



11 March 2024

National and International News

India signs free trade pact with 4 European countries



Context:

- India recently signed a landmark free trade agreement (FTA) with four European countries - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.
- The agreement aims to boost investments in India to \$100 billion and create one million jobs within 15 years.
- This Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is the second full-fledged FTA signed by India, following the one with the United Arab Emirates.

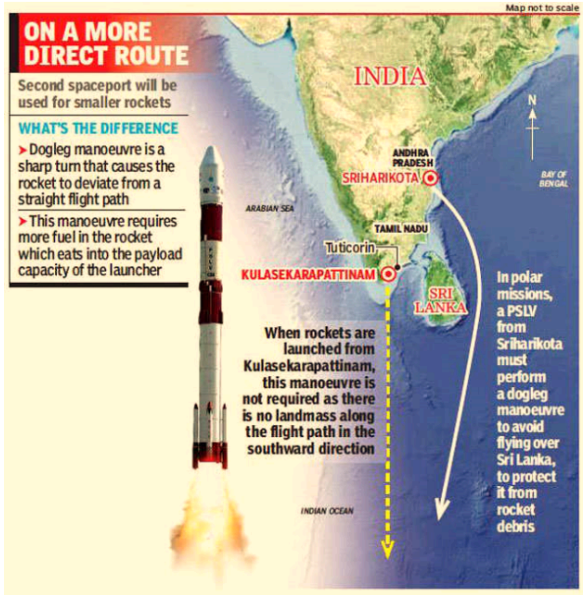
Key points:

- The FTA with the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries, separate from the EU, includes significant tariff reductions, increased market access, and simplified customs procedures.
- It also includes a unique chapter on commitments to human rights and sustainable development, a first in such agreements.
- The agreement will come into force after ratification by the EFTA states, expected possibly by the end of the year.
- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted the investment clauses as a unique achievement, with a goal to invest \$100 billion in India from EFTA countries.
- The agreement sets objectives to increase foreign direct investment from EFTA states into India by \$50 billion within 10 years and another \$50 billion in the next five years, aiming to generate 1 million jobs within 15 years in India.
- If the goals are not met within 15 years, India can temporarily withdraw some trade concessions.

ISRO's second rocket launchport

Context:

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the construction of ISRO's second rocket launchport.



Why India Needs a New Launchport?

- **Increasing Commercial Launches:** India expects a surge in commercial launches with the recent policy allowing private players in the space sector.
- **Relieving Pressure on Existing Facility:** To avoid overloading ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR in Sriharikota, a new launchport is essential.
- **Diverse Launch Capabilities:** The Kulasekarapattinam launchport will handle smaller payloads, allowing SHAR to focus on larger missions like lunar, Venus, and human-flight missions.
- **Facilitating Private Players:** Private companies can develop space systems, build satellites, and launch vehicles, **promoting private sector involvement in space.**
- **Dedicated Infrastructure:** It will provide dedicated launch infrastructure for on-demand commercial launches, ensuring smooth operations.

Why is the New ISRO Launchport in Tamil Nadu?

- **Geographical Advantage:** Kulasekarapattinam's coastal location in Tamil Nadu offers a natural advantage.
- **Optimized Trajectory for SSLV:** The launchport allows a direct southward trajectory, beneficial for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) missions.
- **Reduced Fuel Consumption:** Kulasekarapattinam's westward location saves fuel for SSLV missions compared to the eastward trajectory required from SHAR.
- **Equatorial Proximity:** Located near the equator, both launchports significantly boost payload capacity due to the Earth's rotational velocity.
- **Enhanced Payload Capacity:** Proximity to the equator increases velocity due to Earth's rotation, benefiting geostationary satellites.

IRIS AI Robot

Context:

A pioneering advancement in education has emerged in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram, where a school has introduced India's first AI teacher robot, Iris.

Key points:

- **Powered by Robotics and Generative AI technologies,** Iris boasts a dedicated Intel



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- processor and coprocessor for seamless performance.
- Its Android App interface allows users to control and interact with the robot, ensuring a **personalized learning experience**.
- Not just a passive presence in the classroom, **Iris is a dynamic voice assistant and interactive learning tool**.
- Acts as an **AI voice-controlled assistant**, responding to user queries, providing explanations, and delivering educational content.
- Engages users in **interactive learning experiences through personalized content generation, quizzes, and interactive activities**.
- Equipped with a **4-wheel chassis, Iris can move freely within its environment**, facilitating interaction with users and navigating through learning spaces.
- Its hands, **featuring 5 DoF each, enable Iris to manipulate objects, perform demonstrations, and engage in hands-on learning activities**.
- The robot can **teach subjects from nursery to Class 12**.
- Currently, Iris speaks three languages - **English, Hindi, and Malayalam**.
- Created by Maker Labs.

National Creators Award



Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented the **inaugural National Creators Award at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**.
- The award is being provided across **twenty categories** including the Best Storyteller Award; The Disruptor of the Year; Celebrity Creator of the Year; Green Champion Award; Best Creator For Social Change; Most Impactful Agri Creator; Cultural Ambassador of The Year; International Creator award; Best Travel Creator Award; Swachhta Ambassador Award; The New India Champion Award; Tech Creator Award; Heritage Fashion Icon Award; Most Creative Creator (Male & Female); Best Creator in Food Category; Best Creator in Education Category; Best Creator in Gaming Category; Best Micro Creator; Best Nano Creator; Best Health and Fitness Creator.

Key points:

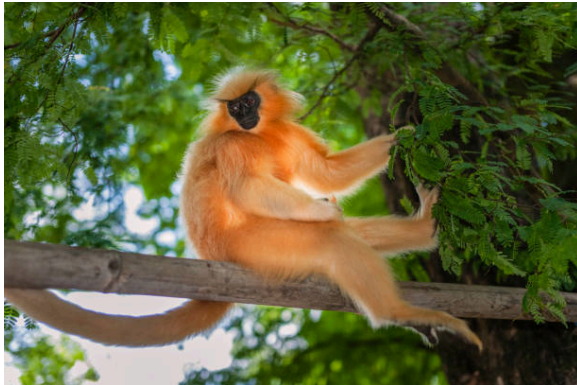
- **Disruptor of the Year award:** Ranveer Allahbadia (BeerBiceps)
- **Best Creator in Education Category(Male &**



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- Female):** Naman Deshmukh
- **Best Creator in Tech Category:** Gaurav Chaudhary(Technical Guruji)
 - **Favourite Travel Creator:** Kamiya Jani
 - **Best Health and Fitness Creator:** Ankit Baiyanpuria
 - **Best Creator in Food Category:** Kabita Singh (Kabita's Kitchen)
 - **Celebrity Creator of the Year:** Aman Gupta
 - **Green Champion' Category:** Pankhti Pandey
 - **Best Storyteller:** Keerthika Govindasamy
 - **Cultural Ambassador of the Year:** Maithili Thakur
 - **Most Creative Creator Female:** Shraddha Jain
 - **Most Creative Creator Male:** RJ Raunac
 - **Heritage Fashion Icon Award:** Jahnvi Singh
 - **Best Creator for Social Change Award:** Jaya Kishori
 - **Best Micro Creator Award:** Aridaman
 - **Best Creator in Gaming Category Award:** Nishchay
 - **Swachhta Ambassador Award:** Malhar Kalambe
 - **Best International Creator Award:** Drew Hicks, Kili Paul, Cassandra Mae Spittmann
 - **Best Nano Creator Award:** Piyush Purohit
 - **Most Impactful Agri Creator:** Lakshay Dabas
 - **The New India Champion Award:** Abhi and Niyu

Golden Langurs




Context:

- The latest survey estimates India's golden langur **population at 7,396.**
- Conducted by the **Primate Research Centre NE India (PRCNE)**, Assam Forest Department, Bodoland Territorial Council, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), and Conservation Himalayas.
- The golden langur's distribution covers the **Manas Biosphere Reserve and fragmented forests in western Assam.**
- Ripu Reserve Forest and Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary identified as significant habitats for golden langurs.

Geographic Range:

- Limited to **Assam, India, and neighboring Bhutan.**
- Inhabits an area surrounded by **four geographical landmarks:** the foothills of Bhutan (north), Manas river (east), Sankosh river (west), and Brahmaputra river (south).



	<p>Habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupies moist evergreen and tropical deciduous forests, as well as some riverine areas and savannas. • Primarily tree-dependent, living in the upper canopy of sub-tropical forests in the south and temperate forests in the north. • Found at elevations close to sea level in the south and up to 3000 m at the foothills of Bhutan in the north. <p>Conservation Status:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IUCN: Endangered • CITES: Appendix I • Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I
<p>71st Miss World pageant 2024</p> 	<p>Context: Krystyna Pyszkova from the Czech Republic was crowned as the new Miss World 2024 at a grand event in Mumbai, India. The previous Miss World 2022, Karolina Bielawska from Poland, crowned her successor in a magnificent ceremony.</p> <p>Runners-Up and Continental Winners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Runner-Up: Yasmina Zaytoun of Lebanon • Miss World Asia and Oceania: Yasmin Azaytoun of Lebanon • Miss World Europe: Krystyna Pyszková of Czech Republic • Miss World America and Caribbean: Aché Abrahams of Trinidad and Tobago • Miss World Africa: Lesego Chombo of Botswana <p>Humanitarian Award</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Miss World Humanitarian Award was given to Nita Ambani for her work at the Reliance Foundation, a non-profit organization. Julia Morley CBE, the Chairwoman of the Miss World Organization, presented her with the award.



Kerala Regional News

RAV Lifetime Achievement Award for P.M. Varier

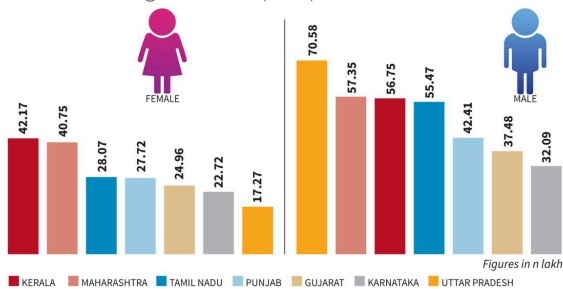


Context:

- Dr. P. Madhavankutty Varier, the managing trustee and chief physician of Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyapeeth (RAV) in New Delhi.
- This recognition highlights Dr. Varier's significant contributions to promoting and spreading Ayurveda across the globe.

Kerala tops chart of highest passport penetration among women in the country

States with high number passport holders till 2023



Context:

- In line with the visible shift in the migration pattern from Kerala of late, women from the southern State hold the highest number of passports issued in the country till 2023, followed by Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Gujarat.
- Though Kerala has the highest number of total passport holders in the country with 98.92 lakh (including male and female), Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of male passport holders with 70.58 lakh.
- The number of female passport holders in Kerala stands at 42.17 lakh.

India's first museum dedicated to cooperatives is coming up in Kozhikode



Context:

- India's first museum dedicated to the cooperative movement is being built in Kozhikode, Kerala.
- This ₹150 crore project by the Karassery Service Co-operative Bank will be a unique destination to learn about the rich history of cooperatives in India, spanning over a century.
- Interestingly, this will be the second such museum in the world, with the first one established in Toad Lane, U.K. in 1844.



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<p>Kerala unveils health sciences research policy</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kerala has unveiled a new health sciences research policy aimed at improving the state's healthcare sector. ● The policy focuses on streamlining the research approval process, making it easier for researchers to get started. ● This includes simplifying consent procedures, a step that should expedite valuable studies. ● The initiative also prioritizes supporting medical professionals by granting dedicated research time. ● The policy aims to free up their time for crucial research activities. ● This dual focus on reducing bureaucracy and supporting researchers has the potential to significantly enhance Kerala's contributions to medical science.
<p>Extended Vande Bharat service to be flagged off by PM Modi on March 12</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PM Modi will flag off the inaugural service of the extended Vande Bharat Service from Mangalore Central to Thiruvananthapuram Central and a new Kollam–Tirupati Express on March 12 through videoconferencing. ● The regular service will start on Wednesday from both ends. ● This train will be operated on all days till July 4, after which it will be operated on 6 days a week (except Wednesday) <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vande Bharat Express is a semi-high speed train service launched by Indian Railways in 2019. ● It connects major Indian cities with a maximum speed of 130 km/hr ● As of now, there are 34 Vande Bharat trains operating on various routes across India, typically connecting cities within 800 km of each other.
<p>National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day</p>	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● March 10 is celebrated as National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NWGHAAD). ● This day highlights the impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls, and the importance of prevention, testing, care, and treatment. ● This day was first observed in 2005. <p>Theme:</p>



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- The theme for NWGHAAD 2024 is: “**Prevention and Testing at Every Age. Care and Treatment at Every Stage**”.

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