

**Weekly Current Affairs 2<sup>nd</sup> December To 7<sup>th</sup> December 2024****National News****Indian-Origin Kash Patel Takes Charge of Director of FBI**

US President-elect Donald Trump has announced Kash Patel as the next Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), succeeding Christopher Wray. Patel, a long-time Trump loyalist known for his confrontational stance against the “deep state” and criticism of federal agencies, brings a history of staunch support for Trump’s policies.

**India’s First Vertical Lift Rail Bridge: The New Pamban Bridge**

The New Pamban Bridge, India’s first vertical lift railway sea bridge, is replacing the 105-year-old Pamban Bridge to enhance connectivity between the Indian mainland and Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu. This state-of-the-art bridge is a leap in railway infrastructure, designed for speed, safety, and modern train compatibility.

**Ayush Ministry’s Decadal Milestones Unveiled by Shri Shripad Naik**

The Ministry of Ayush has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decade, emerging as a global leader in traditional medicine. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since its inception in 2014, the Ministry has achieved significant milestones in public health, education, research, and economic growth. Aligning its initiatives with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the Ministry has effectively integrated traditional Indian medicine into mainstream healthcare, enhanced global outreach, and promoted economic sustainability.

**“Oxford & Gates Foundation Highlight PRAGATI’s Role in Infrastructure Growth”**

India’s digital governance platform, PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation), has revolutionized the nation’s infrastructure development landscape. Launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, PRAGATI has become a game-changer in driving accountability, fostering collaboration between federal and regional authorities, and expediting the completion of long-delayed infrastructure projects. A study by Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, and the Gates Foundation has highlighted the transformative impact of PRAGATI on the nation’s infrastructure, overseeing \$205 billion worth of projects.

**UNESCO Declares West Bengal a Top Heritage Tourism Destination**

West Bengal’s tourism sector has received international recognition with UNESCO declaring it a top destination for heritage tourism. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee emphasized the state’s significant progress in religious, heritage, and tea tourism. This development has not only boosted tourism but also generated employment for thousands of youth. West Bengal’s focus on enhancing iconic religious sites and heritage spots is driving its tourism to new heights, fostering job creation, and making it a key player in India’s tourism landscape.

**India’s Tiger Population Doubles Since 2006, Reaches 3,682 in 2022**

India’s tiger population has grown remarkably, reaching 3,682 in 2022 from 1,411 in 2006, doubling in just over 15 years. The rise reflects a significant annual increase of 6% in consistently monitored areas, with numbers rising from 2,967 in 2018. This achievement has been driven by focused conservation efforts under Project Tiger and measures implemented by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the Parliament was informed.

**Government Ends Windfall Tax on Crude Oil and Petroleum Exports**

The Indian government has abolished the windfall tax on crude petroleum oil, petrol, diesel, and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), effective November 2, 2024. Additionally, the Road and Infrastructure Cess on the export of petrol and diesel has been scrapped. Initially imposed on July 1, 2022, to curb abnormal profits by oil companies during the Russia-Ukraine war, the tax aimed to stabilize domestic supplies and fund welfare programs. However, its removal follows a review by the PMO, Revenue Department, and Petroleum Ministry, citing stabilizing crude prices and reduced revenue from the tax.

**India Welcomes Its 57th Tiger Reserve: Ratapani Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh**

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, has officially announced the notification of the Ratapani Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh as India’s 57th Tiger Reserve. This remarkable step emphasizes India’s commitment to tiger conservation and highlights the nation’s dedication to preserving its rich biodiversity.

**India Intensifies Efforts to Reduce Snakebite Deaths by 2030**

India, which accounts for nearly 50% of global snakebite deaths, has declared snakebite a notifiable disease at the national level. This initiative aims to reduce the high mortality and morbidity rates associated with snakebites, particularly in rural and tribal areas, and aligns with the World Health Organization's (WHO) target of halving global snakebite deaths and injuries by 2030. By mandating reporting of all snakebite cases and deaths, the move enables better surveillance, treatment, and prevention strategies, offering hope to marginalized communities disproportionately affected by this neglected public health issue.

**Pralhad Joshi Launches 'Anna Chakra' and SCAN Portal**

The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and New & Renewable Energy, Shri Pralhad Joshi, launched 'Anna Chakra' and SCAN (Subsidy Claim Application for NFSA) portal, marking a significant step toward modernizing India's Public Distribution System (PDS) and subsidy claim mechanisms.

**MHA Grants FCRA Licenses to CNI and USIN Foundation**

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has granted FCRA licenses to the USIN Foundation, a think tank, and The Synodical Board of Social Services of the Church of North India (CNI), reinstating CNI's license that was revoked last year. This approval allows CNI to resume receiving foreign funds for social and religious activities. The decision comes as the MHA continues its scrutiny of NGOs, with recent revocations signaling increasing regulatory oversight.

**India to Chair 68th Session of UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs**

India has achieved a significant milestone by being named to chair the 68th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), marking the first time the country has been chosen for this prestigious role. Ambassador Shambhu S Kumaran, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, officially assumed the chairmanship of this crucial forum. The CND, a key policy-making body of the UN, focuses on addressing global drug-related issues and promoting international collaboration on drug control measures.

**"Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak Passed: Civil Aviation Minister Hails Milestone"**

The Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024, marks a transformative step in India's aviation sector by replacing the 90-year-old

Aircraft Act of 1934. Passed by both Houses of Parliament, the bill aims to streamline aviation regulations, align with international standards, and support the sector's exponential growth. It addresses safety, affordability, governance, and consumer protection while fostering investment and self-reliance in aircraft manufacturing. The Hindi renaming of the bill, a move to honor India's cultural heritage, sparked debates but aligns with the government's broader objective of promoting indigenous identity.

**Sex Ratio and Girl Child Enrollment Show Positive Trends Under BBBP Scheme**

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, launched on January 22, 2015, under the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, has achieved notable progress in improving the Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB) and Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for girls.

Provisional data from the Health Management Information System (HMIS) shows SRB improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24. GER at the secondary level has risen from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22, as per UDISE+ data. The scheme focuses on eliminating gender-biased practices, ensuring girl child protection, and promoting education.

**International News****India Highlights Green Initiatives at UNCCD COP16 in Riyadh**

West Bengal's tourism sector has received international recognition with UNESCO declaring it a top destination for heritage tourism. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee emphasized the state's significant progress in religious, heritage, and tea tourism. This development has not only boosted tourism but also generated employment for thousands of youth. West Bengal's focus on enhancing iconic religious sites and heritage spots is driving its tourism to new heights, fostering job creation, and making it a key player in India's tourism landscape.

**Murdu Fernando Becomes Sri Lanka's 2nd Female Chief Justice**

Justice Murdu Nirupa Bindushini Fernando was ceremonially sworn in as the Chief Justice of Sri Lanka on December 2, 2024, before President Anura Kumara Dissanayake at the Presidential Secretariat. This landmark event marks a significant milestone in Sri Lankan judicial history as Justice Fernando becomes the second woman to hold the esteemed position of Chief Justice, following the trailblazing Justice Shirani Bandaranaike.

**China Opens First Atmospheric Monitoring Station in Antarctica**

China has inaugurated its first atmospheric monitoring station in Antarctica, marking a significant expansion of its research presence on the continent. Located in Larsmann Hills, East Antarctica, the Zhongshan National Atmospheric Background Station aims to provide continuous and long-term observations of atmospheric components, contributing valuable data on climate change and the impact of human activity on the environment. This station supports China's growing role in Antarctic research, aligning with its broader goals as a 'polar power.'

**US Approves \$1.17 Billion Deal for Indian Navy Chopper Equipment**

In a significant boost to India's naval capabilities, the outgoing Biden administration has approved a \$1.17 billion deal under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program to supply advanced communication systems, sensors, and logistical support for the Indian Navy's Sikorsky MH-60R multi-role helicopters. The deal, part of a broader strategy to counter challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from China and Pakistan, underscores the growing defense partnership between India and the United States.

**From Freedom Fighter to Namibia's First Female President**

Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, nicknamed "NNN," made history by becoming Namibia's first female president. A key figure in Namibian politics, her journey from an activist fighting against South African occupation to her leadership in post-independence Namibia has been nothing short of remarkable. Elected at the age of 72, Nandi-Ndaitwah won with more than 57% of the vote, despite facing political opposition. Her story reflects the transformative power of activism, perseverance, and a strong commitment to economic and social progress.

**Nepal and China Sign Framework for BRI Cooperation**

During Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli's official visit to China, both countries signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation Framework. This agreement aims to accelerate the implementation of BRI projects, marking a pivotal moment in Nepal-China relations. While Nepal joined the BRI in 2017, no projects were executed until now. The recent framework, signed by Nepal's acting Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai and Liu Sushe of China's National Development and Reform Commission, includes terms like "aid and technical assistance," replacing "grant" with "investment" following deliberations.

**Nebraska Declares December 6 as Mahatma Gandhi Remembrance Day**

A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at the Nebraska State Capitol on December 6, 2024, marking the day as "A Day of Remembrance for Mahatma Gandhi." Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen declared this special day to honor Gandhi's principles of non-violence, tolerance, and justice, emphasizing their relevance in today's world. The event was a collaboration between the Indian Consulate in Seattle and the Governor's Office in Nebraska, reflecting cultural understanding and long-term partnership.

**State News****Telangana Joins Mineral Auction Regime, Auctions Limestone Blocks**

Telangana has joined India's mineral auction regime, with the auction of two limestone blocks at Sultanpur and Saidulnama in November. These blocks, essential for cement manufacturing, were auctioned to NCL Industries and Deccan Cement. This marks the state's entry into the Centre's mineral auction system, making it the 14th state to participate. The Centre had earlier urged Telangana to auction 11 limestone blocks, with a deadline set for the first phase; failure to comply would have led the Centre to conduct the auction itself.

**'Mission Himveer': Empowering Arunachal's Economy**

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh has launched Mission Arun Himveer to enhance market linkages for local agricultural and horticultural producers. In a significant move, the Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture Marketing Board (APAMB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), North East Frontier, in the presence of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

**UP Declares Maha Kumbh Area a New District for 2025 Mela**

Uttar Pradesh government has declared the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj as a new district, named the Maha Kumbh Mela district, ahead of the grand religious event scheduled for January 2025. This decision marks a crucial step to streamline the administrative and logistical efforts for the smooth organization of the Kumbh Mela, which attracts millions of pilgrims from across the world. The creation of the new district aims to enhance coordination, law enforcement, and resource management for the event.

**Telangana's Rythu Bharosa: Boosting Farmer Welfare**

The Telangana government, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, is set to roll out the Rythu Bharosa Scheme after Sankranti, aiming to provide annual subsidies of ₹15,000 per farmer as part of Congress' six guarantees. Agriculture Minister T. Nageshwara Rao emphasized that implementation will follow the Cabinet Sub-Committee's report. The scheme replaces the previous Rythu Bandhu and seeks to bolster farmers' welfare amid criticism over its discontinuation. The government has cleared ₹7,625 crore in crop loan arrears for Kharif 2023, affirming its commitment to farmers' welfare.

**India Launches First 'Uber Shikara' Service in Srinagar**

In a landmark move, Uber has launched Asia's first water transport service, Uber Shikara, in the scenic Dal Lake in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir. This innovative initiative aims to offer a seamless and modern way for tourists to experience the traditional shikara ride, a popular attraction in the region, combining technology with Kashmir's cultural heritage. With this new service, Uber seeks to uplift tourism and provide greater accessibility, making the shikara experience more convenient and hassle-free for visitors.

**Google to Launch Safety Engineering Centre in Hyderabad**

Google and the Telangana government have signed an agreement to establish the Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) in Hyderabad. This specialized international cybersecurity hub will be Google's second such centre in the Asia Pacific, after Tokyo, and fifth globally, joining Dublin, Munich, and Malaga. The GSEC will focus on advancing cybersecurity capabilities, fostering skill development, and creating employment opportunities.

**Economy News****GST Collection for November Rises by 8.5% to ₹1.82 Trillion**

India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue rose by 8.5% to ₹1.82 lakh crore in November 2024, compared to ₹1.68 lakh crore in the same month last year. The growth is primarily driven by higher revenues from domestic transactions, with GST from domestic transactions increasing by 9.4%. This increase is significant, though it follows a previous high of ₹1.87 lakh crore in October, which marked the second-best collection in GST history. In April 2024, India recorded its highest-ever GST collection of over ₹2.10 lakh crore.

**Singapore Tops FDI Inflows to India, Contributing 50% in Q3**

In the July-September quarter of 2024-25, Singapore emerged as the largest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for India, contributing a significant 50% of the total inflows, which amounted to USD 13.6 billion. This marks a 43% increase in overall FDI inflows to India, reflecting a strong recovery after a period of weak investment. Singapore's cumulative FDI into India, spanning from April 2000 to March 2024, stands at approximately USD 159.94 billion, highlighting the country's longstanding and vital role in India's economic growth.

**UPI Breaks Record in October with 16.58 Billion Transactions Worth Rs 23.5 Trillion**

In October 2024, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) set a new record, processing 16.58 billion transactions valued at Rs 23.5 trillion (approximately US\$ 279.4 billion), the highest since UPI's inception in April 2016. This achievement marked a significant 10% increase in transaction volume and 14% in value compared to September 2024.

The surge was primarily driven by a boom in person-to-merchant transactions during the festive season. The daily average of UPI transactions surpassed 535 million in volume and Rs 75,801 crore in value. Year-on-year, UPI transactions saw a 45% rise in volume and 37% in value.

**Morgan Stanley Cuts India's FY25 GDP Growth to 6.3%**

Morgan Stanley has revised India's GDP growth projection for FY25 down to 6.3%, from its previous estimate of 6.7%. This downward revision comes after India's GDP growth slowed to 5.4% in the July-September 2024 quarter, marking its lowest level since March 2023. This reflects a broader economic slowdown, driven by weaker private consumption and capital expenditure (capex), though the services sector showed resilience. Despite this dip, Morgan Stanley maintains optimism for a recovery in the latter half of FY25, expecting growth to average 6.6%, fueled by government spending, improved rural demand, and easing financial conditions.

**RBI Increases UPI Lite Wallet and Transaction Limits**

In a bid to enhance digital payments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has raised the UPI Lite wallet limit to Rs 5,000, with an increase in the per-transaction limit to Rs 1,000. This adjustment, announced after the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on October 9, 2024, aims to promote wider adoption of UPI Lite and ease offline transactions, providing a more seamless experience for users.



**World Bank Approves \$188.28 Million Loan for Maharashtra's Backward Districts**

The World Bank has approved a \$188.28 million loan to Maharashtra aimed at boosting economic growth in the state's underdeveloped districts. This loan, provided by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), comes with a 15-year maturity period, including a five-year grace period. The project focuses on enhancing district-level governance, improving e-governance services, and fostering private sector involvement to accelerate economic development and job creation.

**OECD Raises India's FY25 Growth Forecast to 6.8%**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has upgraded India's GDP growth forecast for FY25 to 6.8%, up from 6.7%, citing robust public infrastructure spending, strong private consumption, and recovery in agricultural output. This growth momentum is expected to be sustained through FY25 and FY26, with investment and rural income growth being central to the economy's expansion. Despite global economic uncertainties and geopolitical risks, India's economic resilience points to a promising future.

**RBI Leads Global Gold Purchases with Record Reserves Surge**

India's gold reserves surged to 882 tonnes in October 2024, with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) adding 27 tonnes to its reserves, as per World Gold Council (WGC) data. This marks a five-fold increase in gold purchases compared to the same period in 2023, totaling 77 tonnes from January to October 2024. Central banks worldwide bought 60 tonnes in October, with RBI leading the surge, contributing significantly to global gold demand.

**India's Employment Growth: Unemployment Rate Falls to 3.2% in 7 Years**

India's employment landscape has seen significant improvement in recent years, with the unemployment rate dropping from 6% to 3.2% between 2017 and 2024, as per the latest Annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data. The Worker Population Ratio (WPR), indicating the share of the working-age population employed, rose from 46.8% to 58.2% during this period, demonstrating strong job creation despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This marks a notable shift from earlier notions of "jobless growth" and highlights India's progress in economic and employment expansion.

**Rankings & Reports News****IndiGo Ranks Among Worst Airlines Globally in AirHelp 2024 Report**

India's IndiGo Airlines has landed in the bottom tier of the global airline rankings, securing the 103rd position out of 109 in the 2024 AirHelp Score report. This ranking places the low-cost carrier as one of the worst performers, which has raised questions about the credibility of the survey. While Air India fares slightly better at 61st, IndiGo refutes the findings, arguing that the methodology lacks transparency, especially concerning the sample size from India.

**Business News****Adani Group to Invest \$2 Billion in European Ports**

The Adani Group plans to invest \$2 billion in acquiring ports in Europe as part of its strategy to strengthen its global presence and expand its market share in international sea trade. The company's flagship entity, Adani Ports & Special Economic Zones Ltd. (APSEZ), is actively scouting for two or three terminals in Europe, which accounts for 40% of global sea trade. This move aligns with Adani's broader ambitions in renewable energy and international maritime expansion.

**Banking News****Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 Set To Introduce in the Lok Sabha**

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to introduce the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the Lok Sabha on 2nd December, 2024. The bill aims to amend several key banking-related legislations, including the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, the State Bank of India Act, 1955, and the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts of 1970 and 1980. The amendments are expected to enhance the functioning and regulation of the banking sector, and the bill will be considered for debate and passage in the lower house of Parliament.

**RBI Lifts Supervisory Restrictions on Navi Finserv**

On December 2, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the supervisory restrictions imposed on Navi Finserv, a non-banking financial company (NBFC) led by Sachin Bansal. This decision comes after the company took significant corrective measures to address the regulatory concerns that had led to the imposition of restrictions on October 17, 2024, primarily related to loan pricing practices and non-compliance with lending norms.

**SEBI Fines Reliance Securities ₹9 Lakh for Rule Violations**

SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) has imposed a ₹9 lakh penalty on Reliance Securities Ltd (RSL) for breaching stock broker norms and market regulations following an inspection. The action was triggered after a review of RSL's records and documents by SEBI, NSE, and BSE from April 2022 to December 2023.

The inspection identified multiple violations including poor record-keeping, unauthorised terminal use, and lack of proper office segregation. Despite corrective steps taken by RSL, SEBI maintained that non-compliance during the inspection period warranted the penalty.

**RBI Monetary Policy Meeting Dec 2024: Key Highlights and Updates**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) conducted its latest bi-monthly Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting in December 2024. Governor Shaktikanta Das announced several crucial measures and projections to address current economic challenges while maintaining stability. To tackle liquidity concerns, the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) was reduced by 50 basis points to 4%. This move aligns with the RBI's neutral policy stance, aimed at ensuring economic stability without disruptive interventions. The MPC decided by a 4-2 majority to maintain the repo rate at 6.5%. The Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) rate and the Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate were also retained at 6.25% and 6.75%, respectively. This cautious approach reflects the central bank's focus on balancing inflation and growth.

**SEBI: SDP Recognition for Digital Platforms is Voluntary**

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has clarified that digital platforms are not obligated to register as Specified Digital Platforms (SDPs). The framework aims to simplify compliance for regulated entities (REs) while ensuring flexibility for digital platforms. SEBI emphasized that preventive measures for SDP recognition are voluntary, and there is no regulatory framework governing SDPs.

**RBI Introduces Podcast Facility for Public Communication**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), under the leadership of Governor Shaktikanta Das, has announced plans to launch a podcast series aimed at enhancing public communication and financial literacy. This initiative marks the RBI's continued efforts to expand its communication tools, aiming to provide more transparent and accessible information to the public.

**RBI Enables Small Finance Banks to Offer Pre-Sanctioned Credit via UPI**

In a landmark move aimed at improving financial inclusion, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), after its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting on December 6, 2024, announced that Small Finance Banks (SFBs) will now be permitted to offer pre-sanctioned credit lines through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). This decision is expected to provide financial services to underserved groups, such as small businesses, micro-entrepreneurs, and individuals in rural and semi-urban regions.

**SBI Card Surpasses 20 Million Credit Cards Milestone**

SBI Card has reached a significant milestone by surpassing 20 million credit cards in circulation, a testament to its growth since entering the credit card market in 1998. This achievement comes after a consistent rise in its card numbers and customer spending, with the company maintaining an impressive CAGR of 25% in cards issued and 26% in spends from FY19 to FY24. The milestone reinforces SBI Card's position as the second-largest card issuer in India, following HDFC Bank, which also reached the 20 million milestone in January 2024.

**Science & Technology News****IIT Ropar's AWaDH Celebrates 4th Foundation Day with Farmer-Centric Innovations**

IIT Ropar's Technology and Innovation Foundation (iHub – AWaDH) is celebrating its 4th Foundation Day by hosting a significant Farmer Engagement Session, marking a key milestone in its journey to transform agriculture through technology. Launched under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) with support from the Department of Science & Technology (DST), AWaDH is spearheading innovation in agriculture, water, and IoT, with a focus on deep-tech research, startups, and incubation.

**Amazon Boosts AI with Nova Foundation Models**

Amazon has unveiled its latest innovation in generative AI with the introduction of Nova Foundation Models (FMs). These cutting-edge models, collectively branded as "Amazon Nova," represent a significant leap in AI technology, designed to process diverse inputs like text, images, and videos. The Nova series is tailored to improve multimedia content creation, document analysis, and video understanding, catering to the diverse needs of developers and businesses. Amazon's advancements aim to address challenges such as latency, cost-effectiveness, and customization, positioning the company as a strong contender in the AI space alongside industry leaders like OpenAI, Meta, and Adobe.

**World's Oldest Known Wild Bird Lays First Egg at 74**

Wisdom, the world's oldest known wild bird, a Laysan albatross, has once again made history by laying her first egg in four years at the age of 74. Her remarkable achievement highlights her survival instincts, longevity, and ongoing contribution to her species. Wisdom's story, spanning decades, has made her an iconic figure in wildlife conservation, symbolizing resilience and the delicate balance of nature.

**Schemes and Committees News****Women-Centric Welfare Schemes in FY25: Key Allocations and Initiatives**

In FY25, women-centric welfare schemes collectively account for 0.5% of India's GDP, reflecting their growing prominence in state policies and national budgets. Maharashtra leads with the largest allocation of \$5.4 billion (1.1% of its GDP), while nine states collectively allocate \$18 billion for such initiatives.

These schemes, including cash transfers and developmental programs, have emerged as pivotal political tools to attract women voters, as seen in Maharashtra's "Ladki Bahin Yojana," a significant factor in the BJP-led coalition's electoral success. Haryana proposes the highest monthly cash transfer at ₹2,100 for eligible women, impacting 1.7% of its GDP, the highest among states.

**SheSTEM 2024: Empowering Youth-Led Innovation for a Sustainable Future**

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and the Swedish Embassy, in collaboration with Nordic partners like Innovation Norway, Innovation Centre Denmark, and Business Finland, successfully concluded SheSTEM 2024. This initiative, aimed at inspiring young innovators, celebrated the contributions of women in STEM fields and invited students from grades 6–12 across India to present innovative ideas on Battery Technology and Energy Storage (BEST) systems. The event was part of the India-Nordic BEST project, designed to foster sustainability through advancements in energy storage technologies.

**Mahila Samman Savings Certificate: Empowering Women Financially**

As of 31st October 2024, the Mahila Samman Savings Certificate (MSSC) scheme has achieved a significant milestone with over 43 lakh accounts opened. Launched on 31st March 2023 by the Government of India to commemorate the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', the scheme aims to provide financial security to women and minor girls, empowering them with a safe and

attractive investment option. This initiative is part of the broader goal of enhancing financial inclusion and supporting the financial independence of women across the nation.

**Kirti Vardhan Singh Launches Nano Bubble Tech to Purify Delhi Zoo Pond Water**

Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Kirti Vardhan Singh, inaugurated a 15-day trial of Nano Bubble Technology at the National Zoological Park in Delhi on Tuesday. This initiative is aimed at improving the water quality in the zoo's ponds to benefit aquatic animals by removing algae, foul odors, and discoloration often caused by polluted water. The success of this trial could lead to the broader implementation of the technology to ensure cleaner, healthier water for the animals.

**PMGDISHA Achieves 6.39 Crore Digital Literacy Milestone**

The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), launched to bridge the digital literacy gap in rural India, has successfully trained 6.39 crore individuals, surpassing its target of 6 crore rural households as of March 31, 2024. This initiative, under the Digital India Programme, aimed to empower one member per rural household with essential digital skills. The scheme was implemented nationwide through training centers under the supervision of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in collaboration with State Implementing Agencies.

**PMSGMBY: 10 Lakh Solar Installations by 2025, 1 Crore by 2027**

The Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY), the world's largest domestic rooftop solar scheme, is rapidly transforming India's solar energy landscape. Launched in February 2024, the scheme has already achieved impressive milestones, with 6.3 lakh installations in just 9 months—averaging 70,000 per month, a sharp increase from the 7,000 per month prior to its launch. By March 2025, installations are projected to exceed 10 lakh, and the scheme aims for one crore installations by March 2027.

**Centre Launches eMaap Portal for Fair Trade and Consumer Protection**

The Indian government is introducing the National Legal Metrology Portal (eMaap) to promote fair trade practices and enhance consumer protection. This initiative is aimed at ensuring transparency, accountability, and compliance with legal metrology standards. As part of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs' effort, the portal will streamline services for businesses and consumers, fostering a balanced marketplace.

**Central 'Smile Sub-Scheme': 970 lives rehabilitated, 169 families rehabilitated**

The SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) sub-scheme is a central government initiative aimed at the comprehensive rehabilitation of individuals, including children, engaged in begging. Implemented across 81 cities and towns in 26 states and union territories, the scheme primarily focuses on areas of religious, historical, and tourist importance where begging is more prevalent. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Virendra Kumar, shared the progress of the scheme in the Rajya Sabha, highlighting its achievements in reintegrating individuals into society.

**Summits & Conference News****Women-Centric Welfare Schemes in FY25: Key Allocations and Initiatives**

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**Chennai to Host World Maritime Conference 2024**

The World Maritime Technology Conference (WMTC) is a premier global event held every three years under the auspices of the World Maritime Technology Congress. This prestigious gathering brings together industry leaders, professionals, and experts in maritime technology and allied sectors from across the globe. The 2024 edition of WMTC will be hosted in Chennai, India, from December 4-6, by the Institute of Marine Engineers (India) Chennai Branch.

**Awards & Honors News****Filmfare OTT Awards 2024 Celebrating Digital Excellence**

The 5th edition of the Filmfare OTT Awards 2024 was a grand celebration of the best in digital entertainment. The event highlighted the outstanding contributions from both films and series in the OTT space, with notable achievements in various categories.

**Maria Victoria Juan Wins Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award 2024**

Nurse Maria Victoria Juan has been honoured with the Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award 2024, a prestigious recognition that celebrates exceptional contributions to the nursing profession worldwide. Maria, whose career has been a testament to dedication and resilience, was chosen for this award for her outstanding efforts in transforming the healthcare landscape, particularly in the Philippine Army Health Services and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

**Scottish Sikh Artist Wins 2024 Turner Prize**

Glasgow-born Scottish Sikh artist Jasleen Kaur has been awarded the Turner Prize 2024, one of the world's most prestigious accolades in contemporary art. Known for her evocative exploration of personal, political, and spiritual themes, Kaur received the prize for her solo exhibition *Alter Altar*, which combines sculpture, sound, and music to reflect on community, cultural inheritance, and anti-colonial struggles. Her work is celebrated for its innovative storytelling, connecting everyday objects to broader narratives of resilience, memory, and identity.

**Important Dates News****International Day for the Abolition of Slavery 2024**

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, observed annually on December 2, serves as a global call to action to combat modern forms of slavery. This day emphasizes the eradication of human trafficking, forced labour, and other contemporary forms of exploitation while promoting the fundamental rights and dignity of individuals.

**World AIDS Day 2024: Date, Theme, and History**

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**Indian Navy Day 2024: Honouring the Maritime Guardians of India**

Indian Navy Day, observed annually on December 4, celebrates the valor, accomplishments, and unwavering dedication of the Indian Navy in safeguarding the nation's maritime borders. It also commemorates the success of Operation Trident during the 1971 Indo-Pak War, a pivotal moment in India's military history.

**International Day of Banks 2024: Date, History and Significance**

The International Day of Banks, celebrated annually on December 4, highlights the crucial role that banks play in driving sustainable growth, improving living standards, and stabilizing economies. In India, despite enduring challenges like geopolitical tensions, the banking and financial sectors have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability.

**World Soil Day 2024: Understanding Its Importance and Combating Soil Degradation**

World Soil Day, observed annually on 5th December, highlights the importance of healthy soil and advocates for the sustainable management of soil resources. This global event aims to raise awareness about soil conservation and its role in sustaining life on Earth.

**International Volunteer Day 2024: Date, History and Theme**

The United Nations (UN) celebrates International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development on December 5 annually. Commonly known as International Volunteer Day (IVD), this special occasion provides a platform for volunteers worldwide to come together and highlight their invaluable contributions to social and economic development. This day serves as a reminder of the transformative power of volunteerism in addressing global challenges and fostering sustainable progress at local, national, and international levels.

**All India Civil Defence and Home Guards Day: A Tribute to Voluntary Service**

All India Civil Defence and Home Guards Day, observed annually on December 6, honors the commitment and contribution of the Home Guards and Civil Defence organisations. This day also marks the formation of the Home Guard force, which was first established in the Bombay Province on December 6, 1946, as a voluntary citizen force to assist the police in maintaining law and order. Over the years, this force has evolved into a key auxiliary unit supporting the nation during crises, natural disasters, and emergencies.

**Mahaparinirvan Diwas 2024: Commemorating the Legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**

Mahaparinirvan Diwas, observed annually on December 6, marks the death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, fondly known as Babasaheb Ambedkar, the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. A leader, thinker, and reformer, Dr. Ambedkar dedicated his life to fostering equality and eradicating caste-based discrimination. On this solemn day, millions across India pay homage to his enduring legacy by reflecting on his teachings and his commitment to building a just and inclusive society.

**Armed Forces Flag Day 2024: Date, History and Significance**

India celebrates Armed Forces Flag Day annually on December 7 to honour the valor, sacrifices, and dedication of the Indian Armed Forces. This day serves as a reminder of the unwavering commitment of the Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel who safeguard the nation's freedom and security. It is also a day for citizens to express their gratitude and contribute to the welfare of armed forces personnel, veterans, and their families.

**UNGA Declares December 21 as World Meditation Day**

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) has unanimously adopted a resolution declaring December 21 as World Meditation Day, co-sponsored by India and supported by countries like Liechtenstein, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mexico, and Andorra. This resolution emphasizes meditation's role in achieving comprehensive well-being, inner peace, and coping with modern challenges such as stress and anxiety.

**International Cheetah Day Celebrating the World's Fastest Land Animal**

International Cheetah Day, observed annually on December 4, raises awareness about the challenges faced by cheetahs and promotes global conservation efforts. Established by the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), the day honors the memory of a cheetah cub named Khayam, rescued by Dr. Laurie Marker, founder of the CCF. Cheetahs, once widespread across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, are now critically endangered, with fewer than 7,000 individuals left in the wild.

**International Civil Aviation Day 2024, History, Significance, Theme of 2024**

International Civil Aviation Day (ICAD) is observed every year on December 7 to honor the transformative impact of civil aviation on global development. First celebrated in 1994 to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Chicago Convention, the day emphasizes the importance of international air travel in fostering global connectivity, economic progress, and cultural exchange.

**Sports News****Syed Modi 2024: Sindhu, Lakshya End Drought; Treesa-Gayatri Make History**

The Syed Modi India International Super 300 tournament in Lucknow marked a significant achievement for Indian badminton, as PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen ended their respective title droughts. Sindhu claimed her third title at the event, while Lakshya secured his first, and the women's doubles duo, Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, made history by becoming the first Indian women's pair to win the title since 2009.

**Pavan Kampelli Wins Bronze in eFootball at Asian Esports Games**

India's Pavan Kampelli has made history by securing a bronze medal in eFootball at the 2024 Asian Esports Games held in Bangkok. This marks India's first-ever podium finish in the eFootball category, a monumental achievement in the country's esports journey. Known as 'Mr Tomboy', Pavan showcased his exceptional skill and determination throughout the competition, battling some of the best eFootball players in Asia.

**Arjun Erigaisi Joins Elite 2800 ELO Club, Second Indian After Anand**

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi has made history by becoming only the second Indian after Viswanathan Anand to breach the prestigious 2800 ELO rating barrier in classical chess. This remarkable achievement places the 21-year-old from Warangal, Telangana, in the global spotlight as he ranks 4th in the world with a rating of 2801, just below Hikaru Nakamura and Fabiano Caruana. Erigaisi's achievement is part of his sensational form in 2024, which included an individual gold and a team title at the 45th Chess Olympiad.

**Jay Shah Became A Youngest ICC Chairman in History**

Jay Shah, an experienced cricket administrator and Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), has officially commenced his tenure as the Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC). At 36, Shah becomes the youngest to ever hold the prestigious position. His leadership comes at a critical juncture for global cricket, with significant opportunities and challenges in expanding the sport's reach and inclusivity.

**India Wins 5th Junior Hockey Asia Cup, Beats Pakistan 5-3**

In a thrilling showdown in Muscat, the Indian men's junior hockey team defeated arch-rivals Pakistan 5-3 to secure their fifth Junior Asia Cup title and their third consecutive championship on December 4, 2024. This victory adds another

feather to India's illustrious hockey cap, with previous title wins in 2004, 2008, 2015, and 2023. The hero of the match was Araijeet Singh Hundal, who scored four remarkable goals, leading India to a historic triumph.

**Obituaries News****Brigadier Raj Manchanda: The 'Old Fox' of Indian Squash Passes Away at 80**

The Indian squash community mourns the loss of Brigadier Raj Manchanda, a legendary figure affectionately known as the 'Old Fox,' who passed away on December 1, 2024, in Delhi. At the age of 80, Manchanda leaves behind an inspiring legacy marked by unparalleled achievements, resilience, and contributions to the sport. He was cremated with Military Honours at Brar Square in Delhi.

**Australian Davis Cup Icon Neale Fraser Passes Away at 91**

Neale Fraser, one of Australia's most celebrated tennis players and captains, passed away at the age of 91. A legend of the sport, Fraser's contributions as a player and as a Davis Cup captain marked a golden era for Australian tennis. Renowned for his prowess in both singles and doubles, Fraser won a total of 19 Grand Slam titles and led Australia to eight Davis Cup victories, solidifying his legacy as a tennis icon.

**Defence News****International Day for the Abolition of Slavery 2024**

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**Harimau Shakti 2024: India-Malaysia Military Drill Begins**

The 4th edition of the India-Malaysia Joint Military Exercise, HARIMAU SHAKTI, commenced on December 2, 2024, at Bentong Camp, Pahang district, Malaysia. This exercise, scheduled to run until December 15, 2024, is an annual event designed to enhance the military cooperation between the two nations. The exercise will focus on improving the ability of both forces to undertake joint counterinsurgency operations in jungle terrain, aligned with the United Nations Chapter VII Mandate.

**Adani Defence Delivers 2nd Drishti-10 Drone to Indian Navy for Maritime Security**

Adani Defence has delivered the second Drishti-10 Starliner surveillance drone to the Indian Navy, enhancing the nation's maritime capabilities. This marks a significant leap in India's indigenous defence technology, underscoring the country's focus on self-reliance. The Drishti-10 drone is a highly advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform designed to monitor vast maritime territories, mitigate piracy, and provide over-the-horizon surveillance with unmatched endurance.

**Miscellaneous News**

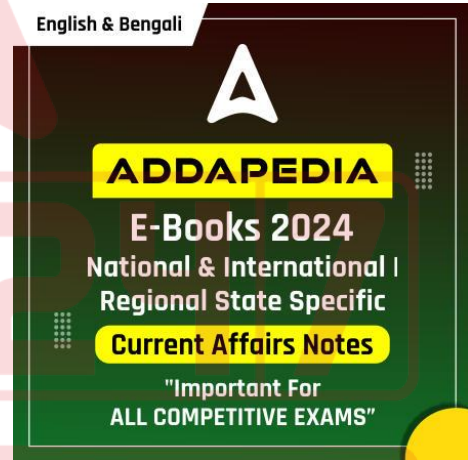
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