



DHANANJAY IAS ACADEMY

An Institute for UPSC & BPSC

DIA MONTHLY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

FEBRUARY-2024

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Sources:-  **The Indian EXPRESS**


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Dhananjay IAS Academy

The Hindu Review (February 2024)

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Chapter 1: Appointment (National, International)

(National)

Organization Name	Person Name
Appointed as ED of Bank of Baroda by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)	Sanjay Vinayak Mudaliar
Chief Minister of Jharkhand	Champa Soren
Appointed as the president of the Asian Cricket Council for a third consecutive term	Jay Shah
Non-Executive Chairman of AU Small Finance Bank	Harun Rashid Khan
Office and Secrecy as Member, UPSC	Sanjay Verma
Consumer lending and mortgages head of Bandhan Bank	Santosh Nair
Appointed as the Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare.	Apurva Chandra
First Woman Chief Justice of Uttarakhand HC	Justice Ritu Bahri
Appointed as MD & CEO of Tata AIA Life	Venkatachalam H
As non-executive chairman of the Board and independent director NPCI	Ajay Kumar Choudhary
Brand Ambassador for IPL 2024 Chennai Super Kings	Katrina Kaif
first trans woman Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) of Southern Railway	Sindhu Ganapathy
CEO Of Sundaram Asset Management	Anand Radhakrishnan
President of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)	Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal
Chairman and Managing Director Railway PSU IRCTC (Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd)	Sanjay Kumar Jain
MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets	Virendra Bansal
Additional Director of Axis Bank	Pranam Wahi

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MD of Boeing Defence India	Nikhil Joshi
Bihar Legislative Assembly Speaker	Senior BJP leader Nand Kishore Yadav
Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank	Pradeep Kumar Sinha
Joint Managing Director of Kotak Mahindra Bank	KVS Manian
Punjab 'state icon' for Lok Sabha polls	Shubman Gill
Vice Chief of the Army Staff	Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi
non-executive Chairman of Bank of India (BOI)	M R Kumar
non-executive chairman as well as Executive Chairman of Indian Overseas Bank	Srinivasan Sridhar
non-executive chairman of Kolkatabased UCO Bank	Aravamudan Krishna
Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of SBM bank	Ashish Vijayakar
Director in Skill Development Ministry	Tatung Padi
Director of Census Operations (DCO)/Director of Citizen Registration (DCR) (Deputy Secretary level) of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.	Bhupinder Kumar (IAS)
Director in Department of School Education & Literacy	Sunil Sharma (IRS)
Deputy Secretary in Ministry of Steel	Nitin Jain
Director in Heavy Industries Ministry	Sureshwar Bonal
first Woman CM of Punjab province	Maryam Nawaz
Director (Operations) of NTPC	Ravindra Kumar
new chairperson of Lokpal	Justice AM Khanwilkar
CEO of The World Gold Council India	Sachin Jain
Director in Women & Child Development Ministry	Arkaja Das

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(International)

Organization/country	Person Name
17th Sultan of Malaysia	Ibrahim Iskandar of Johor State in Malaysia
Country director for India in Asian Development Bank	Mio Oka
President of El Salvador	Nayib Bukele
Prime Minister of Yemen	Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak
Prime Minister of Kazakhstan	Olzhas Bektenov
Finland Presidential election	Alexander Stubb
Indonesia President	Prabowo Subianto
Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the World Bank's Global Environment Facility (GEF).	Geeta Batra

Chapter 2: Awards (National, International)

National

Award	Person/Organization	Purpose/ Field
The UK's Blavatnik Awards For Young Scientists	Rahul R Nair, Mehul Malik, and Tanmay Bharat	The UK's Blavatnik Awards For Young Scientists honour research in three categories—Chief Sciences, Physical Sciences & Engineering, and Life Sciences—that is revolutionizing technology, medicine, and our understanding of the world.

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Bharat Ratna	Lal Krishna Advani	For her remarkable contributions in Indian politics
"Maha Gaurav 2024" award	Nikhil Mukund Wagh	Towards his great work in public relations.
Outstanding Business Woman of the Year 2023' award by the Defence Minister of India	Dr. Bina Modi	In the field or business
Lifetime Achievement' award from the Sports Journalists Federation of India and the Delhi Sports Journalists Association	Legendary sprinter and IOA president PT Usha	For her remarkable contributions in the field of sports
Prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award	The portrait titled 'Ice Bed' has been clicked by British amateur photographer Nima Sarikhani.	A stunning picture of a sleeping polar bear has won the prestigious Wildlife Photographer of the Year People's Choice Award.
KPP Nambiar Award for 2024	ISRO Chairman S Somanath	Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Chairman, S Somanath has been awarded KPP Nambiar Award for 2024 by Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) Kerala Section
9th GovTech Prize for its pioneering endeavors in Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered government services	India	India has secured the prestigious 9th GovTech Prize for its pioneering endeavors in Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered government services, at the World Government Summit 2024.
IBA's banking technology awards	City union bank	Old private sector lender City Union Bank (CUB) has won seven awards in various categories in the '19th Banking Technology Conference, Expo & Citations 2023' by the Indian Banks Association (IBA) in Mumbai
58th Jnanpith Award 2023	Gulzar and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya	Renowned Urdu poet Gulzar and Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya have been named the recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award 2023.

'Innovative Technology Development Award'	REC Ltd	REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been honoured with the 'Innovative Technology Development Award' at the 'Building India 2047: Technology for Better Tomorrow', an IIT Madras Corporate Social Responsibility Summit
France's highest civilian honour 'Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur'	Shashi Tharoor	Shashi Tharoor, a prolific author and a diplomattturned-politician, was conferred France's highest civilian honour 'Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur'.

Filmfare Awards 2024

Category	Winner
Best Film	12th Fail
Best Director	Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
Best Actor in a Leading Role (Male)	Ranbir Kapoor (Animal)
Best Actor in a Leading Role (Female)	Alia Bhatt (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male)	Vicky Kaushal (Dunki)
Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female)	Shabana Azmi (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Best Playback Singer (Male)	Bhupinder Babbal (Arjan Vailly – Animal)
Best Playback Singer (Female)	Shilpa Rao (Besharam Rang – Pathaan)
Best Actress (Critics')	Rani Mukerji (Mrs Chatterjee vs. Norway), Shefali Shah (Three of Us)
Best Lyrics	Amitabh Bhattacharya ("Tere Vaaste" – Zara Hatke Zara Bachke)
Best Music Album	Animal (Pritam, Vishal Mishra, Manan Bhardwaj, Shreyas Puranik, Jaani, Bhupinder Babbal, Ashim Kemson, Harshwardhan Rameshwar, Gurinder Seagal)

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Best Debut Director	Tarun Dudeja (Dhak Dhak)
Best Debut Male	Aditya Rawal (Faraaz)
Best Debut Female	Alizeh Agnihotri (Farrey)
Best Screenplay	Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
Best Dialogue	Ishita Moitra (Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Best Background Score	Harshavardhan Rameshwar (Animal)
Best Cinematography	Avinash Arun Dhaware (Three of Us)
Best Production Design	Subrata Chakraborty, Amit Ray (Sam Bahadur)
Best Costume Design	Sachin Lovelekar, Divvyaa Gambhir, Nidhi Gambhir (Sam Bahadur)
Best Sound Design	Kunal Sharma (Mpse) (Sam Bahadur) Sync Cinema (Animal)
Best Editing	Jaskunwar Singh Kohli- Vidhu Vinod Chopra (12th Fail)
Best Action	Spiro Razatos, Anil Arasu, Craig Macrae, Yannick Ben, Kecha Khamphakdee, Sunil Rodrigues (Jawan)
Best VFX	Red Chillies VFX (Jawan)
Best Choreography	Ganesh Acharya ("What Jhumka?" – Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani)
Lifetime Achievement Award	David Dhawan

Republic day awards 2024

People's choice	Marching Contingent
Best Marching Contingent among the three services	Rajputana Rifles Regimental Marching Contingent
Best Marching Contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces	CRPF Woman Marching Contingent

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Best three Tableaux (States/UTs)	First - Gujrat (Dhordo : A Global Icon Of Gujarat's Border Tourism) Second - Uttar Pradesh (Viksit Bharat Samradh Virasat) Third – Andhra Pradesh (Transforming School Education in Andhra Pradesh – Making Students Globally Competitive)
Best Tableau (Central Ministries/Departments)	Vibrant Villages (Ministry of Home Affairs)

Judge's choice	Marching contingent
Best Marching Contingent among the three services	Sikh Regiment Contingent
Best Marching Contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces	Delhi Police Women Marching Contingent
Best three Tableaux (States/UTs)	First – Odisha (Woman Empowerment in Viksit Bharat) Second – Gujrat (Dhordo : A Global Icon Of Gujarat's Border Tourism) Third – Tamil Nadu (Kudavolai System in ancient Tamil Nadu – Mother of Democracy)
Best Tableau (Ministries/Departments)	Ministry of Culture – (Bharat : Mother of Democracy)
Special Prize	Central Public Works Department (Central Vista -Viksit Bharat Ka Pratibimb)
Special memento	'Vande Bharatam' – Dance Group

Chapter 3: Government Scheme/ campaign

SCHEME	PURPOSE
Mahtari Vandan Yojana (Chhattisgarh)	Under the scheme, the government will provide Rs 1,000 financial assistance for married women.
'Chief Minister Vayoshree Yojana' (Maharashtra)	Maharashtra Government has decided to introduce 'Chief Minister Vayoshree Yojana ' that is likely to benefit 15 lakh senior citizens who suffer from some physical or mental disability.

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'Van Mitra' (Haryana)

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has launched the '**Van Mitra**' scheme and its portal to encourage community participation in tree planting activities in nonforest areas.

Chapter 4: Summit/ Conference

Summit/Conference	Location	About
The Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) - Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference (CASGC) 2024	Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.	The theme of the conference is "Cross-Border Challenges in Justice Delivery". This conference has deliberated on important issues pertaining to law and justice like judicial transition and the ethical dimensions of legal practice; executive accountability; and revisiting modern-day legal education, among others.
Future Skills Summit	Guwahati	The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in collaboration with the National Institute of Electronics and IT (NIELIT) will host the Future Skills Summit in Guwahati.
16th conference of World Social Forum 2024 commences	Kathmandu	The 16th conference of the World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 commenced in Kathmandu. The five-day WSF 2024 under the "Another World is Possible" banner aims to open horizontal exchange among civil society organizations, social movements, trade unions and individuals opposing neoliberal globalization.
INDUS-X Summit	New Delhi	The 2-day INDUS-X Summit was held in New Delhi. The summit aims to be a pivotal event driving strategic technology partnerships and defence industrial cooperation between India and the USA.
Raisina Dialogue	New Delhi	Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 9th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. The theme for this year's edition is "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create"

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2024 World Governments Summit	Dubai	India, Türkiye, and Qatar have been declared the guests of honor at the 2024 World Governments Summit which is set to take place in Dubai from February 12-14. The summit, themed 'Shaping Future Governments,' will see the participation of over 25 government and state heads from around the world.
13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO)	Abu Dhabi, UAE	The 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) commenced in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Ambassador Athaliah Lesiba, Chairperson of the WTO General Council, delivered a report highlighting progress on implementing commitments from the previous conference, including strengthening trade reviews and advancing negotiations on fisheries subsidies and e-commerce.

Chapter 5: Partnership/ Agreement

Chapter 6: Ranking Index

Index	Index released by	India's Rank
Henley Passport Index for 2024	Henley and partners	India's passport ranking has slipped one place from last year, moving from 84th to 85th position.
Transparency International's corruption perception index	Transparency International (TI)	India slipped 8 places to 93rd in CPI, as India's rank in 2022 was 85th.
Brand Guardianship Index 2024	Brand Finance.	Mukesh Ambani has been ranked first among all the Indians and second globally

Chapter 7: Mergers and Acquisitions

Merger Company	About
IT major Wipro has acquired a 60 per cent stake in US-based insurtech Aggne Global	IT major Wipro has acquired a 60 per cent stake in US-based insurtech Aggne Global for \$66 million to strengthen its competitive advantage in the insurance sector, particularly in the property and casualty (P&C) insurance space.
Tech Mahindra to acquire 100% stake in Orchid Cybertech	Tech Mahindra has acquired a 100 percent stake in Orchid Cybertech Services (OCSI) through a wholly owned subsidiary for \$3.27 million. This deal strengthens the relationship with it and aids in expanding existing customer experience capabilities and business in the Philippines, said the IT major.
70% stake by Zurich Insurance Company Ltd. in Kotak Mahindra General Insurance	The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved acquisition of a 70% stake by Zurich Insurance Company Ltd. (Acquirer) in Kotak Mahindra General Insurance Company Limited (Target).
Mitsubishi Corp to acquire 32% stake in TVS Vehicle Mobility	TVS Mobility and Japanese conglomerate Mitsubishi Corporation has announced a strategic partnership under which the latter will pick up a 32 per cent stake in a newly-formed subsidiary of the Chennai-based group for Rs 300 crore.
Whirlpool sells 24% stake in India unit for \$468 million	Following the sale, the parent firm's holding has come down to 51% from 75%.

Chapter 8: Loan

1. Japan commits 232.2 billion Yen for Nine Development Projects in India

- Japan has committed a 232.21-billion-yen (about \$1.55 billion) Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan for nine projects across various sectors in India such as road connectivity, climate change response, and horticulture.
- Delineating on the projects, the road network connectivity projects aim to improve infrastructure development in India's North East region.

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Chapter 9: App/Website/Portal

Chapter 10: Important MoU

MoU	Between Which Countries
The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that would provide a framework for collaboration in new areas of defence engagement including procurement of military equipment.	India and oman
MoU for Clean Energy Innovation	The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar have signed an MoU.
The MoU aims towards promoting collaborative biomedical research, to aid in improving the combat medical support and patient care of serving personnel.	The Armed Forces Medical Service has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee
MoU on Cooperation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions	India and Colombia
MoU to set up manufacturing unit	Kalyani Steel Ltd has signed an MoU with the Odisha government to set up a manufacturing facility with an investment of Rs 11,750 crore.
MoU to spread awareness on investment and fraudulent schemes	Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) and Singaporeheadquartered DBS Bank
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at advancing renewable energy initiatives across the nation.	Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. and Punjab National Bank

Chapter 11: GDP Forecasting

1. Morgan Stanley projects India's GDP growth for FY25 to 6.5%

- ◆ Morgan Stanley Research projects India's GDP growth for FY25 to moderate to 6.5%, down from the 6.9% projected for FY24.
- ◆ Despite this moderation, the report maintains a constructive outlook on the Indian economy, citing improvements in domestic demand and macro stability.

2. India's GDP to grow at around 6.75-6.8% in FY25: BoB

- ◆ The Bank of Baroda (BoB) has projected India's gross domestic product (GDP) to grow at around 6.75

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to 6.8 per cent in FY25 and 6.8 per cent for the current financial year.

- ♦ The IMF has projected the Indian economy to grow at 6.7 per cent for the current fiscal, upgrading the estimates by 40 basis points from its previous forecast in Oct 2023.

Organization	FY23 (2022-23)	FY24 (2023-24)
Fitch	7.2%	6.5%-FY24 6.9%-FY25
HSBC Bank		5.8%
RBI forecasted	6.8%	6.5%,
Moody	6.8%	6.7%-2023 6.1% -2024 6.3%-2025
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	7%	6.7% (6.7% FY25)
World Bank	6.9%	6.3% (FY24) 6.4%(FY25) 6.5%(FY26)
World Economic Outlook released by International Monetary Fund (IMF)	7.2%	6.7% (6.5% FY 25 and 26)
FICCI	6.9%	6%
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	7.2%	6.3% (FY 25-6%)
UNCTAD	6.6% (2022)	6% (2023)
Goldman Sachs		6.3% (2023)
CRISIL	7%	6%
UN (United Nation)	6.6% (2022)	5.8%-2023 6.7%-2024
Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)	7.2%	6.8%(FY24) 7% (FY 25)
India Ratings & Research (IndRa)	6.9%	6.7%

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Economy Survey	7%	6.5%
National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)	7.4%	6.5%
Standard & Poor's (S&P)	7.2%	6.4% (6.9% in FY25 and FY26.)
ICRA	6.9%	6.5%
State Bank of India (SBI)	7.1%	between 6.2% and 6.3%.
Morgan Stanley	7%	6.4% (6.5% FY25)
CARE Ratings	7%	6.5%
Normura		5.9%
UBS	6.9%	6.3% (FY25-6.2%)
National Statistical Office (NSO)	7%	

Chapter 12: Current Affairs (National)

1. India home to 718 snow leopards: SPAI report

- India is home to around 718 snow leopards, according to the first-ever population estimation exercise conducted by the Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Programme.
- The highest number of snow leopards were recorded in Ladakh (477), followed by Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9).

2. Punjab CM Flagged Off Sadak Suraksha Force

- The Chief Minister of Punjab, Bhagwant Mann has launched a new initiative called the 'Sadak Suraksha Force' to improve traffic movement and reduce road accidents in the state.
- The force aims to protect people and streamline traffic movements in the state.
- The 'Sadak Suraksha Force' will comprise 144 vehicles and 5,000 employees who will be deployed every 30 kilometers on the roads to ensure the safety of the people.

3. Toyota keeps crown as world's top-selling automaker in 2023

- Toyota Motor sold a record 11.2 million vehicles in 2023, taking the crown as the world's top-selling automaker for a fourth straight year.
- Second-ranked German rival Volkswagen Group earlier this month reported a 12% rise in deliveries last year to 9.2 million cars, marking a post-pandemic recovery as supply chain bottlenecks eased.

4. Five more Indian wetlands added to Ramsar list

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- ♦ India has added five more wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance, or the Ramsar List, taking the number of such sites in the country to 80.
- ♦ The announcement of adding five more sites, three in Karnataka and two in Tamil Nadu, to the list was made by Federal Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav.
- ♦ Three of these sites, Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve, Aghanashini Estuary and Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve are located in Karnataka whereas two, Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest are in Tamilnadu.

5. Dharmendra Pradhan launches MoE - AICTE Investor Network

- ♦ Union Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has launched 'Ministry of Education - AICTE Investor Network' in New Delhi.
- ♦ This initiative will be a ground-breaking beginning that will bring students, faculty, investors and the market on one platform to strengthen the culture of innovation.
- ♦ The network aims to provide crucial financial support, mentoring, and strategic guidance to early-stage student or faculty-led startups.

6. BHU gets automated DNA extractor machine

- ♦ North India's first human DNA bank is being set up at Banaras Hindu University (BHU).
- ♦ The Automated DNA Extractor Machine has been installed in the Gnyaneshwar Lab of the Zoology Department of BHU.
- ♦ These machines are completely indigenous to Make in India. It has been made in such a way that the minimum plastic is used in it, so that there is no harm to the environment.

7. Annual Mass Drug Administration Campaign to Eradicate Filariasis by UP

- ♦ The Uttar Pradesh government will launch the annual Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign to eradicate filariasis diseases from February 5 to 15.
- ♦ The campaign, to be carried out as part of a mission to eradicate filariasis from the state, will be conducted in 17 districts of the state.
- ♦ The central government aims to eliminate filariasis from the country by 2027.

8. 40,000 rail bogies to be converted to Vande Bharat standards

- ♦ In a move to modernize the Indian Railways, the Centre has announced an ambitious programme to upgrade 40,000 standard rail coaches to Vande Bharat standards.
- ♦ This initiative, announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in while presenting the interim budget for fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25), aims to elevate the safety, convenience, and comfort of rail travel while also providing a boost to private sector railway manufacturers through new refurbishment contracts.

9. PM SVANIDHI provided credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors

- ♦ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced that PM SVANIDHI, a flagship initiative focusing on street vendors, has extended credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors across the country.
- ♦ 2.3 lakh vendors have availed loans for the third time under this initiative.

10. Record Rs 6.21 lakh crore allocation to Defence in Interim Budget 2024-25

- ♦ In the current geopolitical scenario and with the twin objective of promoting self-reliance and

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exports, the Defence Budget has touched Rs 6,21,540.85 crore in the Financial Year 2024-25.

- ♦ This comes out to be 13.04% of the total Union Budget. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) continues to receive the highest allocation among the Ministries.
- ♦ The budgetary allocation to Defence for FY 24-25 is higher by approx. one lakh crore (18.35%) over the allocation for the FY 2022-23 and 4.72% more than allocation of FY 23-24.

11. Govt to focus on vaccination against cervical cancer

- ♦ Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the government's plans to focus on vaccination against cervical cancer for girls aged 9 to 14 as part of her Interim Budget 2024.
- ♦ The FM also announced multiple other health-related schemes in her speech, including extending Ayushman Bharat cover to all Asha workers and Anganwadi workers and helpers.
- ♦ Cervical cancer, which develops in a woman's cervix, is the second-most common cancer among women in India.

12. Tamil Superstar Vijay launches his political party

- ♦ Tamil superstar Vijay has announced the name of his new political party "Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam".
- ♦ Vijay will contest 2026 Assembly Elections in Tamil Nadu, when the current term of MK Stalin-led DMK party ends.
- ♦ The Tamil movie superstar is fondly called by his fans as Thalapathy, meaning General or Commander.

13. President Murmu inaugurated 37th Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2024

- ♦ President Droupadi Murmu has inaugurated the 37th Surajkund International Crafts Mela - 2024 at Surajkund in Faridabad district, Haryana.
- ♦ Tanzania is a partner country for the mela, which reflects India's strong ties with the African Union.
- ♦ Gujarat is the theme state. The Surajkund Fair will continue till February 18.

14. Uttarakhand Police Adopt Self-Balancing e-scooters For Smart Patrols

- ♦ Abhinav Kumar, Director General of Police, Uttarakhand, has flagged off four cutting-edge self-balancing electric scooters from the Police Headquarters to patrol the vibrant streets of Haridwar.
- ♦ For the safety of tourists and local citizens, police in Haridwar will patrol with self-balancing scooters.
- ♦ Donated by Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, these eco-friendly electric scooters are equipped to navigate narrow streets, allowing police personnel to efficiently monitor walking paths, Ganga ghats, and crowded areas of the city.

15. India launches UPI Payments at Eiffel Tower in Paris

- ♦ India has officially introduced the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) at the iconic Eiffel Tower in Paris, marking a significant step towards realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of globalizing UPI.
- ♦ This initiative follows the digital payments sector agreement signed between India and France in July of the previous year, making France the first European country to adopt India's UPI for retail transactions.

16. PM Narendra Modi Unveils Projects Worth ₹1330 crore In Goa

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has participated in 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Goa 2047' programme and inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects worth over ₹1330 crore.
- ♦ The Prime Minister inaugurated the permanent campus of the National Institute of Technology Goa.

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17. Dr Jitendra Singh launches the theme for National Science Day 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'

- ♦ Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh has released the theme for the "National Science Day 2024", titled "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat".
- ♦ The NSD Theme for this year's celebration reflects a strategic focus on promoting public appreciation for Science, Technology and Innovation and accomplishments of Indian scientists to address challenges through home-grown technologies for over-all well-being.

18. Arunachal Pradesh Cabinet Approves 2 new district

- ♦ The cabinet of Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu has approved the creation of two new districts for ease of administration.
- ♦ The cabinet decided to carve out Keyi Panyor district from Lower Subansiri and Bichom from East and West Kameng districts.
- ♦ The number of districts in the northeastern state will now rise to 28.

19. Govt plans to have 25,000 Janaushadhi Kendras by March 2026

- ♦ The government has set a target to have 25,000 Janaushadhi Kendras across the country by March 31, 2026.
- ♦ In a written reply in Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Chemicals & Fertilizers Bhagwanth Khuba said that about 10,624 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) were functional across the country till January 31, 2024.

20. Dharmendra Pradhan launches EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme

- ♦ Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has launched the EdCIL Vidyanjali Scholarship Programme.
- ♦ The Vidyanjali Scholarship Program symbolizes a whole-of-society approach to empowerment through access and opportunities of education, particularly to students belonging to economically disadvantaged sections.

21. Anurag Singh Thakur kicks off 1st BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships

- ♦ Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur kicked off BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships 2024 in New Delhi.
- ♦ The BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships is being held for the first time.

22. The Iranian government has approved a visa-free policy for Indian nationals.

- ♦ This policy will be only valid for tourism purposes.
- ♦ With this exemption, Indian citizens holding ordinary passports can enter Iran without a visa once every six months for a maximum stay of 15 days.

23. Aether Industries to commission 15 MW solar power plant in Gujarat

- ♦ Aether Industries will commission a 15 MW solar power project (Auto-Tracker Modules) under the Captive Power Producer (CPP) segment in the Bharuch district of Gujarat with an aim to become more sustainable.

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24. India to be world's biggest oil demand growth driver through 2030: IEA

- ♦ India will in seven years become the largest source of global oil demand growth as its domestic production shrinks 22 per cent, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).
- ♦ The two trends have major implications as India is already the world's second largest net importer, said the agency in a report released at the India Energy Week in Goa.
- ♦ India's crude imports reached 4.6 million b/d in 2023, increasing 36 per cent in a decade.

25. India Decided to Fence its Border with Myanmar

- ♦ The Indian government has decided to build a fence or close border along the 1,643-kilometer border with Myanmar, according to Union Home Minister Amit Shah.
- ♦ Several thousand anti-Junta rebels have fled to India since the Myanmar military coup in 2021 and tribal militants are also believed to enter into India through the porous border.

26. Bihar govt launched Device 'NITISH' for farmers

- ♦ Bihar State Disaster Management Authority and IIT Patna have collaborated to develop a pendant-shaped device called NITISH (Novel Initiative Technological Intervention for Safety of Human Lives)
- ♦ The device uses voice messages to alert users about impending lightning, floods, heatwaves, and cold waves, helping farmers and common people stay informed and protected.

27. Microsoft to train over 2 million people in India in generative AI skills by 2025

- ♦ Microsoft has announced an ambitious initiative to equip 2 million people in India with skills in artificial intelligence by 2025.
- ♦ Dubbed ADVANTA(I)GE INDIA, the program aims to accelerate India's AI transformation and empower its workforce for the jobs of the future.

28. Divya Kala Mela 2024 inaugurated in Agartala, Tripura

- ♦ Divya Kala Mela is being organized from 6th to 11th February 2024 at Children Park, Agartala.
- ♦ The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) {DEPWD}, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, through National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation regularly organizes Divya Kala Mela.

29. Uttarakhand CM launches "Dhami against drugs campaign"

- ♦ Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has initiated the "Dhami against drugs campaign," a significant effort led by the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha Metropolitan Dehradun.
- ♦ The "Dhami against drugs campaign" is a testament to Uttarakhand's proactive stance on public health and social well-being

30. PM inaugurates projects worth Rs 7300 crores in Madhya Pradesh

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched multiple development projects worth about 7,300 crore rupees in Jhabua, the tribal-dominated district of Madhya Pradesh.
- ♦ The Prime Minister also disbursed monthly installments of Aahar Anudan under Aahar Anudan Yojna to about two lakh women beneficiaries.

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31. Defence Minister unveils statue of Gen Bipin Rawat in Dehradun

- ◆ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami have unveiled a life-size statue of General Bipin Rawat, the nation's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), at Tons Bridge School in Dehradun.
- ◆ The objective is to take the stories of valor of the armed forces to school students and instill patriotism and dedication in them.

32. Odisha govt to give interest-free loans to youth under 'Swayam' scheme

- ◆ The Odisha government has decided to provide interest-free loans up to Rs 1 lakh to youth of the state under the new government scheme 'Swayam.'
- ◆ Under the scheme 'Swayam' to create self-employment for youth, 1 lakh eligible rural and an equal number of urban youth in the age group of 18-35 years will receive interest-free loans of up to Rs 1 lakh for starting a new business.

33. Dharmendra Pradhan Inaugurates National Conference on APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card

- ◆ Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan has inaugurated the national conference to mark the creation of 25 crore 'APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card.'
- ◆ "One Nation, One Student ID" has been envisioned in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the conference will deliberate on creating a seamless educational landscape, facilitating academic mobility, and ensuring data security and privacy for students.

34. Assam declares 'Kaji Nemu' as state fruit

- ◆ The Assam government has announced that 'Kaji Nemu' (citrus lemon) has been recognized as the state fruit of Assam.
- ◆ With its unique aroma and antioxidant properties, Assam lemon has enriched our local cuisines.
- ◆ Kaji Nemu has already received a GI tag in 2016.

35. Government Names of 'Indira' and 'Nargis' Dropped From National Film Awards

- ◆ The 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' and the 'Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration', which are part of the National Film Awards, have been renamed on the recommendation of the Committee for Rationalisation of Film Awards.
- ◆ The committee recommended that the 'Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director' be renamed as 'Best Debut Film of a Director', and the award money be increased to Rs 3 lakh.

36. CIAL partnered with BPCL to set up first green hydrogen plant at Cochin airport

- ◆ Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) for setting up a green hydrogen plant in the premises of Cochin Airport.
- ◆ This collaborative effort will result in the world's first green hydrogen plant and fueling station located within an airport setting, CIAL said in a statement on Wednesday.

37. PM Modi inaugurates grand BAPS Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi

- ◆ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi, the first Hindu temple in the United Arab Emirates.

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- ♦ The BAPS temple will be an enduring tribute to the values of harmony, peace and tolerance, which both India and the UAE share.

38. Supreme Court declares electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional

- ♦ The Supreme Court has declared the electoral bonds scheme as "unconstitutional," stating that anonymous corporate contributions to political parties are "violative of the right to information."
- ♦ The decision was announced by a bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud.

39. Pashupati Paras Launches "SUFALAM" For Food Entrepreneurs

- ♦ Union Minister of Food Processing Pashupati Kumar Paras has inaugurated "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024".
- ♦ This initiative demonstrates the government's unwavering dedication to fostering entrepreneurship and building a supportive ecosystem for startups, which in turn empowers aspiring entrepreneurs in the food processing industry.

40. UP govt. boosts Kanya Sumangala Yojana grant

- ♦ The Uttar Pradesh government has increased the grant amount for Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 from the financial year 2024-25.
- ♦ This amount is provided from the birth of daughters up to admission in undergraduate/diploma courses. The increase in grant amount will be effective from April 1.

41. Sonowal inaugurates Kalughat Inland Waterways Transport terminal in Bihar

- ♦ Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has inaugurated the newly constructed Kalughat Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) terminal on National Waterways -1 (NW-1) at Kalugaht near Parmanandpur in Saran district in Bihar.
- ♦ It has been constructed with a worth of 82.48 crore rupees.

42. Odisha CM inaugurates Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Center in Bhubaneswar

- ♦ Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute (BSCCRI) in Bhubaneswar.
- ♦ Objective - To provide quality treatment to patients at an affordable cost.

43. Arunachal Pradesh achieves 100% coverage under Har Ghar Jal

- ♦ Arunachal Pradesh has achieved 100 percent saturation in 'Har Ghar Jal' scheme under the Centre's Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).
- ♦ The state has become the first in the northeast and tenth in the country to achieve a cent per cent saturation under the central government sponsored scheme.

44. UP emerges as top state in total vehicle sales, Maharashtra 2nd: SIAM

- ♦ Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number of vehicle sales in October-December 2023, followed by Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, according to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.
- ♦ As per data from SIAM, Uttar Pradesh clocked a total sale of 8,22,472 units across passenger and commercial vehicles; and two and three-wheeler categories.

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45. Karnataka boasts highest number of EV charging stations in India: BEE

- ♦ Karnataka tops the country in terms of public electric vehicle charging stations with 5,059, according to statistics from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Union Ministry of Power.
- ♦ Bengaluru Urban District has the most public charging stations with 4,281, which constitutes 85% of the charging infrastructure in the State

46. Government raises authorized capital of FCI from Rs 10,000 cr to Rs 21,000 cr

- ♦ The government of India has increased the authorized capital of state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) from ₹10,000 crore to ₹21,000 crore to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfill its mandate effectively.
- ♦ FCI is the central government's nodal agency that undertakes the procurement of foodgrains at a minimum support price (MSP) to protect the interest of farmers. It also maintains strategic stocks and distributes the grains under different welfare schemes.

47. Govt launches 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines to boost efficiency, competitiveness

- ♦ Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has launched the 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for the Indian port performance index to boost their efficiency and improve competitiveness.
- ♦ The 'Sagar Aankalan' guidelines for National Benchmarking of Indian Ports Performance will be enforced across all seaports in India, with the goal of boosting their efficiency and competitiveness.

48. PM Modi lays foundation stone of Kalki Dham temple in UP

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham temple in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal.
- ♦ The construction of Shri Kalki Dham is overseen by the Shri Kalki Dham Nirman Trust, led by its chairman Acharya Pramod Krishnam.

49. 11th International Puppet Festival begins in Chandigarh

- ♦ The 11th International Puppet Festival was inaugurated at Tagore Theatre in Chandigarh.
- ♦ The festival's inauguration was presided over by the Governor of Punjab and Administrator UT Chandigarh, Banwarilal Purohit, along with Rajeev Verma, Adviser to the Administrator.

50. Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates first Skill India Centre in Odisha

- ♦ Union Minister for Education and Skill Development Dharmendra Pradhan has inaugurated India's inaugural Skill India Centre (SIC) in Sambalpur, Odisha.
- ♦ To ensure seamless implementation of the training ecosystem, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) will designate a Centre Manager to monitor the implementation of training programs, ensure adherence to quality standards, and oversee the overall functioning of the center.

51. PM Modi Inaugurates IIT Hyderabad Campus

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has virtually inaugurated and dedicated to the nation two central institutions in Telangana and five in Andhra Pradesh.
- ♦ The list includes the Campus Development Project of Indian Institute of Technology and Maulana Azad National Urdu University in Hyderabad.

52. Govt allows 100% FDI in space sector to realize the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat

- ♦ The Centre has approved an amendment in the Foreign Direct Investment, FDI policy, allowing 100% foreign investment in the space sector.
- ♦ The liberalized entry routes under the amended policy are aimed to attract potential investors to invest in Indian companies in space.
- ♦ FDI up to 100% under the Automatic route will be allowed for the manufacturing of components and systems or subsystems for satellites, ground segments, and user segments.

53. Centre decides to continue Women's safety scheme till 2025-26

- ♦ The Union Government has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the continuation of the implementation of the Umbrella Scheme on 'Safety of Women' at a total cost of around 1,180 crore rupees during the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.
- ♦ Besides, every year 5000 police personnel will be imparted training for effective investigation and prosecution to curb crime.

54. NTPC to set up India's largest green hydrogen production facility in Andhra Pradesh

- ♦ Power sector PSU and India's largest integrated power company NTPC Limited has signed a Land Lease Agreement in order to realize its green energy and green hydrogen objectives.
- ♦ The agreement between NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL) and Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), is for the development of an "Integrated Green Hydrogen Hub".

55. Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurates 211 PM SHRI Schools in Chhattisgarh

- ♦ Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Dharmendra Pradhan, along with Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Vishnu Deo Sai have inaugurated 211 PM SHRI schools in Raipur, Chhattisgarh.
- ♦ Pradhan also inaugurated a Digital Library for Kendriya Vidyalaya and Virtual Reality labs for Navodaya Vidyalaya of the State.

56. Goa Collaborated with World Bank for Blended Finance Facility

- ♦ The Goa government will set up a blended finance facility in partnership with the World Bank that will enable the coastal state to access and mobilize concessional finance to implement low-carbon and climate-resilient investments.
- ♦ This will be the first of its kind, climate-focused, multi-regional facility at the subnational level. This will help Goa to access and mobilize concessional finance to implement low-carbon and climate-resilient investments

57. India's poverty level down to 5% of population: NITI Aayog

- ♦ NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam has said that the latest consumer expenditure survey indicates that poverty has come down to five per cent in the country and people are becoming prosperous both in rural and urban areas.
- ♦ Citing the survey data, the increase in consumption both in rural and urban areas is about 2.5 times

58. India to be the third largest economy by 2027: Jefferies

- ♦ Global investment advisory firm Jefferies has projected an optimistic outlook for the Indian economy and its equity markets.
- ♦ The New York-headquartered firm said that in the last ten years, India has seen fundamental structural reforms that have created the framework for the country to realise its full potential.
- ♦ Anurag Thakur announced setting up Film Certification Facilitation Office in Chandigarh
- ♦ Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Anurag Singh Thakur has announced the setting up of a regional facilitation office of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in Chandigarh.

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- ♦ This move aims to support filmmakers in the region by making the process of obtaining film certification more convenient.

59. Bihar, SIDBI to collaborate on enhancing startup ecosystem

- ♦ The Bihar Startup Fund Trust (BSFT) has signed an MoU with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to boost the startup ecosystem in the eastern state.
- ♦ The initiative is aimed at creating a conducive environment for startups and transforming Bihar into a startup hub.

60. India's First Gati Shakti Research Chair to be established at IIM Shillong

- ♦ The country's first 'Gati Shakti Research Chair' will be established at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong.
- ♦ The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) has collaborated with IIM-Shillong to set up India's first 'Gati Shakti Research Chair'.

61. SJVN commissions 50 MW Gujrai Solar Power Station in Uttar Pradesh

- ♦ SJVN Limited, a Mini Ratna, Category-I and Schedule 'A' Central public sector enterprise under the administrative control of Ministry of Power, Government of India, has begun the successful commercial operation of its 50 MW Gujrai Solar Power Station in Kanpur Dehat, Uttar Pradesh.

62. PFC ties with Italian export credit agency SACE to boost India-Italy cooperation

- ♦ State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) has become the first government firm to collaborate with SACE, an Italian export credit agency, to boost the cooperation between the two countries.
- ♦ PFC is partnering with SACE, the export credit agency of Italy, for an innovative ECA-backed financing facility under its 'Push Strategy' initiative.

63. Haryana govt launched 'Savera' programme

- ♦ Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has inaugurated the Savera programme — aimed at early detection and prevention of breast cancer.
- ♦ It was initiated by the Medanta Foundation in collaboration with the Health Department in Gurgaon.
- ♦ Under the scheme, visually impaired people will conduct screening for breast cancer.

64. PM Modi inaugurates India's longest cable-stayed bridge Sudarshan Setu

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the Sudarshan Setu, India's longest cable-stayed bridge, connecting Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka.
- ♦ The unique design of the bridge includes a footpath with verses from the Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna.

65. Rajeev Chandrasekhar launches 'Investor Information and Analytics Platform'

- ♦ Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and Jal Shakti, Rajeev Chandrasekhar has launched the 'Investor Information and Analytics Platform' developed by IIT Madras.
- ♦ This platform will act as a one-stop shop for startups to seamlessly access Venture Capitalists (VCs) and investor networks, Govt schemes and several other components of the startup landscape for all stakeholders.

66. NICDC joined hands with IIT Delhi to enhance development of greenfield smart cities

- ♦ National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC) under the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GoI and the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (FITT-IITD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding at Vanijya Bhawan, New Delhi.

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67. PM Modi laid foundation stone of Sikkim's First Railway Station

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone for Sikkim's first railway station at Rangpo.
- ♦ The design of the Rangpo railway station will draw inspiration from the rich culture, heritage and architecture of Sikkim.
- ♦ The station will be a part of the under-construction 45-km rail line from Sevoke near Siliguri in West Bengal to Rangpo in Sikkim. It will have 14 tunnels and 22 bridges.

68. PM Modi inaugurates 'Bharat Tex 2024' in New Delhi

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated 'Bharat Tex 2024' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- ♦ The event is one of the largest global textile events ever held in the country.
- ♦ The event is being organized at Bharat Mandapam and Yasho Bhoomi, two of the largest exhibition centers in India.

69. PM Modi launches World's Largest Grain Storage Scheme

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched the world's largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector, entailing an investment of over Rs 1.25 lakh crore, with the inauguration of 11 godowns in primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) in as many states.
- ♦ Under the programme, 700 lakh tons of storage capacity will be created over the next five years in the cooperative sector by constructing thousands of godowns and warehouses.

70. PM Modi announces 4 astronauts for Gaganyaan

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has revealed the name of four astronauts who have been selected for the Gaganyaan Mission.
- ♦ The four Indian Air Force Officers will be the first Indians to go to space from Indian soil on an indigenous space vehicle.
- ♦ The four astronauts are Group Captain Prashanth Balakrishnan, Group Captain Ajith Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap, Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla.

71. Ministry of Ayush signed MoU with RIS

- ♦ The Ministry of Ayush has signed an MoU with the Research and Information System (RIS) in New Delhi.
- ♦ The MoU will bring forth the overview of Ayush Service sector and will serve the continuation of academic cooperation and collaboration with RIS, which is a Policy Research autonomous institute of the Ministry of External Affairs.

72. PM Modi inaugurates ISRO's Second Spaceport in Tamil Nadu

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone for the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) second spaceport in Kulasekarapattinam, Tamil Nadu.
- ♦ The first spaceport, Satish Dhawan Space Centre, is located in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota.

73. Nagaland govt launched universal life insurance scheme

- ♦ Nagaland government has launched a fully-funded universal life insurance scheme to mitigate financial hardship caused by untimely demise.
- ♦ The scheme ensures financial security and protection, providing coverage for breadwinners and family members, complementing the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme.

74. Reliance foundation unveils animal welfare initiative 'Vantara'

- ♦ Reliance Industries and Reliance Foundation have launched 'Vantara' (Star of the Forest) programme.

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The programme will focus on rescue, treatment, care and rehabilitation of injured, abused and threatened animals, both in India and abroad.

- ♦ The Vantara initiative has been conceptualized under the leadership of Anant Ambani, a Director on the boards of RIL and Reliance Foundation.

75. PM Modi unveils India's first hydrogen fuel cell ferry

- ♦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi has flagged off India's first indigenously built hydrogen fuel cell ferry boat in virtual mode.
- ♦ The vessel has been built at the Cochin Shipyard.

76. Reliance-Disney merger will drive consolidation

- ♦ Reliance Industries Limited and Walt Disney Company have officially signed a binding agreement to merge their media businesses in India.
- ♦ This sets the stage for the establishment of an \$8.5 billion (Rs 70,352 crore) media and entertainment powerhouse, surpassing any other entity in the industry.

Chapter 13: Current Affairs (International)

1. WHO awards countries for progress in eliminating industrially produced trans fats for first time

- ♦ WHO has awarded its first-ever certificates validating progress in eliminating industrially produced trans fatty acids to five countries.
- ♦ Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand have each demonstrated they have a best practice policy for industrially produced trans-fatty acids (iTFA) elimination in effect, supported by adequate monitoring and enforcement systems.

2. Malta becomes 119th member of International Solar Alliance

- ♦ Malta has become the 119th country to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- ♦ The ISA is an alliance of more than 120 signatory countries that aims to reduce the dependence on non-renewable sources of energy like fossil fuels.

3. UAE removed from money laundering 'grey list'

- ♦ Global anti-money laundering watchdog the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) had removed the United Arab Emirates from its "grey list" of countries subject to increased monitoring.
- ♦ While Kenya and Namibia were added.
- ♦ A total of 21 nations are on the grey list.

4. Algeria Inaugurates World's Third-Largest Mosque

- ♦ Algeria has inaugurated the world's third-largest and Africa's largest mosque.
- ♦ Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has inaugurated the Grand Mosque Of Algiers on the North African nation's Mediterranean coastline.

5. New Zealand set to scrap world's first law banning tobacco sale

- ♦ New Zealand will repeal a world-first law banning tobacco sales for future generations.
- ♦ Set to take effect from July, the toughest anti-tobacco rules in the world would have banned sales to those born after January 1, 2009, cut nicotine content in smoked tobacco products and reduced the

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number of tobacco retailers by more than 90 per cent.

Chapter 14: Banking & Financial

Interim Union Budget 2024-25: Important Point

- ❖ On February 1, 2024, as part of the legislature's budget session, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will deliver the Union Budget 2024 for the fiscal year 2024–2025. However, due to it being an election year, the budget presented will be a temporary financial plan or a vote on account.

1. Govt's four focus areas

- ♦ Welfare of youth,
- ♦ Women,
- ♦ Farmers,
- ♦ And the Poor.

2. GDP

- ♦ Real GDP recorded a growth of 7.7 per cent in the H1 2023-24
- ♦ In Q1 FY24 India's real GDP grew by 7.8%
- ♦ In Q2 FY24 GDP grew by 7.6%
- ♦ In FY2023, GDP grew year-over-year (YoY) at 7.2%
- ♦ According to NSO, India's real GDP growth in 2023-24 is seen as 7.3%
- ♦ IMF projections for India's economy in FY 24 6.7%

3. Fiscal Announcements

- ♦ Capex outlay of Rs 11.11 lakh crore
- ♦ Capex outlay at 3.4 per cent of GDP
- ♦ FY24 Fiscal Deficit target revised to 5.8 per cent of GDP from 5.9 per cent.
- ♦ 5.1 % Fiscal Deficit target for FY 25
- ♦ Govt plans to reduce fiscal deficit to 4.5 per cent in 2025-26
- ♦ FY 25 Gross market borrowing target is Rs 14.13 lakh crore
- ♦ Net market borrowing seen at Rs 11.75 lakh crore
- ♦ Revised expenditure for FY 24 Rs 44.90 lakh crore
- ♦ Total revenue receipts in 2024/25 estimated at Rs 30 lakh crore vs revised estimate of Rs 26.99 lakh crore
- ♦ Nominal GDP growth seen at 10.5%
- ♦ Food Subsidy 2.12 lakh crore
- ♦ FY 24 Divestment Target Cut to Rs 30,000 crore
- ♦ FY 25 Divestment Target set at Rs 50,000 crore

4. Direct and Indirect Tax

- ♦ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposes no change in direct and indirect tax including import tax
- ♦ Same tax rates for Direct and Indirect tax retained
- ♦ Tax break for start-up, investments made by Sovereign wealth funds, extended to March 31, 2025
- ♦ Focus on improving taxpayers service
- ♦ Tax reforms have widened the tax base and increased tax collections

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- ♦ Govt to withdraw old disputed direct tax demands of up to Rs 25,000 till FY2009 and Rs 10,000 for 2010-11 to 2014-15. It will benefit 1 crore taxpayers
- ♦ FM also proposes some tax benefits for pension funds
- ♦ Processing time of tax returns reduced from 93 days in FY14 to 10 days
- ♦ Tax base of GST more than doubled
- ♦ The number of tax filers swelled by 2.4 times, direct tax collection trebled since 2014
- ♦ Tax receipts for 2024-25 are projected at Rs 26.02 lakh crore
- ♦ Direct Tax Collections tripled in last 10 years
- ♦ Return filing swelled to 2.4 times

5. Agriculture

- ♦ Promote investment in post-harvest activity by both private and public sector support • Empower dairy farmers
- ♦ More efforts to control Foot and mouth disease
- ♦ Application of Nano-DAP to be expanded in all agro-climatic zones
- ♦ Crop insurance has been given to 4 crore farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana
- ♦ Five integrated Aqua Park to be set up
- ♦ Govt to launch Blue Economy 2.0 to promote aquaculture
- ♦ Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana to be stepped up to enhance aquaculture productivity, double exports and generate more jobs
- ♦ Direct financial assistance to 11.8 crore farmers under PM-KISAN

6. Nari Shakti in focus

- ♦ Nari Shakti found a special place in the Budget 2024; Here are the key points
- ♦ 30 crore Mudra Yojana loans disbursed to women entrepreneurs
- ♦ Increased female enrolment in higher education by 28 per cent in 10 years
- ♦ 43 per cent of female enrolment in STEM courses
- ♦ 1 crore women assisted by 83 lakh SHGs to become Lakhpati Didis

7. FY25 divestment target at 50,000 cr

- ♦ The government has revised FY24's divestment target to Rs 30,000 crore from Rs 51,000 crore budgeted previously.
- ♦ The target for FY25 has been set at Rs 50,000 crore.

8. Rs 928.46 crore allocated to CBI

- ♦ The government has reduced the allocation to the Central Bureau of Investigation by Rs 40.4 crore. This time the probe agency has received Rs 928.46 crore.
- ♦ Earlier, it received Rs 946.51 crore to manage its affairs in the Budget Estimates for 2023-24.

9. Health budget

- ♦ Encourage Cervical Cancer Vaccination for girls (9-14 years)
- ♦ Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 to be expedited for improved nutrition delivery, early childhood care and development
- ♦ U-WIN platform for immunisation efforts of Mission Indradhanush to be rolled out
- ♦ Health cover under Ayushman Bharat scheme to be extended to all ASHA, Anganwadi workers and helpers

10. Rail

- ♦ Allocation Rs 2.55 lakh crore
- ♦ Three major economic railway corridors under the PM Gati Shakti to improve logistics efficiency and reduce cost
- ♦ Energy, mineral and cement corridors
- ♦ Port connectivity corridors
- ♦ Decongest high-traffic density corridors
- ♦ Promotion of urban transformation via Metro rail and NaMo Bharat
- ♦ 40,000 normal train bogies to be converted into high-speed Vande Bharat ones

11. Housing

- ♦ New housing plan for the middle class
- ♦ 2 crore houses to be built under PM Aavas Yojana
- ♦ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen) close to achieving target of 3 crore houses, additional 2 crore targeted for next 5 years

12. Renewable energy

- ♦ Viability gap funding for wind energy
- ♦ Setting up of coal gasification and liquefaction capacity
- ♦ Phased mandatory blending of CNG, PNG and compressed biogas
- ♦ Financial assistance for procurement of biomass aggregation machinery
- ♦ 1 crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units of free electricity per month

13. Lokpal gets Rs 33 crore, CVC Rs 51 crore

- ♦ Lokpal was given Rs 44.46 crore for 2023-24, which has been revised to Rs 47.73 crore for the ongoing fiscal.
- ♦ CVC allocated Rs 51.31 crore for the next financial year.

14. Tourism

- ♦ Interest-free loans to states to promote tourism
- ♦ Funds will be provided for development of tourism in Lakshadweep

15. Air Connectivity

- ♦ 517 new routes to be launched under Udan Scheme

16. PLI Scheme

- ♦ PLI scheme gets Rs 6,200 crore

17. Sunrise Tech

- ♦ FM Nirmala Sitharaman proposes Rs 1 lakh crore corpus to drive private investment in sunrise technologies

18. Top achievements of Modi govt

- ♦ Average income of people has increased by 50%
- ♦ GST has enabled one nation, one market, one tax
- ♦ Infrastructure build-up is being seen in record time
- ♦ Direct transfer of Rs 34 lakh cr using PM Jan Dhan scheme has led to savings for government.
- ♦ Inflation has been under check and has been within the policy band

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- ♦ PM SVANIDHI scheme gave credit assistance to 78 lakh street vendors
- ♦ Crop insurance given to 4 crore farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana
- ♦ 34 cr Mudra Yojana loans been given to women entrepreneurs
- ♦ Over 22 crore Mudra loans disbursed in the last 10 years
- ♦ Jan Dhan accounts have helped government save over Rs 2 lakh crore
- ♦ In the last 10 years government has uplifted 25 crore people out of poverty
- ♦ Skill India mission has trained over 1.4 crore youth to make them job ready Other Important
- ♦ Nirmala Sitharaman announced that 7 IITs, 16 IIITs, 7 IIMs, 15 AIIMS, and 319 universities have been set up.
- ♦ To achieve its commitment for 'net-zero' by 2070
- ♦ On the Capex front, the outlay for next year increased by 11.1% to Rs 11.11 trillion
- ♦ No tax changes
- ♦ The Budget Contains A Number Of Announcements And Strategies Indicating Directions And Development Approach For Making India Viksit Bharat By 2047
- ♦ 'Lakshpati Didi' scheme to target 3 crore women
- ♦ Rs one trillion corpus for research in technology announced in Interim Budget
- ♦ Govt. will borrow Rs 14.13 trillion in FY2024-25

19. RBI Imposes Major Restrictions on Paytm Payments Bank

- ♦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has directed Paytm Payments Bank to cease all deposits and credit transactions after February 29, 2024.
- ♦ This action stems from persistent non-compliances and ongoing supervisory concerns within the bank, raising questions about the impact on its customers.
- ♦ In exercise of its powers under section 35A of the Banking Regulation Act, RBI has directed that no further deposits and credit transactions or top-ups shall be allowed in any customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, and FASTags after the 29th of February, other than any interest, cashbacks, or refunds which may be credited anytime

20. GST collections rise 10% to ₹1.72 lakh crore in January

- ♦ The gross GST revenue collected in the month of January 2024 is ₹1,72,129 crore, which shows a 10.4% Year-o-Year (Y-o-Y) growth over the revenue of ₹155,922 crore collected in January 2023.
- ♦ Notably, this is the second-highest monthly collection ever and marks the third month in this financial year with a collection of ₹1.70 lakh crore or more.

21. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, Iran, Egypt confirmed they are joining BRICS

- ♦ The BRICS group, a key platform for emerging markets and developing countries, has officially welcomed five new members: Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia.
- ♦ The five countries were extended invitations along with Argentina at a summit in August in Johannesburg to join the bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa.

22. Government allocates 3.4% of GDP for Capital Expenditure Boost

- ♦ The government proposes to increase capital expenditure outlay by 11.1 per cent to Rs 11.11 lakh crore in 2024-25, amounting to 3.4 percent of the GDP, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her interim Budget.
- ♦ The central government will focus especially on five eastern states - Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and West Bengal.

23. Govt revised the fiscal deficit estimates at 5.8% in FY24

- ◆ Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has revised the estimate of the fiscal deficit for FY24 to 5.8 per cent while presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25.
- ◆ The Revised Estimate of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 percent of GDP, improving on the Budget Estimate, notwithstanding moderation in the nominal growth estimates.
- ◆ The government is committed to reducing the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26, adding that the fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP.

24. 97.50% of Rs 2,000 Notes Returned to System: RBI

- ◆ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced nearly 97.5 per cent of the Rs 2,000 bank notes have been returned to the banking system, and only about Rs 8,897 crore worth of the withdrawn notes are still with the public.
- ◆ On May 19, 2023 the RBI announced the withdrawal of Rs 2,000 denomination bank notes from circulation.
- ◆ The total value of Rs 2,000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023.

25. ESAF Small Finance Bank and Edelweiss Insurance partner to offer Life Insurance

- ◆ ESAF Small Finance Bank has partnered with a bancassurance collaboration with Edelweiss Tokio Life Insurance.
- ◆ The partnership plays a crucial role in ESAF Small Finance Bank's strategy to broaden its range of offerings, demonstrating its commitment to providing financial security to a more extensive segment of the unbanked and underbanked population.

26. UPI transactions reach a record Rs 18.41 trillion in January: NPCI

- ◆ Unified payments interface (UPI) has started 2024 on a strong note, with transaction spends staying over the ₹18-lakh crore mark and touching a new record high.
- ◆ Transactions worth ₹18.41-lakh crore were processed during January, nearly 1 per cent higher than the previous record of ₹18.23-lakh crore in December 2023.
- ◆ The value of transactions was 42 per cent higher on year, as per data by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The number of transactions on the UPI network remained flat on month at 1,202 crore for January. In the year, the volume of transactions was 52 per cent higher.

27. Government Boosts Sovereign Gold Bond Issuance to 3,500 Crore in FY 25

- ◆ The Indian government has decided to substantially increase the issuance of Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGB) for the upcoming fiscal year.
- ◆ The allocation for SGBs has been more than doubled, rising from ₹1,500 crore in the financial year ending March 31, 2023, to a significant ₹3,500 crore for the fiscal year 2024-25.

28. Digital payments rise 10.94 pc annually at September-end 2023: RBI

- ◆ Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 10.94 per cent in a year through March 2023, as per RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions.
- ◆ RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) stood at 418.77 at end-September 2023 compared to 377.46 in September 2022 and 395.57 in March 2023.
- ◆ The index comprises five broad parameters that enable the measurement of the depth and penetration of digital payments in the country over different periods.
- ◆ These parameters are Payment Enablers (weight 25 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Demand-side

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factors (10 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Supply-side factors (15 percent); Payment Performance (45 per cent); and Consumer Centricity (5 percent).

29. SBI's Q3FY24 net profit drops 35.5% due to one-time provisions

- ♦ State Bank of India (SBI) has reported a drop in net profit for the first time in 12 quarters, with its third quarter (Q3FY24) standalone net profit declining 35.5 per cent year-on-year (yoy) to ₹9,164 crore.
- ♦ As it absorbed one-time provisions relating to increase in pension liabilities and dearness relief neutralization.

30. HDFC Bank rolls out 4 SME credit cards for entrepreneurs, freelancers

- ♦ India's largest private sector bank, HDFC Bank has launched four new small and medium enterprises (SME)-focused credit cards to cater to the specific needs of entrepreneurs, freelancers, and professionals.
- ♦ The biggest USP of the cards is that they will provide 55 days of interest-free credit, the highest number of days offered by any bank.

31. Max Financial gets IRDAI nod for capital infusion of Rs 1,612 cr by Axis Bank into Max Life Insurance

- ♦ Max Financial Services has received approval from Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for capital infusion of Rs 1,612 crore by Axis Bank into the company's material subsidiary, Max Life Insurance.
- ♦ As part of the deal, Max Life will issue nearly 14, 25, 79,161 equity shares to Axis Bank for an aggregate investment of above-mentioned amount.

32. HDFC Bank raises \$300 million through maiden sustainable finance bond issue

- ♦ HDFC Bank has raised \$300 million through its first-ever sustainable finance bond issue. The fund raise is part of an overall raise of \$750 million through Regulation S Bonds.
- ♦ The lender has raised \$300 million for three years with a 95 bps spread over US Treasury, and another \$450 million for 5 years with a 108 bps spread over US Treasury.

33. SBI partners with Flywire to modernize international education payments for students

- ♦ State Bank of India (SBI) has partnered with Flywire Corporation to revolutionize the landscape of international education payments for Indian students.
- ♦ This strategic partnership aims to simplify the traditionally complex payment process, offering students a seamless and fully digital experience.

34. LIC launches new plan "Index Plus" Policy

- ♦ Life Insurance Corporation of India has launched the unit-linked, regular premium, individual life insurance plan "Index Plus"
- ♦ The plan offers life insurance cover-cum-savings throughout the term of the policy

35. RBI repo rate unchanged at 6.5 percent

- ♦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has kept repo rates unchanged at 6.5 percent.
- ♦ It has also decided to remain focused on the withdrawal of the accommodative stance.
- ♦ This is the sixth consecutive unchanged decision.
- ♦ MPC also decided by a majority (5 out of 6 members) to remain focused on the withdrawal of accommodation to ensure the inflation progressively aligns with the target while supporting growth.

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- ♦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has maintained its inflation projection at 5.4% for 2023–2024.
- ♦ CPI inflation is predicted to be 4.5% for the upcoming fiscal year 2024–2025, with Q1 at 5%, Q2 at 4%, Q3 at 4.6%, and Q4 at 4.7%.

36. RBI Current Policy Rate are as-

- ♦ Policy Repo Rate – 6.50%
- ♦ Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) - 6.25%
- ♦ Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) - 6.75%
- ♦ Bank Rate - 6.75%
- ♦ Reverse Repo Rate – 3.35%
- ♦ Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) – 4.50%
- ♦ Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) – 18%

37. Karnataka Bank launches centenary campaign

- ♦ Karnataka Bank has launched its centenary campaign, 'Bharat Ka Karnataka Bank'.
- ♦ Jointly executed by Havas Media India and Havas Worldwide India, the campaign underscores Karnataka Bank's ability to adapt to the changing times while staying true to its core values.

38. Karnataka Bank launches centenary campaign

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39. The RBI has increased the ceiling on fees payable to non-executive directors of banks to 30 lakh rupees per year from the existing level of 20 Lakh rupees.

- ♦ The revision comes two years after RBI came out with new guidelines for directors as a part of corporate governance, where it capped the remuneration for non-executive directors, excluding the chair of the board.
- ♦ It revised the ceiling in recognition of the vital role of the non-executive operation of bank boards and their various committees.

40. India launches UPI payment services in Sri Lanka, Mauritius

- ♦ India has launched its Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius.
- ♦ RuPay card services were also introduced in Mauritius as part of this strategic initiative.

41. India's Retail inflation is at 3-mth low to 5.1% in January

- ♦ India's retail inflation eased to a three-month low of 5.1% in January from 5.7% a month earlier, with food price rise cooling a bit to 8.3% compared with 9.5% in December 2023.
- ♦ The number has remained within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) tolerance band of 2-6 per cent.
- ♦ Inflation rate in rural and urban areas stood at 5.34 per cent, 4.92 per cent, down from 5.93 per cent and 5.46 per cent seen in the same month a year ago.

42. India's WPI inflation eases to three-month low of 0.27 per cent in January

- ♦ India's wholesale price index-based inflation eased further to 0.27 per cent in January 2024 on an annual basis, as against 0.73 per cent in December, stated provisional data from the Commerce Ministry
- ♦ The month-on-month change in WPI index for January witnessed a contraction of (-)0.33 percent from a contraction of (-)1.12 per cent in the preceding month.

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43. PayU, NPCI join hands to roll out Credit Lines on UPI' feature

- ♦ Payments solution provider, PayU has collaborated with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for rolling out of the 'Credit Lines on UPI' feature on its platform, which will create avenues of financial security and growth for the merchants.
- ♦ The company anticipates over 380 million UPI users to gain easier access to Credit Line.

44. India, Nepal sign pact to link UPI, NPI for faster remittances

- ♦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank entered into an agreement integrating the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and the National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal for cross-border remittances.
- ♦ The integration of Indian and Nepalese fast payment systems is aimed at facilitating cross-border remittances between the two countries by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers.

45. South Indian Bank gets Best Technology Bank of the Year award

- ♦ South Indian Bank has been honored with the title of Best Technology Bank of the Year Award at the 19th IBA Annual Banking Technology Conference, Expo, & Citations.
- ♦ The bank's outstanding performance was recognized with a total of six prestigious awards.

46. RBI extends deadline for Paytm Payments Bank restrictions to March 15

- ♦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has extended the deadline for restrictions on deposit and credit transactions of Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) to March 15, stating that customers and merchants might require "a little more time to make alternative arrangements."
- ♦ The earlier deadline was February 29.

47. SBI launches digital enrolment for PMJJBY and PMSBY Schemes

- ♦ State Bank of India (SBI) has launched a self-subscribing journey for enrolment under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) schemes for its customers.
- ♦ The facility will provide impetus to the Indian Government's drive of covering all eligible citizens under PMJJBY & PMSBY schemes.

48. IRDAI reconstitutes expert committee for Ind AS/IFRS implementation

- ♦ The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has announced the reconstitution of the Expert Committee on the implementation of Ind AS/IFRS.
- ♦ The 13-member committee, which will be headed by the Member (Finance and Investment) F&I of IRDAI, will also include the Chairman of the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) of ICAI, the President of the Institute of Actuaries of India (IAI), the CGM & HOD of IRDAI's Actuarial Department, among others.

49. Paytm shifts nodal account to Axis Bank for seamless transactions

- ♦ Fintech firm One97 Communications -- owner of the brand Paytm -- has shifted its nodal account to Axis Bank from Paytm Payments Bank.
- ♦ The move will allow continuity of Paytm QR, Soundbox, and card machines after the March 15 set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), as per a regulatory filing.

50. LIC launched 'Amritbaal' plan for children

- ♦ The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has launched "Amritbaal", an insurance plan for children.
- ♦ The new "non-linked, non-participating, individual, savings, life insurance" plan is specifically designed to have an adequate corpus to meet the higher education and other needs of a child.

51. Bandhan Bank authorized to collect revenues of West Bengal govt

- ♦ Private lender Bandhan Bank has been authorized by the West Bengal government to collect tax and non-tax receipts on its behalf.
- ♦ The mandate will enable the bank to collect revenues through the Government Receipt Portal System (GRIPS).

52. PayPal registers with FIU of India under anti-money laundering law

- ♦ American payments gateway service provider PayPal has registered its operations with the Financial Intelligence Unit of India, about six years after a protracted legal battle ensued between the two entities.
- ♦ It has completed the formal procedure of being designated as a reporting entity under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) recently and submitted documents to FIU.

53. RBI grants payment aggregator licence to Mswipe Technologies

- ♦ Merchant-led digital payments provider Mswipe Technologies said it has been granted a payment aggregator (PA) licence by the Reserve Bank of India.
- ♦ The company had received an in-principle nod from the central bank to operate as a payment aggregator in August 2022.

54. EPFO organizing its monthly district outreach programme Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0

- ♦ Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) is organising its monthly district outreach programme Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0 in over 670 districts of the country.
- ♦ For the ease of EPS'95 pensioners, a special dedicated Pension Helpdesk will be set up wherein various pensioners-centric services like submission of Digital Life Certificates, Enquiries, and Pension Payment Order (PPO) handover on the day of retirement will be provided.

55. Amazon Pay gets final approval from RBI to operate as payment aggregator

- ♦ Amazon Pay, the fintech arm of e-commerce major Amazon India, has received a payment aggregator licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the company.
- ♦ The fintech firm joins a list of companies that the central bank has granted authorisation to operate as payment aggregators (PA) recently.

56. Mahanagar Gas acquires 30.97% share in 3EV Industries

- ♦ Mahanagar Gas has entered into a shareholders' agreement with 3EV Industries Private Limited to acquire 30.97 per cent shareholding in the company that manufactures and operates three-wheeler electric vehicles (EVs).
- ♦ The shareholding will give MGL the right to appoint one Director on the board of 3ev and one board observer.

57. MobiKwik introduces Pocket UPI to facilitate payments without linking bank account

- ♦ MobiKwik has launched a new feature on its platform, 'Pocket UPI'.
- ♦ Pocket UPI allows users to make UPI payments through MobiKwik Wallet without linking their bank account, thus giving more power in the hands of the users with an additional choice while they make

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UPI payments.

58. Jana SFB partnered with Dvara Money for digital banking

- ♦ Jana Small Finance Bank Limited has partnered with Dvara Money for digital banking services.
- ♦ Under this, DM's Spark Money platform has been integrated with the technical capabilities of Jana SFB.
- ♦ The integration of third-party application provider (TPAP) capabilities will enable the Spark Money platform to incorporate a full-stack UPI solution.

Chapter 16: Defence News

1. SARVATRA: A Multispan Mobile Bridging System Developed by DRDO

- ♦ SARVATRA, a Multispan Mobile Bridging System designed and developed by Armament and Combat Engineering Systems (ACE) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Ministry of Defence.
- ♦ SARVATRA assists the Army in constructing bridges over flowing water, ensuring robust connectivity between two areas during natural disasters.

2. Indian Navy Declares 2024 As 'Year of Naval Civilians'

- ♦ Indian Navy has declared 2024 as 'Year of Naval Civilians' to improve administration, efficiency and well-being of Naval Civilians by addressing all facets of Civilian HR Management in a time bound manner.
- ♦ Major focus areas towards maximizing administrative efficiency, digital initiatives, generic and specific training programmes and welfare activities have been identified for implementation in 2024.

3. US State Department approves 31 armed drones to India

- ♦ The US State Department has given the go-ahead for the possible sale of 31 armed MQ-9B SkyGuardian drones, related missiles, and equipment to India for nearly \$4 billion.
- ♦ This comes after years of discussions between the two nations about such a deal.

4. IIT Madras to create India's first 155mm smart ammunition

- ♦ Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has partnered with Munitions India Limited (a Defence Public Sector Enterprise) to develop India's first indigenously-designed 155 Smart Ammunition to achieve indigenization in the defence sector.
- ♦ The objective is to increase the accuracy of the 155 mm shell within a Circular Error Probable (CEP) of 10 m. At present, ammunition developed in India has a CEP of 500 m. Another goal is to increase the lethality at the terminal impact point.

5. Navy Chief Inaugurates New Defence System 'Precision Approach Radar'

- ♦ Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral R. Hari Kumar has inaugurated a Precision Approach Radar (PAR) at INS Utkrosh in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which will enable "highly accurate horizontal and vertical guidance to land an aircraft safely in low visibility conditions, such as heavy rain and fog".
- ♦ He also inaugurated the IUHDSS (Integrated Underwater Harbour Defence and Surveillance System) at Naval Jetty, Port Blair.

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6. Defence Ministry Signs Rs 2,269 Crore Contract with BEL

- ♦ The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of 11 Shakti Electronic Warfare Systems for the Indian Navy.
- ♦ The contract is worth 2,269 Crore Rupees.

7. MoD signs contract with AWEIL for 463 Stabilised Remote-Control Guns for Indian Navy & Indian Coast Guard

- ♦ The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract with Advanced Weapon Equipment India Ltd (AWEIL), Kanpur for the manufacturing & supply of a total of 463 indigenously manufactured 12.7 mm Stabilised Remote-Control Guns (SRCG) for the Indian Navy & Indian Coast Guard at a total cost of Rs. 1752.13 crores.
- ♦ The SRCG will enhance the capability of Navy and Coast Guard to accurately engage small targets that pose a threat to ships in an asymmetric environment, both by day and night.

8. North Korea launched new surface-to-sea missiles

- ♦ North Korea test-launched the new surface-to-sea missiles, "Padasuri-6".
- ♦ The missile hit a target after launch over waters in the East Sea for around 1400 seconds, or 23 minutes and 20 seconds.
- ♦ The missile seems to be designed to counter the naval capabilities of South Korea and the United States, such as U.S. aircraft carriers.

9. Aeronautical Development Agency Signs MoU with Indian Air Force

- ♦ Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) has signed an MoU with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for integration of futuristic Weapons and Sensors for LCA Tejas aircraft.
- ♦ This will facilitate the IAF to independently carry out sensors, weapon integration and flight testing to enhance the operational capability of Tejas-LCA fighter.

Defence Exercise	Between	About
12th Edition of MILAN Naval Exercise	Biennale multinational naval exercise hosted by the Eastern Naval Command of the Indian Navy	The 12th edition of the MILAN naval exercise will be held in Visakhapatnam from February 19-27, with over 50 countries participating. The "Forging Naval Alliances for a Secure Maritime Future" is the theme of the exercise
DHARMA GUARDIAN	India - Japan	The 5th edition of Joint Military Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self Defence Force commenced at Mahajan Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan.

Chapter 17: Sports News

1. India finished fifth at FIH Hockey5s World Cup

- ♦ The first ever men's FIH Hockey5s World Cup came to a thrilling conclusion with the Netherlands overcoming Malaysia to lift the trophy.
- ♦ Malaysia can be justifiably proud of their silver medal.

2. Abhinav Bindra selected as torchbearer for the 2024 Paris Olympics

- ♦ Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual gold medalist at the Olympic Games, has been selected as a torchbearer for the upcoming 2024 Paris Olympic Games.
- ♦ He will be part of the Olympic torch relay to be held from April 16 to July 26.
- ♦ Bindra, a member of the Athletes Commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), clinched the gold medal in the men's 10m air rifle event at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008.

3. Khelo India Winter Games 2024 mascot, snow leopard 'Sheen-e She' (Shan) reveals

- ♦ The mascot and logo of Khelo India Winter Games were launched. The first part of the Winter Games, a mouth-watering event for winter sports athletes, will be held in the Union Territory of Ladakh for the first time from February 2-6. The second portion is scheduled in Gulmarg, Jammu & Kashmir from February 21-25.
- ♦ In keeping with the tradition and biodiversity of the region, the mascot of the Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is a snow leopard. It has been named 'Sheen-e She' or Shan in Ladakh region.

4. SCA Stadium Renamed in Honor of Niranjan Shah

- ♦ The Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) stadium in Rajkot has been re-named as the Niranjan Shah Stadium.
- ♦ This change comes as a tribute to the former first-class cricketer and senior cricket administrator, Niranjan Shah, marking his immense contributions to the sport and the region.

5. Shamar Joseph and Amy Hunter awarded ICC Players of The Month for Jan 2024

- ♦ The International Cricket Council (ICC) has announced the winners of the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month for January 2024.
- ♦ West Indies' Shamar Joseph has become the first West Indian to win the Men's ICC Player of the Month award for his heroics in the Australia Test series.

6. Anurag Thakur hands over Chess Olympiad Torch to Hungary

- ♦ Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur handed over the Chess Olympiad Torch to Budapest, Hungary.
- ♦ Hungary to host the 45th edition of the Chess Olympiad.
- ♦ The transfer of the torch took place at the Major Dhyani Chand National Stadium in New Delhi.

7. Indian hammer thrower Rachna Kumari banned for 12 years for doping

- ♦ The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) has suspended hammer thrower Rachna Kumari for 12 years for a second anti-doping rule violation.
- ♦ Rachna returned positive results for multiple anabolic androgenic steroids in samples collected out of competition at Patiala on September 24 and on November 1 at the National Games last year.

8. R Ashwin joins elite 500 test wicket club

- ♦ Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has claimed his 500th Test wicket in the first innings of the

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third Test match against England at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot.

- ♦ The 37-year-old achieved this monumental feat in his 98th Test Match. Ashwin dismissed Zak Crawley on the second day to join Anil Kumble as the second Indian to take 500 wickets in Test history.

9. ICC bans UK cricketer Rizwan Javed for over 17.5 years for Match-Fixing

- ♦ A UK club cricketer, Rizwan Javed received a 17.5 years ban from all cricket due to his participation in match-fixing attempts during the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 League.
- ♦ Authorities enforce the ban on September 19, 2023, as Javed failed to address charges related to his involvement in the league.

10. India women clinch Badminton Asia Team Championships title

- ♦ India women's badminton team scripted history in Selangor Malaysia as they won the Badminton Asia Team Championships crown, beating Thailand 3-2 in a hard-fought final.
- ♦ This is the first time India have won the prestigious continental team championship title in the history of the sport.

11. MS Dhoni Named Captain of IPL's Greatest All-Time Team

- ♦ Chennai Super Kings (CSK) skipper MS Dhoni was picked as the captain to lead the all-time greatest IPL side.
- ♦ The 15-member squad was selected by a panel of experts, including former legends Wasim Akram, Dale Steyn, Matthew Hayden, and Tom Moody, along with 70 other journalists.

12. Manoj Tiwary announces retirement from all forms of cricket

- ♦ India and Bengal batter Manoj Tiwary has announced retirement from all forms of cricket.
- ♦ Tiwary played 148 First-Class matches and gathered 10,195 runs at an average of 47.86, with a career-best 303 not out and 30 centuries. He scored 5,581 runs in List-A matches and 3,436 runs in T20s.

13. Eight year-old Ashwath becomes youngest chess player to beat grandmaster

- ♦ Eight-year-old Ashwath Kaushik has become the youngest player to defeat a grandmaster after trouncing Jacek Stopa during the Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open in Switzerland.
- ♦ The Indian-born Singapore resident learnt to play the game at the age of four and became a World Under-Eight Rapid Champion in 2022.

14. Pakistan's Babar Azam becomes quickest to 10,000 runs in T20s

- ♦ Pakistan's Babar Azam has become the fastest batter to notch 10,000 runs in T20 cricket.
- ♦ Babar achieved this feat during a Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2024 match between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi Kings played at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

15. Indian Squash player Abhay Singh wins Goodfellow Classic squash

- ♦ Indian Squash player Abhay Singh clinched the Goodfellow Classic PSA Challenger Tour Title in Toronto, Canada.
- ♦ In the finals, he defeated Elliott Morris Devred of Wales by 3-0.
- ♦ With this win, the Asian Games Gold medalist has won his eighth PSA World Tour title.

16. India bags nine gold medals at Archery Asia Cup 2024 in Baghdad

- ♦ India finished the Archery Asia Cup 2024 with 14 medals, including nine gold, four silver and one bronze medal in Baghdad, Iraq.
- ♦ In the women's individual recurve category, three-time Olympian Deepika Kumari won the gold medal

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by defeating compatriot Simranjeet Kaur 6-2. Meanwhile, in an all-Indian final, Dhiraj Bommadevara beat Tarundeep Rai 7-3 to win the men's recurve archery title.

17. Namibia's Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton smashes fastest T20I Hundred

- ♦ Namibia's Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton scripted history by scoring the fastest century in T20 International (T20I) history during a bilateral match against Nepal.
- ♦ Achieving this monumental feat off just 33 balls, Loftie-Eaton shattered the previous record held by Nepal's Kushal Malla, who had set the benchmark at 34 balls against Mongolia during the Asian Games in 2023.
- ♦ New Zealand's Neil Wagner retires from international cricket
- ♦ New Zealand fast bowler Neil Wagner has decided to bring the curtain down on his illustrious 64-Test career for the Black Caps, formally announcing his retirement from international cricket.

Chapter 18: Book and Author

Book	Author
'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar'	Sanjeev Joshi
'9 Incredible Years of Haryana Government	Released by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar
"AI and National Security"	Revealed by CDS Anil Chauhan

Chapter 19: Important Day

Date	Day	Theme/Importance
1 February	Indian Coast Guard Day	The day aims to honor the contribution of the Coast Guard. The Indian Coast Guard Day is dedicated to the officers and personnel who look after maritime security. This year, the Indian Coast Guard Day will be commemorating its 48th Raising Day.
1-7 February	World Interfaith Harmony Week	World Interfaith Harmony Week is celebrated annually in the first week of February. The week transforms into a global platform for fostering peace and understanding.
2 February	Rheumatoid Arthritis Awareness Day	Objective - To raise awareness of rheumatoid arthritis, an inflammatory disease that affects the joints.

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2 February	World Wetlands Day	The day primarily aims to raise global awareness regarding the crucial role of the wetlands for human beings and the planet. Theme 2024 - Wetlands and Human Wellbeing
4 February	International Day of Human Fraternity	International Day of Human Fraternity is observed every year on 4 February. The day serves as a powerful reminder of the beauty of unity and the strength found in diversity
4 February	World Cancer Day	The theme for the 2022-2024 period is "Close the Care Gap: Everyone Deserves Access To Cancer Care". The sub-theme, "Together, we challenge those in power," emphasises accountability from leaders to allocate essential resources for eradicating cancer.
6 February	Safer Internet Day	Objective - To promote a safer and more responsible use of online technology around the world Theme 2024 - Inspiring Change. Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online
6 February	International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation	The main objective of celebrating Female Genital Mutilation Day (FGM) is to give respect to women by completely eliminating female genital mutilation. Theme 2024 - Her voice Her Future
7 February	National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day	National HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD) was first observed in 1999. Theme 2024- Engage, Educate, Empower: Uniting to End HIV/AIDS in Black Communities
13 February	World Radio Day	Objective - To raise awareness among the people and the media about the importance of radio, and to encourage access to information through radio. Theme 2024 - Radio: A Century informing, entertaining, and educating

12 February	International Epilepsy Day	In 2024, the world will observe the International Epilepsy Day on February 12. The day provides a platform to educate and create awareness among people.
15 February	World Hippo Day	World Hippo Day is celebrated on 15 February every year. Objective - To raise awareness about the plight of hippos, which are one of the most endangered large mammals on the planet.
15 February	International Childhood Cancer Day	International Childhood Cancer Awareness Day is observed every year on 15 February. It is a global campaign aimed at raising awareness about childhood cancer and its difficulties.
15 February	World Anthropology Day	World Anthropology Day is observed every year on the third Thursday in February and this year it is being marked on February 15. To promote the field of anthropology and raise awareness about its significance in understanding human diversity, cultures and societies worldwide.
17 February	Global Tourism Resilience Day	Global Tourism Resilience Day is observed every year on 17 February. Objective - To raise awareness about the significance of resilient tourism. Theme 2024 - Resilient Tourism: Building Back Better
17 February	World Human Spirit Day	World Human Spirit Day is observed on 17 February each year. It is a day to reflect on the human spirit and reconnect with our sense of awe and purpose.
18 February	World Whale Day	World Whale Day is observed every year on the third Sunday of February. This year, the day falls on February 18.

20 February	Mizoram Foundation Day	Mizoram Foundation Day is celebrated every year on February 20 to honour the northeastern state's accomplishment of statehood in 1987. It was on this day that the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council was raised to the status of a complete state, turning into the 23rd state of India. February 20 denotes the Statehood Day of both Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh.
20 February	World Day of Social Justice	Objective - To offer a platform to raise voices against injustice around the globe. It also brings various communities across the world on a common ground. Theme 2024 - Bridging Gaps, Building Alliances
21 February	International Mother Language Day	Objective - To recognize and promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. Theme 2024 - Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning
22 February	World Thinking Day	The day also raises funds for the development of 10 million Girl Guides and Girl Scouts across the globe. Theme 2024 - Our World, Our Thriving Future
22 February	World Scout Day	The day is also known as Scouts Founder's Day. Theme 2024 - Scouts for a Better World
23 February	World Understanding and Peace Day	World Understanding and Peace Day is every year on 23 February. This day is celebrated to promote peace, empathy and cooperation between people of various origins and cultures.
24 February	Central Excise Day	Central Excise Day is observed every year on 24 February. The day commemorates the establishment of the Central Excise and Salt Act, which came into effect in 1944.
27 February	World NGO Day	Theme 2024 - Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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28 February	National Science Day	Theme 2024 - Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat
26 February to 1 March	Financial Literacy Week	The designated theme for the Financial Literacy Week scheduled from February 26 to March 01, 2024, is "Make a Right Start – Become Financially Smart".
29 February	Financial Literacy Week	The theme for 2024, "Share Your Colors," emphasizes collaboration and support.

Chapter 20: Science & Technology

1. Russian cosmonaut sets world record for time spent in space

- Russian cosmonaut Oleg Kononenko has broken the world record for the most cumulative time spent in space, Russia Space agency Roscosmos reported.
- The 59-year-old has now spent more than 878 days and 12 hours in space, surpassing fellow Russian Gennady Padalka, who set the previous record of 878 days, 11 hours, 29 minutes, and 48 seconds in 2015.

2. IIT Kanpur develops India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility

- The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) has achieved a major milestone by successfully establishing and testing India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility.
- With this technical facility developed by IIT Kanpur, hypersonic cruise missiles can be prepared for precise targeting.

3. ISRO launched INSAT-3DS Satellite from Sriharikota

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched meteorological satellite INSAT-3DS with the GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission from SDSC-SHAR, Sriharikota.
- This will help in enhancing the weather forecast.
- This was ISRO's second success in the current calendar after the launch of XPOSat from Sriharikota on January 1 in PSLV's 60th flight

4. NASA, Japan to launch world's 1st wooden satellite soon

- Japan and the US are planning to launch the world's first wooden satellite, the LingnoSat, into space in 2024.
- This unusual spacecraft is made up of Magnolia wood which, during the experiments, was found to be particularly stable and resistant to cracking

5. PM Modi announced India's own Space Station by 2035

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has declared India's plan to establish its own space station by 2035. This initiative aims to facilitate advanced exploration of the universe.
- Among other feats, India now aims for setting up 'Bharatiya Antariksha Station' by 2035 and sending the first Indian to the Moon by 2040.

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Chapter 21: Obituary

Person	About
Hage Geingob	Namibia's President Hage Geingob passed away at the age of 82 in Windhoek.
Farooq Nazki	Veteran broadcaster, poet and Sahitya Akademi winner Mir Mohammad Farooq Nazki died at the age of 83.
Dattajirao Gaekwad	India's oldest Test cricketer and former captain Dattajirao Gaekwad passed away.
Kelvin Kiptum	The men's marathon world record holder, Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum, 24 , has died in a road accident in his home country.
Kavita Chaudhary	Kavita Chaudhary , known for her 1989 superhit TV show, 'Udaan' , and for playing Lalita-ji in the iconic Surf ads, died at the age of 67.
Suhani Bhatnagar	Suhani Bhatnagar , who played young Babita Kumari Phogat in Aamir Khan's 'Dangal' , died.
Mike Procter	Legendary South Africa cricketer Mike Procter passed away at the age of 77.
Andreas Brehme	FIFA World Cup winner Andreas Brehme , whose late penalty in the 1990 final against Argentina in Italy handed Germany their third world title, has died at the age of 63.
Fali Nariman	Eminent jurist and Senior Supreme Court Lawyer Fali S Nariman passes away at the age of 95. He was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1991 and Padma Vibhushan in 2007 .
Ameen Sayani	Mumbai-based radio personality Ameen Sayani , 91, who hosted that iconic hit parade of film songs from Dec 1952 to April 1994 , passed away.
Pankaj Udhas	Veteran singer Pankaj Udhas passed away at the age of 72. In 2006 , the Indian government conferred the Padma Shri on Udhas.
Kumar Shahani	Kumar Shahani , the pole star of the parallel cinema movement in India, passed away in Kolkata at 83.
Shafiqur Rahman Barq	Senior Samajwadi Party leader , and MP from Uttar Pradesh's Sambals , Shafiqur Rahman Barq passed away at the age of 94. Shafiqur is the India's oldest MP in Parliament

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