIONAL

MOCI Minister Piyush Goyal Launched Bharat Startup Ecosystem Registry, Website & Logo of Startup Mahakumbh

Union Minister **Piyush Goyal**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) unveiled a new database for India's startup ecosystem, named **Bharat Startup Ecosystem Registry**, a **website**, and **logo** of '**Startup Mahakumbh**' during the curtain raiser event of the **first-ever** 'Startup Mahakumbh'.



- The registry will act as a single platform database for startups, investors, incubators, and other stakeholders in India's startup ecosystem.
- The event was organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under MOCI.

Startup Mahakumbh:

- i. The first-ever 'Startup Mahakumbh' is to be held from March 18-20, 2024 at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, Delhi.
- ii. It is envisioned to make the Indian startup ecosystem stronger to have global dominance and foster entrepreneurship among Indian youth.
- iii. It aims to combine all stakeholders of the startup ecosystem to showcase entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation.
- iv. The **theme** of the Startup Mahakumbh is '**Bharat Innovates**,' which underscores the intricate link between innovation and startups.

MoE & MIB Jointly launches nationwide awareness campaign "Mera Pehla vote desh ke liye"

The Ministry of Education (**MoE**) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (**MIB**) have jointly launched a nationwide awareness campaign "**Mera pehla vote desh ke liye (my first vote for the country)**" to encourage the first-time voters to participate in the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

- Union Minister Anurag Thakur, MIB & Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (**MoYAS**) launched a Campaign Anthem video to create awareness among first-time voters.

About the Awareness Campaign:

- i. Under this Campaign, various events will be organised in universities, colleges, and higher education institutions.
- ii. The campaign activities involve both on-ground physical events and online competitions on the MyGov platform.
- iii. The activities such as competitions on blog writing, podcasts, debate, essay writing, quizzes, extempore, and battle of bands will be conducted to show student creativity in content creation.

iv. It also encourages to download the [voter helpline app](#).

Key Facts about Lok Sabha:

i. The maximum sanctioned strength of the Lok Sabha (House of the People) by the constitution was 552 (530 representing states, 20 representing Union Territories (UT), and 2 representing the Anglo-Indian community).

- The two seats for Anglo-Indians were removed by the 104th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019.

Note: The 17th Lok Sabha (the current LS) has 543 seats filled by elected representatives (530 from states & 13 from Union Territories (UTs)). The tenure of the current LS ends on 16th June 2024.

Anant Ambani launched 'Vantara' programme for Welfare of Animals

Anant Ambani, Director on the boards of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and Reliance Foundation, has launched an umbrella initiative called the 'Vantara' (Star of the Forests) programme to rescue, treat, care for, and rehabilitate injured, abused, and threatened animals, in India and abroad.

- The initiative is the **first of its kind** in India and it aims to construct the world's largest animal rescue and rehabilitation centre spanning about 3,000 acres within the Green Belt of Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery Complex in Gujarat.
- Vantara also aims to protect critically endangered species native to India, restore vital habitats, and address urgent threats to species survival.
- The initiative offers dedicated medical facilities and specialized animal kitchens.

"Status of Leopards in India": Number of leopards in India Increased by 8% from 2018 to 2022

According to the report "Status of Leopards in India" released by Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), estimated that the leopards population in India has risen by **8%** from 12,852 in 2018 to **13,874** in 2022.



- The fifth cycle leopard population estimation (2022) was carried out by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII), in collaboration with State Forest Departments.
- The leopard population increased at an annual growth rate of 1.08% from 2018 to 2022.
- The report was part of the quadrennial (four-year) "Monitoring of Tiger, Co-predators, prey and their habitat" exercise in tiger range States.
- **Madhya Pradesh** has 3907 leopards, the highest number of leopards in India, followed by Maharashtra (1985) and Karnataka (1,879) in the second and third, respectively.

- Madhya Pradesh reported the most improvement in the number of leopards at 486 (3,421 in 2018 to 3,907 in 2022), while Odisha reported a drop of 192 (760 in 2018 to 568 in 2022).
- Tiger Reserves or sites having the highest leopard population are Nagarajunasagar Srisailem (Andhra Pradesh), followed by Panna (Madhya Pradesh), and Satpura (Madhya Pradesh).

PM Modi flagged off 'Swarna Sindhu' first tanker carrying Crude Oil from ONGC

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi flagged off the first tanker 'Swarna Sindhu', carrying crude oil from Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)'s **KG-DWN-98/2** deepwater project.

- The project is located in the Krishna Godavari basin and is expected to add 7% to India's oil and gas production at its peak.
- The Floating Production and Storage Offloading (FPSO) Armada Sterling V unit has been built and operated by Shapoorji Pallonji Energy Private Limited (SP Energy).
- The FPSO has a processing capacity of over 50,000 barrels of oil per day and 3 million standard cubic meters per day of gas.

PM Narendra Modi Inaugurates Bharat Tex 2024 in New Delhi

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi inaugurated Bharat Tex 2024, the world's biggest textile event held from 26th to 29th February 2024 at the Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, Delhi.

- The event took place in 2 venues, the Bharat Mandapam and YashoBhoomi, two of India's largest exhibition centres.
- Bharat Tex 2024 inspired by PM Modi's 5F Vision (Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign) was organised with a unified Farm to Fashion focus.

i. Textiles Committee, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE), signed MoU to promote upcycled Products Made From Scrap

ii. Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) signed a MoU with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) Srinagar, J&K to foster entrepreneurship and innovation in the J&K.



VMC, Civic body of Gujarat, issues Asia's 1st Certified Green Municipal Bond

Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC), a civic body of Gujarat, has raised **Rs 100 crore** (USD 12.07 million) by issuing Asia's first certified green municipal bond for Sustainable Water Infrastructure.

- VMC, with a semi-annual coupon rate of 7.90% on the issue, invited bids from investors, setting a new standard in green finance.

Note:

- The bond was opened for bidding on the Electronic Bidding Platform (EBP) of BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange).
- This is the 2nd issue of bonds by Vadodara, after its first issue was oversubscribed by 10 times.

Key points:

- The funds generated will be dedicated to constructing and enhancing liquid wastewater management infrastructure throughout Vadodara, reflecting a commitment to sustainable urban development.
- The bonds are rated AA+ STABLE by India Ratings, and have received a green security certificate from the Climate Bond Initiative.
- Utilisation of proceeds for projects contributing to improved air and water quality through the collection, treatment, and reuse of sewage water.

PM Modi Virtually Inaugurated Priority Corridor of Agra Metro, the 6th Metro in UP

i. On 6th March 2024, during his visit to West Bengal, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the Agra Metro's priority corridor (from Taj East Gate to Mankameshwar) in Agra, Uttar Pradesh (UP).

- Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister (CM) of UP, flagged off the Agra Metro from Taj Mahal Metro Station, Agra, UP. This is the 6th Metro project in UP.
- ii. The Agra Metro Rail Project backed by **EUR 450 million** loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) covers the construction of 2 interconnected urban metro rail lines, spanning 30 kilometers long, and a network of 27 strategically located stations in Agra, UP.

Kerala Launches 'CSpace', India's 1st Government-Owned OTT Platform

On 7th March 2024, Kerala Chief Minister (CM) Pinarayi Vijayan has launched India's first government-owned OTT (over-the-top) platform, 'CSpace', at an event held at the Kairali Theatre in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

About CSpace:

CSpace is managed by Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC), a state-owned company responsible for the promotion of the Malayalam cinema industry on behalf of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Kerala.

Curator panel:

- The curator panel consists of 60 members from cultural background constituted by KSFDC for selecting and approving the content.
- The list of curators includes Benjamin, OV Usha, Santhosh Sivan, Shyamaprasad, Sunny Joseph, and Jeo Baby.
- The three curators from the panel will evaluate every content that is submitted to the platform



for its artistic, cultural, and infotainment merit.

iv. The content will be featured on the platform after the curator's recommendations.

Note: For the first phase of CSpace, the curators selected 42 films, including 35 feature films, six documentaries, and one short film.

MHA notified Citizenship Amendment Act Rules, 2024

On March 11, 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the rules under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA-2019). These rules, called the **Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024** to fast-track the citizenship process for non-Muslims, immigrants such as Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, who had entered India before December 31, 2014.



- The rules are notified over four years after Parliament passed this law on December 11, 2019 amending the Citizenship Act of 1955.
- These rules will enable the persons eligible under CAA-2019 to apply for grant of Indian citizenship.

Key Points:

i. The entire process for eligible people to submit applications for Indian citizenship under the law will be online.

ii. As per parliamentary procedures, legislation rules should be framed within six months of presidential assent. Failure to do so requires an extension from the Committees on Subordinate Legislation in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

- MHA obtained extensions from these committees at regular intervals to develop rules enabling eligible individuals to apply for Indian citizenship.

iii. **CAA doesn't apply to Indian citizens.** It's aimed at granting Indian citizenship to certain foreigners who faced religious persecution in neighboring countries due to their faith.

iv. The CAA doesn't apply to areas under the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution** and those covered by the **Inner Line Permit system**, protecting the interests of tribal and indigenous communities in the North-Eastern region. Residents of these areas can't apply for Indian citizenship under the CAA.

Lakhpati Didi:

i. 'Lakhpati Didi' initiative is a skill development programme which was launched in 2023 and implemented by the MoRD.

ii. It helps rural females set up micro-enterprises in their respective villages and earn a sustainable income of at least Rs. 1 lakh annually per household by leveraging their entrepreneurial skills.

About Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD):

Union Minister – Giriraj Singh (Constituency: Begusarai, Bihar)

Union Minister of State (MoS) – Faggan Singh Kulaste (Constituency: Mandla, Madhya Pradesh); Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti (Constituency: Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh)

Aditya Birla Finance to be Amalgamated with Aditya Birla Capital

The Board of Directors (**BoD**) of Aditya Birla Capital Limited (**ABCL**) has approved the Scheme of Amalgamation of Aditya Birla Finance Limited (**ABFL**), with **ABCL**.

- The scheme aims to make ABCL a large unified operating Non-Banking Financial Company (**NBFC**).

Key Points:

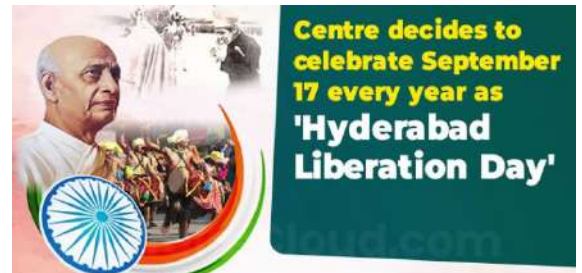
- The proposed amalgamation will result in a reduction of legal entities and simplification of the group structure of ABCL.
- The proposed amalgamation will integrate the businesses and operational synergies and lead to the seamless implementation of policy changes and a reduction in the multiplicity of legal and regulatory compliances.
- The amalgamation will also create a strong capital base for ABCL to grow its business.
- The amalgamation is subject to the approval of the National Company Law Tribunal (**NCLT**), Reserve Bank of India (**RBI**), and Securities and Exchange Board of India (**SEBI**)

Post-merger leadership:

After the merger, **Vishakha Mulye** will be acting as Managing Director (**MD**) & Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) whereas **Rakesh Singh** will assume the role as Executive Director (**ED**) and CEO (**NBFC**) of the merged amalgamated company.

GoI Designates September 17 as 'Hyderabad Liberation Day'

On 12th March 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs (**MoHA**), Government of India (**GoI**), issued a gazette notification, officially designating **September 17** of every year as **Hyderabad Liberation Day**.



- The Day marks the integration of the erstwhile princely State of Hyderabad into the Indian Union in 1948.

Note: Hyderabad remained under the rule of Mir Osman Ali Khan, Nizam of Hyderabad, for 13 months post-independence on 15th August 1947.

Significance of September 17:

- Hyderabad was liberated from Nizam's Rule on 17th September 1948, after a police action namely '**Operation Polo**.'
- On 17th September 1948, Hyderabad Nizam announced a ceasefire and Major general (Maj Gen) Syed Ahmed El-Edroos, chief of the Hyderabad state forces, surrendered to Maj Gen Jayanto Nath Chaudhuri, who led the primary strike against Hyderabad state forces on 18th September 1948.
- The day symbolises the end of Nizam's rule and the integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union.
 - The Police Action was initiated by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who served as the 1st Deputy Prime Minister and 1st Home Minister of Independent India from 1947 to 1950.

GoI approved 'TG' Prefix on Vehicle Registration Plates in Telangana

On 12th March 2024, the Government of India (GoI) approved the 'TG' prefix on vehicle registration number plates in Telangana by replacing the 'TS' prefix.

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) also issued a gazette notification effective immediately.
- The approval was granted in the exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (6) of section 41 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 (59 of 1988).
- The change will be applied to new vehicles and the vehicles with TS number plates will continue.
- The decision to replace the prefix code of vehicle registration from TS to TG was made by Chief Minister (CM) of Telangana, Anumula Revanth Reddy in his 1st cabinet meeting held in February 2024.

GoI Approves Transfer of Air India Building to Govt of Maharashtra for Rs 1,601 Crore

Government of India has approved the transfer of the Air India building at Nariman Point in Mumbai (Maharashtra) from AI Assets Holding Company Ltd (AIAHL) to the Government of Maharashtra (GoM) for a cash consideration of Rs 1,601 crore.



- The Maharashtra govt has agreed to waive Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) dues amounting to Rs 298.42 crore. This would have been payable by AI Assets Holding Company Ltd to GoM.

Points to note:

- The Maharashtra Cabinet approved the acquisition of the 23-storey Air India building in November 2023.
- The building was constructed in 1974 on the land owned by the GoM. The building was designed by renowned American architect John Burgee.
- AIAHL is a state-owned entity overseeing Air India's debt and assets following its acquisition by the Tata Group in January 2022.
- The acquisition offers GoM approximately 46,470 square meters of space near the state secretariat, established in 1955.

MIB Notifies Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 to Improve Film Certification Process

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has notified the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 to improve the process of certification of films for public exhibition. This replaces the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules of 1983

- The rules were notified following the introduction of the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023, which amended the Cinematograph Act, 1952.

Note: The rules were notified in exercise of the powers conferred by section 8 of the Cinematograph Act, 1952 (37 of 1952).

About Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024:

i.Aim: To streamline and modernise the film certification process and to keep up with the new technologies and advancements in the film industry.

ii. The new rules were drafted by MIB and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) following extensive consultations with filmmakers, cinema owners, disability rights organisations, non-government organisations(NGOs), film industry bodies, the general public, and other stakeholders.

iii. The new rule was drafted in line with the adoption of an online certification process, which will ensure transparency, efficiency and ease of doing business for the film sector.

India, Brazil Hold First '2+2' Defence and Foreign Ministerial Dialogue

On 14th March 2024, India and Brazil held their first 2 plus 2 Secretary level Political and Military Dialogue in New Delhi, Delhi. The dialogue was co-chaired by,

- **India:** Godavarthi Venkata Srinivas, Additional Secretary (Latin American and Caribbean-LAC), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Vishwesh Negi, Joint Secretary (International Cooperation), Ministry of Defence(MoD).
- **Brazil:** Marcelo Camara, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and Rear Admiral Fernando de Luca Marques de Oliviera, MoD

Both countries discussed a variety of subjects, including defence, space, energy, critical minerals, technology, counter-terrorism, and regional, multilateral, and other issues of mutual interest.

Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde Inaugurates India's First LNG-Powered Bus

Maharashtra Chief Minister(CM) Eknath Shinde has inaugurated India's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) powered bus, which will be operated by Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation(MSRTC).

- MSRTC announced that it will convert its 5,000 diesel vehicles into LNG alternative fuel vehicles in phases.
- MSRTC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with M/s Kings Gas for the conversion of diesel buses to LNG. It includes the usage and supply of fuel.
- It will set up LNG distribution facilities at 90 depots across Maharashtra.

Six Madhya Pradesh Heritage Sites Included in UNESCO's Tentative List

Six heritage sites in Madhya Pradesh (MP) were included in the tentative list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites (WHS).

- The six sites are Gwalior Fort, Khooni Bhandara, Bhojeshwar Mahadev Temple, the Rock art sites of Chambal Valley, the historic ensemble of Dhamnar, and the Gond monuments of Ramnagar.
- The Tentative list consists of sites that can be either cultural or natural areas or objects for having outstanding universal value.
- The heritage sites in the Tentative list will be considered for nominations to the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- As of 21st March 2024, India has 57 sites in UNESCO's Tentative list of heritage sites.

MeitY Notifies PIB's Fact Check Unit as Authorised Body for Centre under IT Rules 2021

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) notified the Fact Check Unit (**FCU**) under the Press Information Bureau (**PIB**) as a statutory body with powers to flag misinformation about the Central government and its departments across social media platforms.

- FCU under the PIB of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) has been designated as the FCU of the government of India.
- This was notified in exercise of power conferred by Rule 3(1)(b)(v) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules 2021).

Points to note:

i. The rule mandates all social media and internet intermediaries' to make reasonable efforts to prevent the spread of deceptive or misleading content from their users, related to the central government.

ii. It is stated that the social media platforms could lose legal immunity for user-generated content if they choose to keep notified misinformation online.

Note: Not just social media companies, but even internet and telecom service providers will have to block that information, meaning that a web link of a particular report could potentially be blocked.

Categories: The PIB FCU classifies any received information into 3 categories: Fake, Misleading, and True.

Operational Structure:

i. FCU is managed by 3 Joint Director rank officers of the Indian Information Service, overseen by the Principal Director General (DG) of the PIB.

ii. Principal DG of PIB functions as the Principal Spokesperson of the Government of India (GoI).

Recent Amendments:

i. In April 2023, MeitY amended the IT Rules 2021 to introduce the provisions for a government-run FCU to verify any information about the central government.

ii. The amendments included a provision for an FCU by the government to identify "fake or false or misleading" online content related to the "business" of the central government.

About PIB's FCU:

i. The FCU under PIB was founded in November 2019 to deter the spread of fake news and

misinformation.

ii. Its primary goal is to counter misinformation regarding government policies, initiatives, and schemes.

iii. Alternative text (ALT) is provided by PIB's FCU alongside social media posts to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

IAU Approves to Name Chandrayaan-3's Landing Site as 'Statio Shiv Shakti'

International Astronomical Union (IAU)'s Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature (WGPSN) has approved the name "Statio Shiv Shakti" for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander.



- The approval was given on **19th March 2024**.
- The term Shiv Shakti is derived from Indian mythology describing the masculine ("Shiva") and feminine ("Shakti") duality of nature.

Note: The WGPSN of IAU is responsible for formulating and coordinating all topographic nomenclature on the planetary bodies of the solar system.

Background:

i. On 23rd August 2023, the Vikram lander of Chandrayaan-3, the 3rd mission in the Chandrayaan programme, successfully soft landed near the moon's south pole.

ii. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister (PM) of India announced that the landing site will be named "Shiv Shakti" and the 23rd August of every year will be observed as National Space Day in India.

Additional info: The crash site of Chandrayaan-2 on the lunar surface was named 'Tiranga Point'.

Tejas Mark-1A fighter aircraft completes first flight in Bengaluru

On March 28, 2024, the Tejas Mark (Mk)-1A fighter aircraft made its successful maiden flight from the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) facility in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

- HAL's chief test pilot, Group **Captain KK Venugopal** (retd) flew the light combat aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A.

About Tejas Mark-1A:

i. Tejas Mark-1A fighter features advanced radar, electronic warfare, and improved combat capabilities.

- The Tejas Mark-1A is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

ii. Major upgrades include an active electronic scanned array (AESA) radar, a combined interrogator and transponder (CIT) and a digital map generator.

- The digital map generator, designed and developed by HAL's Mission and Combat Systems Research and Development Centre (MCSR&DC), had thermal issues and was a failure point in the Tejas Mark 1. This has been replaced with computers designed by MCSR&DC.

iii. HAL has integrated the ASRAAM (advanced short range air-to-air missile) for the Mark 1A's outboard stations.

iv. Cockpit floor modification allows 95% of IAF pilots (even the bigger pilots), including with shoe size 10, to fly comfortably.

Note:

IAF ordered 83 Mk-1A fighters for Rs. 48,000 crore in February 2021 and planned to buy 97 more Mk-1A's at a cost of around Rs. 67,000 crore.

About Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL):

Addl. Charge of Chairman and Managing Director– CB Ananthakrishnan

Headquarters– Bengaluru, Karnataka

Establishment– 1940

INTERNATIONAL

US Chamber's International IP Index 2024: India retained 42nd rank; The USA tops

According to the 12th edition of the International Intellectual Property (IP) Index (2024) by the United States (US) Chamber of Commerce, **India** has retained the **42nd rank** with an overall score of 38.64%.

- The United States of America (**USA**) has topped the list with an overall score of 95.48% followed by the United Kingdom (**UK**) in the 2nd place with 94.12% and **France** in the 3rd with 93.12%.

About International IP Index:

i.It provides a blueprint for economies aiming to bolster innovation and creativity through robust intellectual property (IP) standards.

ii.The Index assesses IP frameworks of 55 economies using 50 unique criteria related to patents, copyrights, enforcement, and more.

Note: Previously, India was ranked 42nd in 2023 and 43rd in 2022.

Top 5 on International IP Index 2024:

Rank	Country	Score
1	USA	95.48%
2	UK	94.12%
3	France	93.12%
42	India	38.64%

India's IP Strengths:

i.The report highlights India's commendable efforts, citing the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2023, which includes new language and criminal sanctions on film piracy.

ii.Strong initiatives include dynamic injunction orders against copyright piracy, incentives for Research and Development (R&D), and IP-based tax.

Challenges and Weaknesses of India's IP:

i.The report expresses concerns about India's IP regime, emphasising issues such as the dissolution of the Intellectual Property Appellate Board in 2021.

ii.India faces challenges with an under-resourced judiciary, impacting rights holders' ability to enforce IP rights and resolve IP-related disputes.

PM Modi & Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth jointly Inaugurate New Airstrip & a Jetty at Agaléga Island in Mauritius

On February 29, 2024, the Prime Minister (PM) of India, Narendra Modi and PM of Mauritius, Pravind Jugnauth, jointly inaugurated an **Airstrip** and a **Saint James Jetty** at the **Agaléga** Island in Mauritius via video conferencing.

- They also inaugurated the six community development projects in Agaléga that were implemented with financial assistance from India.

Points to note:

- i. These inaugurations will fulfil the demand for better connectivity between mainland Mauritius and Agaléga, **strengthen maritime security** and foster socio-economic development.
- ii. This will also expand India's strategic outreach in the Southern Indian Ocean region (IOR).
- iii. Jetty will facilitate operation of India's **Boeing P-8I** maritime surveillance planes for anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, bolstering India's security role in IOR.
- iv. Both nations cooperate in Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) monitoring, joint patrolling, and hydrography.

Additional info:

- i. Inauguration of projects follows the launch of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) systems and RuPay card services in Mauritius.
- ii. **PM Modi noted that** Mauritius will be the **1st nation** to join India's Jan Aushadi Scheme for affordable medicines. This allows the sourcing of about 250 high-quality medicines from the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India, and establishment of Jan Ayushadhi Kendras in Mauritius.
- iii. Over the past 10 years, India extends USD 1 billion credit line and USD 400 million assistance to Mauritius.

Comoros, Timor-Leste Becomes New Members of WTO at MC13 held in Abu Dhabi

On 26th February 2024, The **Union of the Comoros** and the **Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste** have formally become the members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The signing ceremony was held during the WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference (**MC13**) hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Abu Dhabi.

- With the accession of Comoros and Timor-Leste, the total number of **WTO members** becomes **166**.
- The MC13 was held from 26th to 29th February 2024 and the conference was chaired by H.E. Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade.

Key points:

- i. WTO implemented an agreement on new disciplines on domestic services regulations benefiting all members, including non-signatories like India.
- ii. It was signed by 72 members, including the United States of America (USA), 28 members of the European Union (EU), China, and Japan.

About World Trade Organization (WTO):

Director-General– Okonjo-Iweala

Headquarters– Geneva, Switzerland

Establishment– 1995

India Ranks 113 in the World Bank's Women, Business, and the Law 2024 Index

According to the **10th edition** of Women, Business, and the Law (WBL) 2024 report released by the World Bank Group, India has climbed to **113th** place out of 190 countries in the Index, with a score of **74.4%**. For the first time, WBL assesses the gap between legal reforms and actual outcomes for women in 190 economies.



- The index shows that in India, women enjoy 60% of the legal rights granted to men, which is lower than the global average of 64.2%.
- Despite challenges, India outperforms its South Asian counterparts, where women enjoy 45.9% of the legal protections provided to men.

About World Bank (WB):

President (WB Group)- Ajay Banga

Headquarters– Washington, DC, USA

Established in– 1944

Sri Lanka's Ex-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa authored the Book 'The Conspiracy to Oust Me from the Presidency'

Former President of Sri Lanka, **Gotabaya Rajapaksa**, has authored a book titled '**The Conspiracy to Oust Me from the Presidency**' which speaks about his political downfall to a "conspiracy" involving foreign and local parties.

- Gotabaya Rajapaksa served as the 7th Executive President of Sri Lanka from 2019 to 2022.
- The book attempts to reconstruct the last moments of his Presidency when Sri Lanka was experiencing its worst economic crisis since its Independence in 1948.
- The book also speaks about foreign intervention in manipulating Sri Lankan politics and weakening the economy since the end of the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009
- The book is available in the **English** and **Sinhalese** language.

Sweden Officially Joins NATO as it's 32nd Member

On March 7, 2024, **Sweden** officially joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), becoming the alliance's 32nd member. With this, Sweden ends decades of post-World War II neutrality and 200 years of non-alignment with major powers.

Note: This decision comes in the wake of security concerns in Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Key Points:

- Sweden now benefits from the protection provided under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, which guarantees the freedom and security of its allies.
- Swedish accession strengthens the NATO's defence on the northern flank.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):

NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance of countries from Europe and North America. Objective- To safeguard the freedom and security of its members through both political and military means.

Secretary General– Jens Stoltenberg

Established in 1949

Members– 32 countries(30 from Europe & 2 from North America).

Panama becomes 97th member to ratify the International Solar Alliance

Panama joined the International Solar Alliance (ISA) as its 97th member, showing its commitment to advancing solar energy in the energy sector.



- In this regard, Panama’s Ambassador to India **Yasiel Burillo** handed over the Instrument of Ratification to Joint Secretary (Economic Diplomacy) **Abhishek Singh**, Ministry of External affairs (MEA) during the meeting in New Delhi, Delhi.
- This move aligns with the efforts of other nations in harnessing solar energy for a sustainable future.
- Notably, on March 5th, Malta became the 119th Signatory country to join the ISA.

About International Solar Alliance (ISA):

The ISA was established in Paris, France in 2015 as a joint effort by India and France to mobilize efforts against climate change through the deployment of solar energy solutions. It was conceptualized on the sidelines of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.

Key Points:

i.Its purpose is to endorse clean energy, a sustainable environment, public transport, climate, and deploying cost-effective and transformational solutions through solar energy, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Director General– Dr Ajay Mathur

- Headquarters**– Gurugram, Haryana

SIPRI Report 2023: India World’s Largest Arms Importer Between 2019– 2023

According to ‘Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2023’ released by Swedish think tank, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the world’s top arms importer for the period 2019-23. India’s imports has increased by 4.7% compared to the period 2014-18.



- Saudi Arabia and Qatar were the 2nd and 3rd largest importers.

- United States (US), France, Russia were the **top 3 largest exporters** of arms between 2019-23.

India's main suppliers:

- Russia** remains India's top arms supplier at **36%**, however, it's the first time since 1960–64 that their deliveries comprised less than half of India's imports.
- The 2nd and 3rd main suppliers of India are **France (33%)** and the United States of America(**USA (13%)**).

About Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI):

Director– Dan Smith

Establishment– 1966

Headquarters– Solna, Sweden.

Highlights of PM Modi's state visit to Bhutan from 22-23 March 2024

Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi was on a 2-day state visit to Bhutan from 22nd to 23rd March 2024. He was received by Tshering Tobgay, PM of Bhutan at the Paro International Airport, Bhutan.

- Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, honoured PM Modi with the **Order of the Druk Gyalpo**, Bhutan's highest civilian decoration in a public ceremony at the Tendrelthang, Thimphu, Bhutan. He became **1st foreign head of government** to receive this award.
- Several Memorandum of understandings (MoUs)/agreements in the fields of energy, trade, digital connectivity, space and agriculture, were exchanged in the presence of PM Modi and Tshering Tobgay, Bhutan's PM.
- On 23rd March 2024, PM Modi and Tshering Tobgay, PM of Bhutan, inaugurated the **Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck Mother and Child Hospital** in Thimphu, Bhutan.

United Nations adopts 1st Global Resolution on Artificial Intelligence

On 21st March 2024, The United Nations General Assembly(**UNGA**) unanimously adopted the 1st global resolution on Artificial Intelligence (AI) which encourages nations to safeguard human rights, protect personal data, and monitor AI for risks.

- The nonbinding resolution was proposed by the United States of America(**USA**) and was co-sponsored by 123 countries, including China, Cuba, and Russia.

Note: The draft resolution was adopted without a vote highlighting the respect, protection and promotion of human rights in the design, development, and use of AI.

Key Points:

- This is the first time the UNGA has adopted a resolution on regulating an emerging field.
- The primary objective of the resolution is to use AI which can help in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 such as:

- Ending Global Hunger and Poverty
- Improving health worldwide
- Ensuring Quality Secondary Education for All Children

- Achieving Gender Equality.

Significance:

i. It aims to remove the digital divide between rich developed countries and poor developing countries.

ii. The resolution ensures that developing countries will have access to technology and capabilities to take benefits from AI such as: detecting diseases, predicting floods and provide training to the next generation of workers.

2024 Hurun Global Rich List: Mukesh Ambani becomes world's 10th Richest man; Mumbai Becomes Asia's Billionaire Capital

According to the "2024 Hurun Global Rich List", **Mukesh Ambani**, Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), has been ranked as the **World's 10th richest Person** with a total net worth of USD 115 billion.



- **Elon Musk**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tesla Motors, **topped** the list for the 3rd time, with a total net worth of USD 231 billion followed by **Jeff Bezos**, founder of Amazon (USD 185 billion) and **Bernard Arnault**, CEO of LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (175 billion).
- **Mumbai** (Maharashtra), overtakes Beijing (China) to become the **billionaire capital of Asia**. 92 billionaires of India are based in Mumbai while Beijing houses 91 billionaires.

About Hurun Report Inc. (Hurun Report):

It is a leading research, luxury publishing and events group established in 1998 in London (U.K.). Hurun India was launched in 2012.

MD & Chief Researcher– Anas Rahman Junaid

Headquarters (Hurun India)– Mumbai, Maharashtra

DEFENCE

Exercise Samudra Laksamana 2024, the third edition of the India-Malaysia maritime exercise, was held at/off the coast of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh(AP) from February 28, 2024 to March 2, 2024 between the **Indian Navy (IN)** and **Royal Malaysian Navy**.

Aim:

To enhance interoperability and relationships between Indian and Royal Malaysian Navies

Participants:

Indian Naval Ship (INS) **Kiltan** and the **Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lekir**

Key Points:

- i. The exercise involves harbor professional interactions, such as sports fixtures and expert exchanges, to enhance knowledge, share best practices, and promote maritime cooperation.
- ii. Crews engage in various professional interactions at the harbor to improve knowledge and cooperation.
- iii. Sea phase focuses on joint skill development and diverse operations.

About INS Kiltan:

- i. INS Kiltan, launched in March 2013, was handed over to the Indian Navy in 2017 by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (**GRSE**).
- ii. It is propelled by a Combination of Diesel and Diesel (**CODAD**) system, achieving speeds over 25 knots and a range of 3,500 nautical miles.
- iii. It is the first major warship with entirely composite material superstructure.



Indian Navy Commissions INS Jatayu at Minicoy & India's 1st MH-60R Seahawk Helicopter Squadron in Kochi

The Indian Navy (IN) commissioned the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Jatayu at Minicoy, the southernmost island in Lakshadweep. This is the 2nd naval base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweeprakashak in Kavaratti, the capital of Lakshadweep.

- It was commissioned by Admiral Radhakrishnan (R.) Hari Kumar, the Chief of Naval Staff (CNS).

The CNS R. Hari Kumar also commissioned **Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 334** 'Seahawks', India's first MH 60R multirole helicopter Squadron, at INS Garuda in Kochi, Kerala.

- The first Seahawk squadron of 48 officers and 170 men is commanded by Captain M. Abhishek Ram. The squadron is raised with six helicopters.



Sea Defenders-2024; India-USA Maritime Security Exercise held at Port Blair

'Sea Defenders-2024', the comprehensive maritime security exercise



between the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) & United States Coast Guard (USCG) was successfully concluded at Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) Island on 9th March 2024.

Aim of the Exercise: To enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability between ICG & USCG.

Key Points:

- i. 'Sea Defenders-2024' exercise covered various situations like pollution response, showcasing firefighting and damage control skills, practice to neutralize asymmetric threats related to drone threats and shipboard emergencies.
- ii. The exercise also witnessed Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) Operations for inspecting vessels suspected of illegal activity and medical evacuation exercises to enhance readiness in emergency situations.
- iii. The joint exercise allowed both ICG & USCG to refine their skills and improve their ability to work together in a coordinated manner.

USCG Ship Bertholf:

- i. USCGC **Bertholf**, a Legend-class maritime security cutter, participated in the exercise by engaging in harbour activities, sea exercises and cross-visits
- ii. **Bertholf** is equipped with advanced technology and weaponry such as a helicopter landing pad, state-of-the-art sensors and communication equipment.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated 'Nausena Bhawan' the new Headquarters of Indian Navy

On 15th March 2024, Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD), has inaugurated '**Nausena Bhawan**', the first independent headquarters building of the Indian Navy (IN), at Delhi Cantonment in New Delhi, Delhi.

Key People:

The event was attended by General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS); Admiral Radhakrishnan Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS).

About Nausena Bhawan:

- i. **Nausena Bhawan** has three wings across four stories. The complex is equipped with a state-of-the-art integrated building management system and has achieved **Green Rating IV** under the integrated habitability assessment.
- ii. Through an all-India competition, **Nausena Bhawan's** architectural design was chosen.

Integrated Tri-Service Firepower and Manoeuvre Exercise 'Bharat Shakti' held in Rajasthan

A 50-minute-long synergised demonstration of indigenous defence capabilities in the form of a Tri-Services Live Fire and Manoeuvre Exercise '**Bharat Shakti**' was held at Pokhran during PM Modi's visit to Rajasthan on 12th March 2024.

Key People:

- i. The event was witnessed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi; Union Minister Rajnath Singh, Ministry of Defence (MoD); Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma; General Anil Chauhan, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS); Admiral Radhakrishnan Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), and Vivek Ram Chaudhari, Chief of the Air Staff.
- ii. Delegates from around 30 nations were present at the event.

About Bharat Shakti:

- i. '**Bharat Shakti**' exercise displayed an array of indigenous weapon systems and platforms to

showcase India's unprecedented excellence in global military equipment production.

ii.The exercise demonstrated the firepower capabilities of indigenous weapons and the operational readiness of all three defence forces namely Indian Army (IA), Indian Navy (IN) and Indian Air Force (IAF).

iii.The exercise also simulated realistic, synergised, multi-domain operations displaying integrated operational capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces to counter threats across land, air, sea, cyber, and space domains.

Showcased weapons:

IA:

IA was represented by T-90 (IM) Tanks, Main Battle Tank Arjun, K-9 Vajra, Dhanush (howitzer) and Sarang Gun Systems, Akash Weapons System, Logistics Drones, Robotic Mules, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and an array of unmanned aerial vehicles along with Pinaka rocket system.

IN:

IN showcased Naval Anti-Ship Missiles, Autonomous Cargo Carrying Aerial Vehicles, and Expendable Aerial Target to highlight maritime strength and technological sophistication.

IAF:

Indian Air Force showcased the indigenously developed Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, Light Utility Helicopters, Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) Mk-IV Dhruv and Prachand helicopters. demonstrating air superiority and versatility in air operations.

Exercise Tiger Triumph – 24: 3rd Edition of India & USA Tri-Service HADR Exercise Commenced in AP

“Exercise Tiger Triumph – 24”, the **3rd edition** of the Bilateral Tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (**HADR**) Amphibious Exercise between India and the United States of America (USA) was commenced on 18th March 2024 in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Aim: To share best practices and Standard Operating Procedures in undertaking multinational HADR operations and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enable rapid and smooth coordination between forces of both countries.

Participating Units:

i.Indian Navy (IN): IN is represented by a Landing Platform Dock, Landing Ship Tanks including Landing Crafts and helicopters, guided missile Frigate and Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance Aircraft.

ii.Indian Army (IA): The participating units from IA include one infantry battalion group including mechanised forces.

iii.Indian Air Force(IAF): IAF will be represented by medium lift aircraft, transport helicopters and a Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT).

Note: Special Operations Forces (SOF) from all three services will also participate in the exercise.

iv.USA Navy: The US Task Force would deploy USA Navy Landing Platform Dock including its integral Landing Craft Air Cushions and helicopters, a Destroyer, maritime reconnaissance and medium lift aircraft, along with US Marines Corps and US Army.

Phases:

Harbour Phase:

i.The Harbour Phase of the exercise is being conducted at Visakhapatnam from 18th March to

25th March 2024.

ii. Activities such as pre-sail discussions, Subject Matter Expert Exchange, and deliberations on planning and execution procedures of various tasks will be carried out during this phase.

Sea phase:

i. The Sea Phase of the exercise will be conducted from 26th March to 31st March 2024. The troops will undertake Maritime, Amphibious and HADR operations.

ii. In this phase, a joint Command and Control Centre and a Joint Relief and Medical Camp will be conducted by the units of India and the USA.

Key Points:

i. On 19th March 2024, the exercise was held onboard the Indian Naval Ship (INS) **Jalashwa**.

ii. A Planning and Coordination Exercise will also be conducted parallel to Exercise Tiger Triumph – 24 to discuss and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

iii. The first Tiger Triumph exercise was held in 2019 in Visakhapatnam.

‘Operation Indravati’ Launched to Evacuate Stranded Indians in Haiti

The Government of India (GoI) launched ‘**Operation Indravati**’ to evacuate stranded Indians in **Haiti** after armed gangs seized control of most of the Caribbean nation.

- On 21st March 2024, Union Minister Subrahmanyam (S.) Jaishankar, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), announced that the twelve Indians were evacuated through Operation Indravati.
- Acting President and Prime Minister Ariel Henry of Haiti resigned on 12th March 2024, due to the ongoing crisis.

About Haiti:

Haiti, Located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, borders the Dominican Republic on the eastern side of the island. Its closest neighbors include Jamaica to the west and Cuba to the northwest.

Capital – Port-au-Prince

Currency – Haitian Gourde

Appointments or Resign/Retired

President Appoints New Chairman & Members of Lokpal; Justice AM Khanwilkar as Chairman

On 27th February 2024, Droupadi Murmu, President of India, has appointed the new Chairman and Members of Lokpal, the anti-corruption authority in India. Former Supreme Court judge **Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar** was appointed as the chairperson of Lokpal.

- He will be the second regular chairperson of the Lokpal.

Note:

- The Lokpal has been working without its regular chairperson since the retirement of Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose, 1st Chairperson of Lokpal, on 27th May 2022.
- Justice Pradip Kumar Mohanty, a judicial member of the Lokpal, has been serving as the acting chairperson of Lokpal since 28th May 2022.

About Justice A M Khanwilkar:

- Justice A. M. Khanwilkar was born on 30th July 1957, in Pune, Maharashtra.
- He was appointed as Additional Judge of the Bombay High Court in March 2000 and confirmed as permanent Judge in April 2002.
- He served as the CJ of the Himachal Pradesh HC from April to November 2013 and as CJ of the Madhya Pradesh HC from November 2013 to May 2016.
- Khanwilkar served as a judge of the Supreme Court from May 2016 to July 2022.

New Members of Lokpal:

President Droupadi Murmu has appointed six members to Lokpal including three judicial and three non-judicial.

Judicial Members:

- Justice **Lingappa Narayana Swamy**, former Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court
- Justice **Ritu Raj Awasthi**, former chief justice of the Karnataka High Court.
- Justice **Sanjay Yadav**, former chief justice of Allahabad High Court.

Non-Judicial Members:

- Sushil Chandra, former Chief Election Commissioner.
- Pankaj Kumar, former Gujarat chief secretary.
- Ajay Tirkey, former secretary of the Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Government of India.

Note:

- As of 29th Feb'24, Ritu Raj Awasthi is serving as the chairperson of the law commission, and he will resign from that post before taking over as a member of Lokpal.
- The above appointments will take effect on the dates they assume charge of their respective offices.

About the Lokpal:

- The Lokpal inquires and investigates the allegations of corruption against public functionaries.
- It is the first institution of its kind in independent India, established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013.
- It consists of a chairperson and **8 members**, of whom 50% are judicial members.

iv. Term of office: The chairperson and other members hold office for a term of **5 years** from the date on which they enter upon the office or until they attain the age of **70 years**, whichever is earlier.

v. Jurisdiction: It can inquire into allegations of corruption against anyone who is or has been Prime Minister, or a Minister in the Union government, or a Member of Parliament, as well as officials of the Union Government under Groups A, B, C and D.

Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Took Oath as Pakistan's PM for a 2nd Time

Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was sworn in as the Prime Minister (**PM**) of **Pakistan** for a **2nd term** on 4 March 2024. Pakistan's newly formed parliament elected Shehbaz Sharif as the new PM, who secured 201 votes in a 336-member National Assembly, surpassing the required 169 votes.

- Previously, he served as PM of a coalition government for 16 months from April 2022 to August 2023 before Parliament was dissolved to hold general elections.
- President Arif Alvi administered the oath to him at a ceremony at the Presidential mansion, Aiwan-e-Sadr in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Note:

- On 14 August 2023, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar was appointed as Pakistan's 8th caretaker PM.
- Shehbaz Sharif is the younger brother of 3-time PM of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, who currently serves as the President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party.

Election Outcome:

i. Pakistan held general elections to its National Assembly – the lower house on 8 February 2024.

ii. Shehbaz Sharif was the consensus candidate of the PML-N party and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

iii. Shehbaz Sharif defeated his opponent, Omar Ayub Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party of jailed former PM Imran Khan, which secured 92 votes.

iv. Both PML-N (75 seats) and PPP (54 seats) formed a coalition government, with one of the PTI-backed legislators also joining the PML-N's party.

Note: As per Pakistan's constituency, a political party or alliance needs 169 seats in the National Assembly to assume power.

About Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif:

i. His career in public service began as President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry in 1985.

ii. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1988 and to Pakistan's National Assembly (1990-93) and later to the Punjab Assembly (1993-96) as Leader of the Opposition.

iii. He became a Member of the Punjab Assembly for the 3rd time in 1997.

iv. He was elected as Chief Minister (CM) of Punjab and was sent into forced exile after the 1999 military coup.

v. He was elected unopposed as a Member Punjab Assembly for the 4th term in 2008, serving as CM for the 2nd time till 2013.

vi. In 2018, he was elected as a member of the National Assembly and served as the opposition leader until Imran Khan's removal via a no-trust vote in April 2022.

Brajesh Mehrotra appointed as Chief Secretary of Bihar

The Government of Bihar has appointed **Brajesh Mehrotra**, a 1989 batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, as the Chief Secretary (CS) of Bihar with effect from **4th March 2024**.

- Mehrotra succeeded **Amir Subhani**, a 1987 batch IAS officer, who voluntarily retired from the post.
- Prior to the appointment, Mehrotra served as additional chief secretary of revenue and land reforms with the additional charge of general administration and parliamentary affairs. He also holds the post of Bihar's chief information commissioner.

Note: Amir Subhani was given charge of Chairman of Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission (BERC) for five years from the date of assuming charge, or till the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Gustavo Adrianzen Becomes New PM of Peru

Gustavo Lino Adrianzen Olaya was sworn in as Prime Minister (PM) or President of the Council of Ministers (PCM) of the Republic of Peru with effect from 6th March 2024.

- The swearing-in ceremony was led by the President of Peru, **Dina Boluarte** at the Government Palace in Lima, Peru.
- Gustavo Adrianzen succeeded **Alberto Otarola** who resigned from the post on 05th March 2024 due to a political scandal.
- Prior to the appointment, Adrianzen had been the Permanent Representative of Peru to the Organization of American States (OAS), based in the United States of America (USA), since February 2023.

Famous Indian Author, philanthropist & Padma Awardee Sudha Murty Nominated to Rajya Sabha by President

The President of India, **Droupadi Murmu** has nominated renowned author, Indian philanthropist & Padma Awardee **Sudha Murty** as the 12th nominated Member of Parliament (MP) in the Upper House of Parliament (Rajya Sabha (RS)).

About Sudha Murty:

i. Sudha Murty, a former Infosys Foundation chairperson, is the wife of N. R. Narayana Murthy who is the co-founder of Infosys.

ii. She is an active member of public health care initiatives of the Gates Foundation and she is known for her philanthropy activity.

iii. She received several awards including **Padma Shri** (the 4th highest civilian award) in 2006 and **Padma Bhushan** (the third highest civilian award) in 2023 for Social Work.

Note: Under Article 80 (3) of the Constitution of India, out of the 250 members in the RS, 12 are nominated by the President, on the recommendation of the government of India, and 238 members represents the States and Union Territories.

Asif Ali Zardari Sworn in as Pakistan's 14th President for 2nd Term

On 10 March 2024, **Asif Ali Zardari**, co-chairman of the center-left Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was sworn in as the **14th President** of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the **2nd time**. Previously, he served as the 11th President of Pakistan from 9th September 2008 to 9th September 2013.

- Asif Ali Zardari replaced Arif Alvi, who stayed in office for 5 months after completing his 5-year term in September 2023.
- Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath to Asif Ali Zardari at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the Presidential Palace in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Election Results:

i.Asif Ali Zardari secured 411 electoral votes in parliament and all 4 provincial assemblies, backed by PPP, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P).

iii.Opposition candidate Mahmood Khan Achakzai, supported by Pakistan-Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), secured 181 votes.

About Asif Ali Zardari:

i.His first government role was as the environment minister during Benazir's second term (1993-1996) and also as the minister of investment from 1995 to 1996.

ii.He has been elected as a member of the National Assembly 4 times and as a senator from 1990 to 2024.

- He resigned from parliament after being elected as president in March 2024.

iii.He was elected president in 2008, the 1st ever democratically elected president to complete his full term in Pakistan's history.

Nayab Singh Saini Sworn in as 11th CM of Haryana

On 12th March 2024, **Nayab Singh Saini**, Haryana State President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a Member of Parliament (MP) elected from the Kurukshetra Constituency, was sworn in as the **11th Chief Minister (CM)** of Haryana.

- Haryana Governor **Bandaru Dattatreya** administered oath of office and secrecy to Nayab Singh Saini in the event held in Chandigarh.
- Nayab Singh Saini succeeded **Manohar Lal Khattar** who stepped down resulting in a split in BJP-Jannayak Janata Party (BJP-JJP) alliance which had ruled the state since 2019.



About Nayab Singh Saini:

i.Nayab Saini started his political career in 1996 by joining BJP.

ii.In 2014, he became an MLA for the first time representing Narayangarh Constituency.

iii.He served as a Minister of State for Labour and Employment and Mines & Geology in the Manohar Lal Khattar cabinet from 2014 to 2019.

iv.Since 2019, he has been serving as an MP in the Lower House of Parliament (Lok Sabha(LS)).

Additional Info:

The BJP has 41 MLAs in the 90-member House, while the JJP has 10. The main opposition Indian National Congress (INC) has 30 MLAs while the Indian National Lok Dal and Haryana Lokhit Party one seat each.

Devendra Jhajharia Elected as President Of Paralympic Committee Of India

Javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia was elected unopposed as the president of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI). He succeeded para-athlete Deepa Malik as president of PCI, whose term ended on 31st January 2024.

- Devendra Jhajharia won two gold medals and a silver in the Paralympics. He won a gold medal in the 2004 Athens(Greece) and the 2016 Rio de Janeiro(Brazil) Paralympics in the F46 disability category. He won a silver medal in the 2020 Tokyo(Japan) Paralympics.
- Jhajharia has received awards including the Khel Ratna (2017), Arjuna Award (2004), Padma Shri (2012), and Padma Bhushan (2022) in the field of sports. He was the **only para-athlete** to win the **Padma Bhushan** award so far.
- The other office-bearers who were elected along with the President were R. Chandrashekhara and Satya Prakash Sangwan as Vice Presidents, Jayawant Hammanawar as Secretary General.

Gyanesh Kumar & Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu appointed as new Election Commissioners; Arun Goel Resigns

On 15th March 2024, Retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers **Gyanesh Kumar** and **Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** took charge as the New Election Commissioners(ECs) in the Election Commission of India(ECI).



- Gyanesh Kumar and Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu are of 1988 batch from Kerala & Uttarakhand cadre respectively.
- The post of ECs were vacant since the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey on 14th February 2024 and resignation of Arun Goel on 8th March 2024.

Note: The appointment was made by a high-powered selection committee chaired by Prime Minister(PM) Narendra Modi. The committee includes Union Minister Arjun Meghwal, Ministry of Law and Justice and Leader of Opposition Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

Details of the appointment:

- This appointment marks the inaugural instance of Election Commissioners being appointed under the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 brought in by the government in December 2023.
- Sukhbir Singh Sandhu was appointed as EC on 3rd February 2024 for a contract term of one year. His tenure will end on 4th February 2025.

About Gyanesh Kumar:

i. Prior to his retirement in January 2024, he served as Secretary of the Ministry of Cooperation. He has also served as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and secretary in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.

About Sukhbir Singh Sandhu:

i. He served as the Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and also as Additional Secretary of the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

iii. He was appointed as the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand in 2021. He retired from the post in January 2024.

Arun Goel resigned from the post of EC:

i. Election Commissioner Arun Goel resigned from his post as EC ahead of 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

ii. He was appointed as EC on 19th November 2022 and his tenure as EC was till 6th December 2027.

ECI named Sheetal Devi as National Icon in PwD category

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has chosen **Sheetal Devi**, an Indian para-archer and 2023 Arjuna Awardee, as the National Icon in Persons with Disabilities (PwD) category.

- The announcement was made at an Exhibition Cricket which was organised by ECI in association with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in New Delhi, Delhi.
- The event was attended by Rajiv Kumar, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC); Gyanesh Kumar, Election Commissioner and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, Election Commissioner.
- On the occasion, ECI launched a dedicated Voter's Guide for PwDs and Senior Citizen Electors.

Kishor Makwana Assumes Charge as Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Kishor Makwana assumed the charge of **Chairman** of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) in New Delhi, Delhi. Luv Kush Kumar and Vaddepalli Ramchander also assumed charge as members of the NCSC.

The post of NCSC Chairman was vacant after Vijay Sampla resigned on 18th July 2023

- Arun Halder was vice chairman during the resignation and he later assumed charge as acting chairman and held the position till February 18 2024.
- The tenure of the Commission is three years and this is the 7th Commission.
- Kishor Makwana, a journalist and columnist, has authored more than 33 books, including 'Samajik Kranti na Mahanayak Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar' (great hero of the social revolution – Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar), his notable works include 'Common Man Narendra Modi'.

- The NCSC is a constitutional body set up under **Article 338** of the Constitution of India.

Vladimir Putin won 5th term as the President of Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin (71 years old) has secured a record **fifth term** as President of Russia by winning the 2024 Presidential elections. He secured around 88%(87.97%) of the total votes.

- He is scheduled to be inaugurated on 7th May 2024.
- With this new 6-year term, Putin becomes the longest-serving Russian or Soviet leader in history since Joseph Stalin and the longest-reigning president in post-Soviet Russia.

Note: Joseph Stalin served as leader of the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953.

About Vladimir Putin:

- Vladimir Putin was born in Leningrad on October 7, 1952.
- He served as Prime Minister (PM) of Russia in 1999 under the Premiership of Boris Yeltsin.
- In December 1999, he became the acting President of Russia after Yeltsin resigned.
- He served as President of Russia from 2000 to 2004, 2004-2008, 2012 to 2018, and 2018 to 2024.
- He also served as the PM of Russia from 2008 to 2012.

Awards and honours:

- Time magazine named Vladimir Putin as TIME's Person of the Year in 2007.
- The China International Peace Research Centre awarded the Confucius Peace Prize to Putin in 2011.

About Russia

Prime Minister– Mikhail Mishustin

Capital– Moscow

Currency– Russian ruble

Matam Venkata Rao Elected as Chairman of IBA for 2023-24

On 21st March 2024, Matam Venkata Rao (MV Rao), Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) of the Central Bank of India, was elected as the Chairman of the Indian Banks' Association (**IBA**) for the term 2023-2024.

- He succeeds Atul Kumar Goel(AK Goel), MD & CEO of Punjab National Bank(PNB) who served as chairman of IBA (2022-23).

Other Appointments:

- Dinesh Kumar Khara**, Chairman of the State Bank of India(SBI), has been re-elected as one of the three deputy Chairmen of IBA.
- Shanti Lal Jain(SL Jain)**, MD & CEO of Indian Bank, and **N Kamakodi**, MD & CEO of City Union Bank (CUB) have been elected as the other two Deputy Chairmen of IBA.
- Madhav Nair**, Country Head & CEO of the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait, will serve as the **honorary secretary** of IBA. He served as the Deputy Chairman of IBA for 2022-2023.

About MV Rao:

- i.MV Rao began his career with erstwhile Allahabad Bank (Indian Bank) in 1988, and has over three decades of professional banking experience in leadership roles.
- ii.He has been serving as the MD & CEO of Central Bank of India since March 2021.
- iii.He has also served as the Executive Director of Canara Bank.

Mohammad Mustafa Named as the Prime Minister of Palestinian Authority

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has appointed **Mohammad Mustafa** as the Prime Minister (**PM**) of the Palestinian Authority (PA), formerly the Palestinian National Authority, officially known as the **State of Palestine**.

- He succeeds Mohammad Shtayyeh, who resigned from the post in February 2024 due to developments related to the Israeli conflict in Gaza.
- Mustafa has been serving as a senior economic affairs adviser to President Abbas since 2005.

Note: The PA was formed in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords peace process between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

About Mohammad Mustafa:

- i.Mohammad Mustafa has been Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF) since 2015.
- ii.He has previously served as Deputy PM and Minister of National Economy for the State of Palestine from **2013-2014**.
- iii.He has also held various senior positions at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., United States of America(USA), for 15 years.
- iv.He has also served as the Founding Chief Executive Officer(CEO) of the Palestine Telecoms Company (PalTel).
- v.He founded Wataniya Mobile, and Massader for Natural Resources and Infrastructure, as well as investment funds, such as the Rasmala Palestine Equity Fund and the Sharakat Fund for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises(SMEs).

About Palestine:

Palestine has no specific currency form, and it mainly uses three currencies: Israeli shekels (ILS), United States dollars (USD), and Jordanian dinars (JOD).

President– Mahmoud Abbas

Prime Minister– Mohammad Mustafa

Capital – Jerusalem

Prabowo Subianto Elected as New President of Indonesia

Indonesian Defence Minister **Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo** has been elected as the new President of Indonesia through General Election.

- He is scheduled to become the **eighth president** of Indonesia in October 2024 and will replace **Joko Widodo**.
- After running for president three times, he was victorious in the February 2024 presidential election with 58.6% of the total vote.

About Prabowo Subianto

- i. Prabowo Subianto was born in Jakarta on 17 October 1951.
- ii. He is an Indonesian Politician, **former Lieutenant General in the Indonesian Armed Forces**.
- iii. He has been described as a **right-wing nationalist** (Gerindra Party).

Awards and honors

- i. He was awarded the honorary **Four-star general rank** in February 2024.
- ii. Also he won the 'Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang (Tentera)' **Distinguished Service Order** (Military), the highest military award of Singapore.

About Indonesia

President – Joko Widodo (Prabowo Subianto will take over the presidency from October 2024)

Capital – Jakarta

Currency – Indonesian Rupiah

Naveen Jindal was Elected as President of Indian Steel Association

On 24th March 2024, **Naveen Jindal**, Chairman of Jindal Steel and Power (JSP), took charge as **President** of the Indian Steel Association (ISA), the apex body of the domestic steel industry.

- He succeeds Dilip Oommen, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel (AMNS) India, and Executive Vice President of ArcelorMittal.
- He will also hold the post as the Chairman of the Apex Committee, the Governing body of ISA.

Note: Naveen Jindal was unanimously elected as the President of ISA by the Apex Committee.

About Naveen Jindal:

i. Naveen Jindal served as Member of Parliament (MP-Lok Sabha) representing the Kurukshetra constituency (Haryana) for 2 terms from 2004–2014.

About Indian Steel Association (ISA):

ISA is the apex body of the domestic steel industry and works collectively to highlight the issues of the sector.

ISA represents all the major Public Sector and Private Sector Steel Enterprises of India.

Headquarters– New Delhi, Delhi

Established in– 2014

Luis Montenegro Named as the Prime Minister of Portugal

The Portugal President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa named **Luis Filipe Montenegro Cardoso de Moraes Esteves**, the head of center-right of Democratic Alliance (DA), as the **Prime Minister (PM) of Portugal**.

About the PM Election:

- i. Montenegro won the parliamentary election by securing 80 seats of the total 230 seats while Socialist Party (Pedro Nuno Santos) got 78 seats and Chega Party (Andre Ventura) got 50 seats which was held on March 10 2024.
- ii. In order to form a majority, the Party needs 116 seats.
- iii. He will succeed Antonio Costa and is expected to be sworn-in as the Prime Minister on April 2 2024.

iv. He was invited by the President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, to form the new minority government after eight years of Socialist rule.

About Luis Montenegro:

i. Luis Montenegro (51), was born in Porto on 16 February 1973.

ii. He has been serving as the Leader of Opposition since 2022.

iii. He also served on the City Council from 1997 to 2001.

ACC Appoints Sadanand Vasant Date as DG of NIA; Rajeev Kumar as DG of BPR&D & Piyush Anand as DG of NDRF

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of

- **Sadanand Vasant Date** as the Director General (DG) of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).
- **Piyush Anand** as DG of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
- **Rajeev Kumar** as DG of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).



About National Investigating Agency (NIA):

NIA, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the central counter-terrorism agency of India. It was constituted under the NIA Act, 2008.

Established in 2008

Headquarter– New Delhi, Delhi.

Ritu Raj Awasthi Sworn in as Judicial Member of Lokpal

On 27th March 2024, Ritu Raj Awasthi sworn in as one of the three Judicial member of Lokpal of India. The oath of office was administered by Justice AM Khanwilkar, Chairperson of Lokpal of India at the ceremony held in Lokpal of India office at New Delhi, Delhi.



- Prior to the appointment, Ritu Raj Awasthi was serving as the Chairperson of 22nd Law Commission of India since November 2022. He resigned from the post on 26th March 2024 to join Lokpal.

About Ritu Raj Awasthi:

i. Ritu Raj Awasthi has previously served as the Chief Justice (CJ) of Karnataka High Court from 11 October 2021 to 2 July 2022.

ii. He also served as the Judge of Allahabad High Court from 13 April 2009 to 10 October 2021.

Other Appointments:

During the event, Pankaj Kumar, a 1986 batch IAS officer from Gujarat cadre (retired), and Ajay Tirkey, a 1987 batch IAS officer from Madhya Pradesh (MP) cadre (retired), took charge as the non-judicial members of Lokpal.

PR Sreejesh & Camila Caram Appointed Co-chairs of New FIH Athletes Committee

Indian hockey goalkeeper Parattu Raveendran (**PR**) **Sreejesh** and **Chilean** women's hockey player **Camila Caram** are appointed as **co-chairs** of the International Hockey Federation's (**FIH**) new **Athletes Committee**.

- Camila Caram has been assigned Co-Chair and Athletes Committee Representative on the Executive Board.
- PR Sreejesh is the Co-Chair and he will lead the planning and meetings alongside Camila Caram.

Note: The FIH Athletes Committee serves as a consultative body making recommendations to the FIH Executive Board, FIH Committees, Advisory Panels, and other bodies.

About PR Sreejesh:

i. Sreejesh, hailing from Ernakulam, Kerala, made his senior debut at the 2006 South Asian Games in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

ii. So far, he represented India at the Olympics 3 times in 2012 London (United Kingdom), 2016 Rio (Brazil), and 2020.

iii. Notable victories include the:

- Gold at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea;
- Bronze at the 2015 FIH Hockey World League Final, Raipur, Chhattisgarh (India);
- Bronze at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (Japan) (first medal in the Summer Games in over four decades);
- Gold at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Awards: In 2015- Arjuna Award; 2017- Padma Shri (Sports); 2021- The World Games Athlete of the Year, and also Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award in 2021.

About Camila Caram:

i. She has played around 266 matches (As of March 28, 2024) for the Chile Women's Hockey team since her debut in 2006.

ii. She represented Chile as one of the Co-Captains in the FIH Women's Hockey Olympic Qualifiers 2024 held in Ranchi, Jharkhand in January 2024.

About FIH Athletes Committee and New Members:

The Committee will be established on a 4-yearly basis and is composed of:

- 2 Co-Chairs,
- 8 Ordinary Members

Responsibilities of FIH Athletes Committee:

i. Advocating for athlete welfare, anti-doping, social media, and career management.

ii. Collaborating with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Athletes' Commission and other sports organizations for information exchange.

Honours/ Awards

Sunil Bharti Mittal to be Conferred With Honorary Knighthood by King Charles III of UK

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises became the 1st Indian citizen to be conferred the title of Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (**KBE**) under **King Charles III** reign, recognising his contributions “for services to United Kingdom (UK) and India business relations”.

- The KBE is one of the highest honours conferred by the British Sovereign to civilians, granted to foreign nationals in recognition of their outstanding contributions.

Note: The honour recognises Bharti Enterprises’ work within the India-UK space, including with the UK government in the field of satellites.

Honorary Knighthood:

i.KBE is a distinguished recognition for pre-eminent contributions in any field of activity and is conferred in an honorary capacity to foreign nationals.

ii.While the Knighthood conferred on UK nationals gives them the titles “Sir” or “Dame.”

- The non-UK nationals awarded the honour add KBE (or Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE) for women) after the recipient’s name.

About Sunil Bharti Mittal:

i.In 1976, he founded Bharti Enterprises, which started its telecom services business by launching mobile services in Delhi in 1995.

ii.Bharti Airtel, the flagship company of Bharti Enterprises, has emerged as one of the top telecom companies in the world.

ii.He is the Co-Chairman of Eutelsat Group, a global leader in satellite communications. He was the 1st Indian to be elected as Chair of the GSMA.

‘Staliner Divan’ Translated by Pankaj Kumar Chatterjee Won the Romain Rolland Book Prize 2024

The 7th edition of the **Romain Rolland Book Prize(2024)** has been awarded to “**Staliner Divan**”, the Bengali translation of Jean-Daniel Baltassat’s French novel “Le Divan de Staline” (Stalin’s Couch), by **Pankaj Kumar Chatterjee**.

- The Romain Rolland Book Prize is annually presented by the French Institute in India (**IFI – Institut Français en Inde**) in collaboration with **Apeejay Trust**.
- The original French novel was published in 2013. The Bengali translation of the book was published by **New Bharat Sahitya Kutir** in **2023**.

Note: IFI has invited the publisher and translator of Staliner Divan to participate in the **Paris Book Market** in May 2024 and **Paris Book Fair** in April 2024 respectively.

Points to note:

i.This is the **2nd Bengali book** to win the Romain Rolland Book Prize.

ii.Previously, the Romain Rolland Book Prize 2022 was won by Myorso Birudhyo Saksho, the Bengali translation of the Meursault, contre-enquête, the 1st novel by Algerian writer and

journalist Kamel Daoud, by Trinanjan Chakraborty. The book was published by Patra Bharati.

About the Book:

i. The novel 'Le Divan de Staline' is about 'Soviet leader' Joseph Stalin, who was the leader of the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953.

About Romain Rolland Book Prize:

i. Romain Rolland Book Prize was created in 2017 to recognise the best translation of a French title (francophone area) into any Indian language, including English.

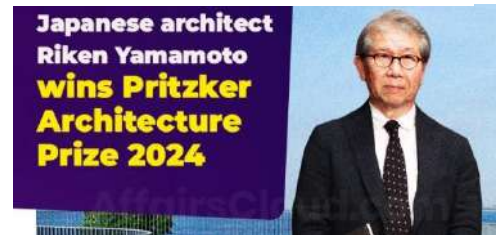
ii. The award aims to encourage the efforts by Indian translators and Indian publishers to bring the best of Francophone (French) literature.

Japanese Architect Riken Yamamoto Wins Pritzker Architecture Prize 2024

Architect Riken Yamamoto of Yokohama, Japan, has been named the 2024 Laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the highest global architectural recognition.

- He is the 53rd laureate of the Pritzker Architecture Prize and the 9th Japanese architect to win the prize.
- The award includes a cash prize of USD 100,000 and a bronze medallion.

Note: Past laureates from Japan are Kenzo Tange (1987 – First Japanese to win the prize); Fumihiko Maki (1993); Tadao Ando (1995); Kazuyo Sejima, and Ryue Nishizawa (2010); Toyo Ito (2013); Shigeru Ban (2014); Arata Isozaki (2019).



About Pritzker Architecture Prize:

i. It was established by the Chicago-based Pritzker family through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979. Jay A. Pritzker founded the prize with his wife, Cindy Pritzker.

Objective: To honour living architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of talent, vision, and commitment, which has produced significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.

ii. This annual award is often labeled as the “Nobel of Architecture.”

Indian Writer Amitav Ghosh Awarded the Netherlands' Erasmus Prize 2024

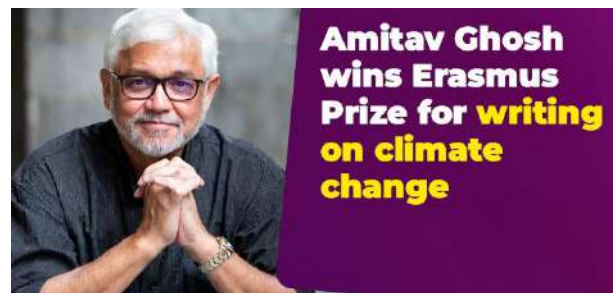
Eminent Indian Writer and Padma Shri Awardee Amitav Ghosh was awarded the Erasmus Prize 2024 by the Netherlands' Praemium Erasmianum Foundation for his writings on the planetary crisis and climate change.

He was honoured for his contribution to the theme of the Erasmus Prize 2024 “**imagining the unthinkable**”.

Points to note:

i. The theme refers to the expression of the unprecedented global crisis 'climate change' in written words.

ii. His writings make the unimaginable consequences of climate change visible through compelling stories about the past.



About Amitav Ghosh:

- i. Amitav Ghosh was born in 1956 in Calcutta (Now Kolkata), West Bengal.
- ii. He is famous for connecting the past with the present in relevant ways in his novels.

Awards & Honours:

- i. He was the first English-language writer to be honoured with the **Jnanpith Award**, India's highest literary award, in 2018.
- ii. He also got **Padma Shri** in 2007 in the field of 'literature and education'.
- iii. He was awarded the **Sahitya Akademi Award** in 1990 for his book "The Shadow Lines."
- iv. He was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008 for his novel "Sea of Poppies".

About the Erasmus Prize:

- i. The Erasmus Prize is awarded annually to a person or institution that has made an exceptional contribution to the humanities, the social sciences or the arts, in Europe and beyond.
- ii. The prize consists of a cash prize of **150,000 Euros** and a momento, which is a folded ribbon with a titanium plate at both ends.
- iii. The prize was named after Dutch humanist scholar **Desiderius Erasmus** (1466–1536). He was a true world citizen, with a universal view of life.
- iv. The King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands is a patron of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation.

Note: Erasmus Prize 2023 was awarded to South African comedian Trevor Noah.

PM Narendra Modi presents 1st National Creators Award in New Delhi

On March 8, 2024, the Prime Minister (PM) of India Narendra Modi presented the inaugural National Creators Award (2024) at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi in Delhi. These awards aim to honor excellence and impact across various domains, serving as a catalyst for positive change through creativity.

- The first National Creators Award event saw **23 winners** including 3 international creators.
- The awards were presented in the **20 categories**, following voting round.

List of All National Creators Awardees:

Category of Award	Winner	Reason for Award
New India Champion	Abhi and Niyu	Recognized for their engaging presentation of dry facts, and their significant impact in a challenging yet vital field.
Best Storyteller	Keerthika Govindhasamy (Keerthi History)	Awarded for her ability to blend history and storytelling, particularly focusing on the interconnected nature of history and

		politics, and her effort in fostering interest in India's greatness among today's youth.
Disruptor of the Year	Ranveer Allahbadia (BeerBiceps)	Acknowledged for raising awareness about sleep deprivation and promoting health through his successful endeavors.
Green Champion	Pankti Pandey	Honored for amplifying the message of Mission LiFE and advocating for environmentally friendly practices, including waste management and natural farming.
Best Creative for Social Change	Jaya Kishori (Meera of modern times)	Recognized for her insightful sharing of stories from Bhagavad Gita and Ramayana, instilling cultural values and wisdom among the youth.
Cultural Ambassador of the Year	Maithili Thakur	Acknowledged for her performances showcasing traditional Indian music in multiple languages, promoting cultural richness, and her contribution to the heritage of Indian music.
Best International Creator	Kili Paul from Tanzania, Drew Hicks from America, Cassandra Mae Spittmann from Germany	Recognized for their significant contribution to Indian culture through their creative endeavors.
Best Travel Creator	Kamiya Jani (Curly Tales)	Awarded for her efforts in showcasing the beauty and diversity of India through travel and lifestyle content, and promoting local tourism while emphasizing the importance of supporting local economies.
Best Celebrity Creator	Aman Gupta (Founder and CEO of boat)	Recognized for his contributions to digital entrepreneurship.

96th Academy Awards – Oscars 2024: ‘Oppenheimer’ Wins 7 awards, Poor Things Wins 4

The winners of the 96th Academy Awards (**Oscars 2024**) were announced at the ceremony held at the Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, United States of America (USA) on 10th March 2024.



- **‘Oppenheimer’** wins seven awards at the Oscars 2024; Director – Christopher Nolan, Best actor – Cillian Murphy, Best supporting actor – Robert Downey Jr., Film editing – Jennifer Lame, Cinematography – Hoyte van Hoytema, Music (Original Score) – Ludwig Göransson, and Best Picture.
- **“Poor Things”** won four awards, including Best Actress, Production Design, Makeup & Hairstyling, and Costume Design.
- “The Zone of Interest” won two Oscar awards, including Best Sound and Best International Feature Film.
- Indian Art Director Nitin Chandrakant Desai was remembered at the Oscars’ In Memoriam segment, which honoured those who passed away last year.
- The Academy Awards (Oscars) have been presented annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) since 1929.

About Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences(AMPAS):

Chief Executive Officer(CEO) – Bill Kramer

Founded in 1927

Headquarters– Beverly Hills, California, USA.

Krystyna Pyszkova of Czech Republic Wins Miss World 2024

Krystyna Pyszkova from the Czech Republic won the **Miss World 2024** title at the 71st Miss World Pageant held in Jio World Convention Centre in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Yasmina Zaytoun of Lebanon secured the **1st runner up position**.



- Krystyna Pyszkova was crowned by Poland’s Karolina Bielawska, Miss world 2022.
- She is the second Miss World from the Czech Republic after Tatana Kucharova, Miss World 2006.

Points to note:

- The 71st edition of Miss Word Pageant was hosted by India for the first time after 28 years. Previously India hosted the event in 1996.
- The event was hosted by Bollywood filmmaker Karan Johar and Miss World 2013 Megan Young from the Philippines.
- The event witnessed participation of contestants from 112 countries.

About Krystyna Pyszkova:

- Pyszkova is a Czech model, pursuing separate degrees in law and business administration.
- Pyszkova is also the founder of the Krystyna Pyszko Foundation and is an advocate for

sustainable development through education.

iii. She is fluent in English, Polish, Slovak, and German languages.

Reliance Foundation chairperson Nita Ambani honoured with 'Beauty With A Purpose Humanitarian Award'

Reliance Foundation Chairperson Nita Ambani was honored with the 'Beauty with a Purpose Humanitarian Award' as recognition for her commitment to philanthropy and social work.

i. The award recognises Nita Ambani's work with Indian women and girl children in the fields of education, healthcare, art and culture, sports, and philanthropy, among others.

ii. Notable past recipients of the award include the former South African President Nelson Mandela and Ina Perlman, the founder of Operation Hunger.

Indian Winners at Miss World:

India has won the Miss World title six times: Reita Faria (1966), Aishwarya Rai (1994), Diana Hayden (1997), Yukta Mookhey (1999), Priyanka Chopra (2000), and Manushi Chhillar (2017).

About Miss World:

i. The Miss World Organization owns and manages the annual Miss World Finals.

ii. The first edition of Miss World was held in 1951.

Ratan Tata Receives PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award for Philanthropy

Ratan Naval Tata was awarded the prestigious PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award for his outstanding contributions in the field of Philanthropy. The award presentation took place at Mumbai, Maharashtra.

About Ratan Tata

i. The Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons was born on 28 December 1937, in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency (Mumbai, Maharashtra).

ii. He served as the Chairman of Tata Sons from 1991 to 2012 and as Interim Chairman from October 2016 to February 2017.

iii. He was also a former chairperson of Jaguar Land Rover.

iv. He was one of the most renowned Industrialist, Philanthropist who has donated 60-65% of his income to the charity both at individual level and through Tata Trusts.

Achievements

i. His philanthropic initiatives has covered diverse sectors such as health, education, rural development and environmental sustainability, reflecting his broad vision and deep concern towards social well-being.

ii. Also, his pet-project the state-of-art veterinary hospital is set to open in Navi Mumbai.

iii. In addition to this award, he also won Padma Bhushan in 2000, Padma Vibhushan in 2008 in the field of **Trade and Industry** and Order of Australia in 2023.

Noted Poet and Author Prabha Varma Selected for Saraswati Samman 2023

The renowned Malayalam poet and author **Prabha Varma** has been named the recipient of **Saraswati Samman 2023** for his poetic work titled "**Roudra Sathwikam**".

- He is the 33rd recipient of Saraswati Samman which is annually presented by the K.K Birla Foundation.

- This becomes the first Malayalam work to win the award after 12 years. Malayalam poetess Sugathakumari won the award in 2012 for her poetry collection ‘ Manalezhuthu ‘.

About Roudra Sathwikam:

Roudra Sathwikam was published in 2022 by DC Books(DCB) as a novel in poetic verse. The book deals with the perennial conflict that exists between power and politics, individual and state, art and power.

About Prabha Varma:

i. Prabha Varma hailing from Kerala is currently serving as a media advisor to the Kerala Chief Minister(CM) Pinarayi Vijayan.

ii. He is a prolific writer in both English and Malayalam and published over 30 books which includes several poems, 3 novels in verse, 8 books on contemporary socio-political and literature and 7 collections of essays in criticism.

iii. **Noted works:** Souparnika (1990), Arkkapoomnima (1995), Kanal Chilambu(2019), etc.

About Saraswati Samman:

i. Saraswati Samman, instituted in 1991, recognises outstanding literary works in Indian languages, mentioned in Schedule 8 of the constitution, published in the last 10 years.

ii. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh, a citation and plaque.

iii. The inaugural award was presented to Harivansh Rai Bachchan in 1991 for his four-volume autobiography Kya Bhooloon, Kya Yaad Karoon, Need Ka Nirman Phir, Basere Se Door, Dashdwar Se Sopan Talk.

Additional info: Besides the Sarawati Samman, the Vyas Samman and Bihari Puraskar are other awards instituted by the foundation.

French mathematician Michel Talagrand Honoured with the 2024 Abel Prize

The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters announced **Michel Pierre Talagrand**, the French mathematician, as the 2024 Abel Prize winner in Oslo, Norway.

- Michel Talagrand, a 72- year-old retired mathematician of French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), was honoured for his work in probability theory involved understanding random phenomenon particularly, Gaussian process.
- Michel Talagrand is the **27th** recipient of the Abel Prize, also known as the Nobel Prize for Mathematics, and he is the **5th** Frenchman to receive the award.

Highlights:

i. Norway’s King Harald V will present the Abel Prize to Michel Talagrand at an award ceremony in Oslo, Norway on 21st May, 2024.

ii. In 2023, the Abel Prize was won by Latin American mathematician Luis A Caffarelli for his contributions to regularity theory for non-linear partial differential equations.

About Michel Talagrand:

i. Michel Talagrand was born in France, in 1952. He obtained his PhD in mathematics in 1977 from the University of Paris VI.

ii. He was recruited by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in 1974, and he retired in 2017.

iii. He was honoured by French Government with Chevalier of the Order of the Legion of Honor in 2011.

About Abel Prize:

- i. The Abel Prize was established in 2002 by Norwegian Parliament (The Storting) in the honor of Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel.
- ii. The award carries a cash prize of 7.5 million Norwegian Krone (USD 7,10,000).
- iii. The Prize is awarded by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, on behalf of Ministry of Education.

Indian Airline IndiGo Named 'Airline of the Year' at 2024 Air Transport Awards

The Indian airline **IndiGo** was named as the “**Airline of the Year**” at the 2024 Air Transport Awards held at Ekali, Greece.

- IndiGo became the first Indian airline to carry 100 million passengers in a single calendar year (2023).
- It was also the first Indian airline to fly 2,000 flights in a single day.
- **Dr. Venkataramani Sumantran** is the Chairman and Non-Executive Independent Director of the Company.

Brand Finance Insurance 100 2024: India's LIC Emerged as World's Strongest Insurance Brand

According to the “**Insurance 100 2024**” report by **Brand Finance**, independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy, India's Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has emerged as the world's strongest insurance brand, with brand value up 0.04% to USD 9.8 billion. It has an Brand Strength Index (**BSI**) score of **88.3** and an associated AAA brand strength rating.



- LIC is followed by Taiwan based Cathay Life Insurance (brand value up 9% to USD4.9 billion) and Australia based NRMA Insurance (brand value up 82% to USD1.3 billion) as 2nd and 3rd strongest insurance brands respectively.

According to the report, China's **Ping An** continues its reign as the **world's most valuable insurance brand** for 6 consecutive years, showcasing a 4% increase in brand value to USD 33.6 billion.

- Following China's Ping An, Germany's Allianz (brand value up 17% to USD24.6 billion), China Life Insurance (brand value up 2% to USD17.5 billion) have retained their spot as the 2nd and 3rd valuable insurance company in the world.

Note: Insurance 100 is an annual report of Brand Finance on the most valuable and strongest Insurance brands

SPORTS

Khelo India University Games 2023: Chandigarh University Tops Medal Tally

Chandigarh University won the overall championship of the 4th edition of the Khelo India University Games (KIUG 2023) held in the North East region from 17th -29th February 2024. Chandigarh University topped the medal tally of KIUG 2023 with a total of 71 medals (32 gold, 18 silver, and 21 bronze).

- Lovely Professional University (Punjab) with 42 medals (20 gold, 14 silver, and 8 bronze), and Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (Punjab) with 51 medals (12 gold, 20 silver, and 19 bronze) were ranked in 2nd and 3rd place, respectively.
- The KIUG 2023 was held from 17th to 29th February 2024, in 07 States of North East namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
- The Mascot of the KIUG 2023 is 'Ashtalakshmi', a butterfly.
- Swimmer Pratyasa Ray of Odisha's Utkal University, who won 6 medals (four gold, one silver, and one bronze) was the most successful female athlete at KIUG 2023.
- Swimmer Xavier Michael Dsouza of Karnataka's Jain University, who won four gold medals was the most successful male athlete at KIUG 2023.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen Wins Season-Opening F1 Bahrain Grand Prix 2024

Belgian-Dutch driver **Max Verstappen** (competing under the Dutch flag) of Red Bull won the season-opening Formula 1 (F1) Bahrain Grand Prix 2024 held at the Bahrain International Circuit, Bahrain, from 29th February to 2nd March 2024.

Winners of Bahrain Grand Prix 2024:



Position	Driver	Team
1	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2	Sergio Perez	Red Bull
3	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari

Max Verstappen's Records:

- This victory also marks Verstappen's second consecutive Bahrain GP title (2023 and 2024).
- It marks the eighth consecutive win of Verstappen since he won the Japanese Grand Prix in

September 2023.

iii. In the 2023 season, he won 19 of 22 races and also won his third consecutive F1 World Championship title (2023, 2022, and 2021).

iv. The 2024 F1 season marks the longest-ever F1 season with 24 races.

About Bahrain GP:

i. The Bahrain GP marks the inaugural event of the **75th Formula 1** World Championship since its first edition held in 1950.

ii. Bahrain GP 2024 officially known as 'Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix 2024' was the **20th edition** since its first edition held in 2004 as the first GP in the Middle East.

Puneri Paltan Defeats Haryana Steelers to Win Pro Kabaddi League Season 10

Puneri Paltan won the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) Season 10 by defeating the Haryana Steelers in the finals held at the GMC Balayogi Stadium in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, Telangana.

- It marks Puneri Paltan's first-ever PKL title win since its first edition in 2014.
- The title winner, Puneri Paltan, was awarded prize money of Rs 3 crore, and runner-up Haryana Steelers was awarded Rs 1.8 crore.
- PKL 10, featuring 12 teams, was held from 26 February to 1 March 2024.

Awards:

Best Raider of the Season: Ashu Malik (Dabang Delhi K.C.) – Rs 15 Lakhs

Best Defender of the Season: Mohammadreza Chiyaneh Shadloui (Puneri Paltan) – Rs 15 Lakhs

New Young Player of the Season: Yogesh Dahiya (Dabang Delhi K.C.) – Rs 8 Lakhs

Most Valuable Player of the Season: Aslam Inamdar (Puneri Paltan)- Rs 20 Lakhs

Game Changer of the Final: Gaurav Khatri (Puneri Paltan)- Rs 50,000

Moment of the Final: Pankaj Mohite (Puneri Paltan)- Rs 50,000

India Men's Cricket Team Defeats England to Win Anthony de Mello Trophy 2024

The Indian men's test cricket team led by Rohit Sharma won the Anthony de Mello Trophy 2024 by defeating England (captained by Ben Stokes) in the five-match test series for 4-1 held from 25th January to 9th March 2024 in five venues across India.



- Ravichandran Ashwin played his **100th Test** for India in the fifth Test against England at Dharamshala, where he also took five wickets in the second innings.
- Ashwin is the ninth bowler and the second Indian (After Anil Kumble – 619) to pick up **500 Test wickets**.
- Yashasvi Jaiswal was the top run scorer in the series with 712 runs. He won the Player of the Series award.
- The Anthony de Mello Trophy 2024 series is the first-ever Test series where more than **100 sixes** were hit.

- Bumrah became the quickest Indian **fast bowler** to 150 Test wickets (in the second Test match against England), achieving the feat in 34 Test matches.
- The Indian men's cricket team claimed the top spot in the International Cricket Council (ICC) Test rankings after winning the test series against England.

Badminton: Indian Pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty Win Men's Doubles Title in French Open 2024

The Indian badminton pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty won the men's doubles title by defeating Chinese Taipei's Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan at the finals of the YONEX French Open 2024.



- The 94th edition of the French Open, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Tour Super 750 Badminton tournament, was held from 5-10th March 2024 at the Arena Porte de la Chapelle, Paris, France.

Note:

As of 13th March '24, Chirag and Satwik pair is ranked world's no. 1 in the BWF men's doubles ranking.

Winners of French Open 2024:

Championship	Winner	Runner
Men's Singles	Shi Yu Qi (China)	Kunlavut Vitidsaran (Thailand)
Women's Singles	An Se Young (South Korea)	Akane Yamaguchi (Japan)
Men's Doubles	Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty (India)	Lee Jhe-Huei and Yang Po-Hsuan (Chinese Taipei)

Key Points:

- The French Open 2024 men's doubles title is the first title for the Chirag and Satwik pair in 2024.
- This victory also marks their second French Open title and second BWF World Tour Super 750 title. They were winners in 2022 and runners-up in 2019.

About French Open:

- The first edition of the French Open badminton tournament was held in 1909.
- It was recognized as one of the five BWF World Tour Super 750 events in 2018.
- It is organised by the French Badminton Federation, or Fédération Française de Badminton

(FFBad), with sanction from the BWF.

About Badminton World Federation (BWF):

President – Poul-Erik Høyer Larsen

Headquarters – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Established – 1934

Red Bull's Max Verstappen Wins Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2024

Belgian-Dutch driver Max Verstappen (competing under the Dutch flag) of Red Bull won the Formula 1 (F1) Saudi Arabian Grand Prix (GP) 2024 held at Jeddah Corniche Circuit, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia from 7th to 9th March 2024.

Winners of Saudi Arabian GP 2024:

Position	Driver	Team
1	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2	Sergio Perez (Mexico)	Red Bull
3	Charles Leclerc (Monaco)	Ferrari



Highlights:

i. Verstappen won the first two races of a season for the first time in 2024 when he triumphed in the Bahrain Grand Prix and the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

ii. Verstappen won his second Saudi Arabian GP title (2022 and 2024).

iii. It also marks the ninth consecutive win for Verstappen since he won the Japanese Grand Prix in September 2023.

iv. It marks his 56th win and 100th podium finish in his driving career.

v. It was Red Bull's 115th GP title, surpassing the Williams Racing team's 114 to fourth position in the list of the teams with the most GP titles. Ferrari with 242 wins stands 1st and McLaren with 183 wins stands 2nd.

Points to Note:

Oliver Bearman of the United Kingdom(UK) made his debut in F1 as Ferrari's youngest-ever driver at 18 years and 305 days.

About Saudi Arabian GP:

i. Saudi Arabian GP 2024 was the fourth edition of the Saudi Arabian GP since its first edition was held in 2021.

Ranji Trophy 2023-2024: Mumbai Wins their 42nd Ranji Trophy title by Defeating Vidarbha in the finals

The Mumbai cricket team led by Ajinkya Rahane won the Ranji Trophy 2023-2024 season by defeating Vidarbha led by Akshay Wadkar in the finals held at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- This marks the Mumbai team's 42nd Ranji Trophy and first trophy since 2016.
- The 89th edition of the Ranji Trophy, India's premier domestic first-class cricket tournament, was held from 5th January to 14th March 2024.
- Tanmay Agarwal of Hyderabad scored 300 runs with 147 balls. With this he became the world's fastest triple-hundred scorer in first-class cricket.
- Indian fast bowler Dhawal Kulkarni announced his retirement from international cricket and first-class cricket after the Ranji Trophy Finals.



Royal Challengers Bangalore Defeats Delhi Capitals in WPL 2024 Final

Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), led by Smriti Mandhana, won the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2024 title by defeating Delhi Capitals (DC), led by Meghann (Meg) Lanning (Australia), in the final held at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, Delhi.

- The second edition of the WPL was held from 23rd February to 17th March 2024.
- It marks RCB's first WPL title.

Venues:

- M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Arun Jaitley Stadium, New Delhi, Delhi.

Awards & Prize Money:

RCB won Rs 6 crore, while DC was awarded Rs 3 crore as the runner-up.

Award	Winner	Cash Reward
Most Valuable Player	Deepti Sharma (UP Warriorz)	Rs 5 lakh
Orange Cap	Ellyse Perry (RCB) (Australia) (347 runs)	

Purple Cap	Shreyanka Patil(RCB) (13 wickets)	
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Player of the Final: Sophie Molineux (RCB) (Australia)

YES Bank Partners with IOA for Paris Olympics 2024; named Official Banking Partner for Team India

YES BANK partnered with the Indian Olympic Association (**IOA**) and has been named the **Official Banking Partner** for Team India for the upcoming **Paris Olympics 2024**, which is scheduled to take place from 26th July to 11th August 2024 in Paris, France.

The collaboration was announced during an event at YES Bank's headquarters in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- As part of the partnership, YES Bank launched the campaign '**Milkar Jitayengey**,' ("Together We Win") for the Indian Olympic team, highlighting the shared effort behind every victory.
- The Bank also launched a special savings account '**YES Glory**' specially designed for India's Olympic athletes, which offers exclusive benefits to both the athletes and their immediate families.
- The benefits include complimentary Orthopaedic consultations, etc, and a limited edition '**YES Glory Debit Card**,' exclusively designed for Indian players.

Sharath Kamal to be India's flag bearer; Mary Kom as the chef de mission of the Indian contingent at 2024 Paris Olympics

The Indian Olympic Association (**IOA**) named table tennis player **Achanta Sharath Kamal** as India's flagbearer for the 2024 Paris Olympics, set to be held from 26th July to 11th August 2024 in Paris, France.

- Sharath Kamal will be the **19th** flag bearer for India at the Olympics.
- The IOA also appointed boxer Mangte Chungneijang **Mary Kom** as the chef de mission of the Indian Olympic contingent.
- Gagan Narang has been tasked with overseeing India's operations at the shooting range at the Paris Olympics.

About Indian Olympic Association (IOA):

IOA is the governing body for the Olympic Movement and the Commonwealth Games in India.

President– P.T. Usha

Headquarters– New Delhi, Delhi

Established in– 1927

OBITUARIES

Shafiqur Rahman Barq: India's Oldest Lok Sabha MP Passed Away

India's oldest parliamentarian and a founding member of the Samajwadi Party (SP), **Shafiqur Rahman Barq** passed away at the age of 93 in Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh (UP). He was born on 11th July 1930 in Deepa Sarai, Sambhal, UP.

- He was serving as Member of Parliament (MP) of the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24) representing the **Sambhal** constituency of UP.

Shafiqur Rahman Barq:

As an MP:

- He served as an MP for five times.
- He was initially elected to 11th Lok Sabha (1996-97) from the **Sambhal** constituency.
- He also represented Sambhal constituency in 12th Lok Sabha (1998-99) and 15th Lok Sabha (2009-14).
- In 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09), he represented Moradabad constituency.

As an MLA:

He served as a Member Legislative Assembly (MLA) in UP for four times in the years 1974-77, 1977-80, 1985-89 and 1989-91 respectively.

Former Canadian PM Martin Brian Mulroney Passed Away

Martin Brian Mulroney, who served as the **18th** Prime Minister (PM) of Canada (1984-1993), passed away at the age of 84 in Palm Beach, Florida, the United States of America (USA). He was born on 20 March 1939 in Baie-Comeau, Quebec (Canada).



- He played a crucial role in the signing of the Canada-United States (US) Free Trade Agreement with former US President Ronald Reagan.
- The agreement was later superseded by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994.

Note: The agreement helped boost Canadian exports and the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 1991.

About Martin Brian Mulroney:

- Before entering politics, he served as President of the Iron Ore Company of Canada.
- In 1983, he won a parliamentary seat in Nova Scotia and assumed the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party. He also served as the Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons.
- In 1984, he took office as the 18th PM of Canada and was re-elected in 1988.

- He became the 1st Canadian PM in 35 years to win successive majority governments, and the 1st Conservative PM to do so in a century.

iv. He resigned in June 1993, having served almost 9 years as PM, and rejoined the Montreal law firm of Norton Rose Fulbright (formerly Ogilvy Renault) as Senior Partner.

v. He co-chaired the United Nations (UN) World Summit for Children in 1990.

vi. In 2014, he was named chairman of Quebecor Inc., a Montreal (Canada)-based media company.

Recognitions and Honours:

i. He was awarded Canada's highest honour, Companion of the Order of Canada in 1998.

ii. He was presented with the Global Citizen Award by the UN Association in Canada (2001).

iii. He received the highest honour of the Government of Quebec, Grand officier de l'Ordre national du Québec (2002).

iv. He received the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service in 2003.

v. In 2018, he was honoured with the George Bush Award for Excellence in Public Service.

vi. In 2019, he also received the James A. Baker III Prize for Excellence in Leadership.

Senior Congress Leader Aziz Qureshi Passed Away

Senior Congress leader **Aziz Qureshi**, who served as Governor of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Mizoram, passed away at the age of 83 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. He was born on 24th April 1940 in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

About Aziz Qureshi:

i. In 1959, he was the founder member and first General Secretary of the Indian Youth Congress in Bhopal.

ii. In 1980, he served as Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Election Committee.

iii. From 1981-84, he served as Chairman of Madhya Pradesh State Fisheries Development Corporation, Bhopal, with the status of Cabinet Minister.

iv. He was a Member of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly from 1972-77.

v. In 1972, he was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Sehore seat in Madhya Pradesh.

vi. He served as a Member of Parliament (MP – Lok Sabha) from 1984 to 1989. He was elected from Satna constituency of Madhya Pradesh.

vii. He served as Governor of Uttarakhand from 2012-2015; and Governor of Mizoram from January 2015 to March 2015. He served as Governor (Additional charge) of Uttar Pradesh from 23 June 2014 to 22 July 2014.



Japan Manga Creator Akira Toriyama Passed Away

Akira Toriyama, one of the most famous Japanese comic (manga) artists and character designers, passed away. He was born on 05th April 1955 in Nagoya, Japan.

- He was the creator of **Dragon Ball**, one of the most influential and best-selling manga.
- In 2019, Toriyama received Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) from the French government for his contributions to the arts.

Former Navy Chief Admiral L Ramdas Passes Away

Former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral Laxminarayana Ramdas, passed away at the age of 90 in Secunderabad Military Hospital, Telangana. He was born on 5th September 1933 in Matunga, Bombay(now Mumbai, Maharashtra).

About L Ramdas:

Indian Navy Career:

- i.He joined the Indian Navy in 1953. He played a major role in the 1971 India-Pakistan war as the commander of the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Beas, a part of the Eastern Fleet.
- ii.He served as the Indian Naval Attache in Bonn, West Germany from 1973 to 1976.
- iii.He also served as the Fleet Commander of the Eastern Naval Command and commanded both the Southern and Eastern Naval Commands.
- iv.He served as the 13th CNS of the Indian Navy from December 1990 to September 1993.
- v.Prior to his retirement in 1993, he served as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Retirement life:

i.In 1994, He partnered with 24 like-minded Indians and Pakistanis in Lahore to open a public dialogue for reconciliation and peace. This led to the formation of Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy(PIPPFD).

- He served as the vice-chair of the India branch of PIPPF and became chair in 1996.
- ii.He was also actively involved in the Indo-Pakistan Soldiers Initiative for Peace (IPSI), and the anti-nuclear peace movement Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP).

Awards:

- i.He was honoured with **Vir Chakra (1971)**, the third-highest gallantry award, for his role in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war
- ii.He received the Ramon Magsasay Award for Peace and International Understanding in 2004 for his efforts to build peace between Pakistan and India. He shared the award with Ibn Abdur Rehman, founding chair of the Pakistan branch of PIPPF.

Psychologist Daniel Kahneman, a Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences Passed Away

Daniel Kahneman, Renowned Israeli-American and the first and only psychologist to win a Nobel Prize(Economics), passed away at the age of 90. He was born on 5 March 1934, in Tel Aviv, British Mandate of Palestine (now Israel).

Awards/Honours:

i.He won the **Nobel Prize in Economic Science** – formally known as The **Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobe** in 2002 for integrating insights from psychological research into economic science, especially concerning human judgment and decision-making under uncertainty.



- He shared the award with an American economist **Vernon Lomax Smith**.
- ii.In 2007, he received the Lifetime Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association.
- iii.He received the United States of America(USA)'s Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013

About Daniel Kahneman:

i.Dr. Kahneman held the position of professor of psychology at the:

- Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1970-1978);
- University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada (1978-1986); and
- University of California, Berkeley, United States (US) (1986-1994).

ii.He was the Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology Emeritus, and a professor of psychology and public affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs (now SPIA), at Princeton University, New Jersey, US since 1993.

iii.He has authored several books and some of his notable works include:

- Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011); Co-author of Noise: A Flaw in Human Judgment (2021), among others.

IMPORTANT DAYS WITH THEME

World Wildlife Day 2024 – March 3

The United Nations (UN) **World Wildlife Day** (WWD) is annually observed across the globe on **3rd March** to celebrate and raise awareness about world's wild fauna (animals) and flora (plants). WWD serves as a global acknowledgment of the incredible diversity in our ecosystems.

The **theme** of WWD 2024 is “**Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation**”.



National Security Day 2024- March 4

National Security Day (NSD) or **Rashtriya Suraksha Diwas** is annually observed across India on 4 March to honour and show gratitude to the Indian Security Forces.

- Security forces include the Police, Military, Para-Military, Guards, Commandos, and other forces who are involved in maintaining the peace and security of the people of India.



International Women's Day 2024- March 8

The United Nations (UN) **International Women's Day** (IWD) is annually observed across the globe on **8 March** to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day aims to renew collective commitment to accelerate women's equality.

- IWD aims to recognise the achievements of women regardless of their national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic, or political distinctions.

Theme:

- The **2024 theme** of IWD is, “**Invest in women—accelerate progress.**”
- The campaign theme for IWD 2024 is **Inspire Inclusion.**



World Kidney Day 2024 – March 14

World Kidney Day (WKD) is a global campaign annually observed across the globe on the **2nd Thursday of March** to raise awareness of the importance of



kidneys to overall health and equitable access to care and medication for all.

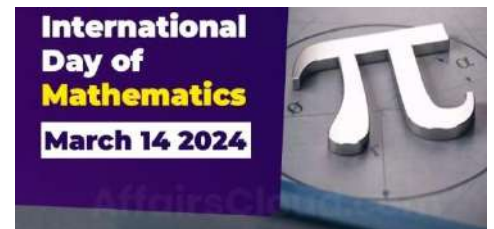
- WKD also aims to raise awareness of kidney disease and to reduce the impact of kidney disease and its associated health problems.

WKD 2024 is observed on **14 March 2024**.

- WKD 2023 was observed on 9 March 2023; WKD 2025 will be observed on 13 March 2025.
- Theme-**The 2024 WKD campaign** theme is, “**Kidney Health for All – Advancing Equitable Access to Care and Optimal Medication Practice.**”

International Day of Mathematics 2024 – March 14

International Day of Mathematics (**IDM**) is annually observed across the globe on **14th March** to create awareness about the importance of mathematics in addressing the challenges in areas like Artificial Intelligence (**AI**), climate change, energy and sustainable development.



- **14th March 2024** marks the observance of the **5th IDM**.
- The theme of IDM 2024 is ‘**Playing with math**’.

Why 14th March?

i.In the month/date format, March 14th represents the value of Pi, 3.14, which defines the ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter.

World Consumers Rights Day 2024 – March 15

World Consumers Rights Day (WCRD) is annually observed across the globe on **15 March** to raise global awareness of consumer rights, needs, protection, and empowerment.

The **2024 theme** of WCRD is, ‘**Fair and responsible AI for consumers**’.



National Vaccination Day 2024 – March 16

National Vaccination Day or **National Immunisation Day** is annually observed across India on **16 March** to raise awareness of the significance and value of vaccination in human health and highlight the crucial role vaccines play in preventing diseases and protecting public health.



- The Day recognises the hard work of doctors and frontline healthcare workers to ensure the vaccination of every child.

- The Day also highlights the important role of full vaccination in protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases (VPDs).

The **2024 theme** of National Vaccination Day is, “**Vaccines Work for All.**”

International Day of Happiness 2024 – March 20

The United Nations (UN) **International Day of Happiness** is annually observed across the globe on **20 March** to recognise the significance of well-being and happiness in people’s lives globally and advocate for inclusive, equitable, and balanced economic growth.

The theme of International Day of Happiness 2024 is ‘**Happier Together.**’

World Happiness Report (WHR) 2024:

According to the World Happiness Report (WHR) 2024, **Finland** has been named the **World’s happiest country** for the 7th consecutive time. Finland is followed by Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Israel.

- **India** has maintained its rank at **126th** (out of 146 countries), which indicates low levels of happiness.

World Sparrow Day 2024 – March 20

World Sparrow Day (WSD) is annually observed across the globe on **20 March** to raise awareness about the importance of sparrows or house sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) for biodiversity and the ecosystem, and to promote actions to protect and conserve them.

- The Day was initiated to advocate for the conservation of House Sparrows and common bird species and highlight the significance of celebrating biodiversity.
The theme for WSD is “**I LOVE Sparrows**”.

International Day of Forests 2024 – March 21

The United Nations (UN) **International Day of Forests** (IDF) is annually observed across the globe on **21 March** to celebrate and raise awareness of the significance of all types of forests.

The **theme** for International Day of Forests 2024 is “**Forests and Innovation: New Solutions for a Better World**”.

World Water Day 2024 – March 22

The United Nations (UN) **World Water Day** is annually observed across the globe on **22 March** to celebrate water, promote action to tackle the global water and sanitation crisis and focus on the significance of freshwater.

- The theme of UN’s World Water Day 2024 is “**Water for Peace**”/ “**Leveraging Water for Peace.**”

The annual observance of the day is led by the **UN-Water** and co-ordinated by UN Water members and partners and a dedicated task force in support of UN Member state and other stateholders.

World Meteorological Day 2024 – March 23

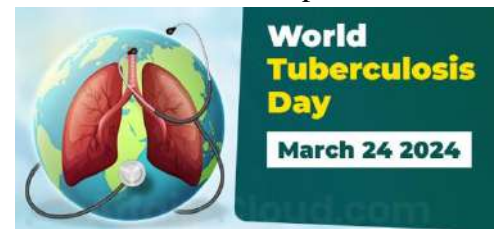
The United Nations (UN) **World Meteorological Day** (WMD) is annually observed across the globe on **23 March** to raise awareness about weather, water, and climate-related issues, and about the Earth's atmosphere and highlight individuals' role in protecting it.

- Every 23 March, WMD commemorates the coming into force of the Convention establishing the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on 23 March 1950. The **theme** for World Meteorological Day 2024 is, “**At the Frontline of Climate Action.**”
- The themes chosen for WMD reflect topical weather, climate, or water-related issues.

World Tuberculosis Day 2024 – March 24

World Tuberculosis Day is annually observed across the globe on **24 March** to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social, and economic consequences of tuberculosis (TB) and to strengthen efforts to end the global TB epidemic.

- The **2024 theme** of World Tuberculosis Day is, “**Yes! We can end TB,**” which is the continuation of the 2023 theme.



World Theatre Day 2024 – March 27

World Theatre Day is annually observed across the globe on **27 March** to promote theatre in all its forms across the world. The Day highlights the intrinsic value of theatre as an art form.

- World Theatre Day 2024 observed on 27th March 2024 marks the **62nd anniversary** the observance. The Day has been annually celebrated by the International Theatre Institute (ITI) Centres and the international theatre community.



2024 Message: Norwegian novelist and playwright, **Jon Fosse** authored the World Theatre Day Message 2024, titled “*Art is Peace*”.