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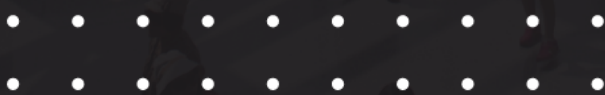


W E E K L Y

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2023 (3RD WEEK)

FOR ALL COMPETITIVE EXAMS



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NATIONAL AFFAIRS

1. Australian Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** has recently (March 2023) visited India to enhance overall bilateral engagement in a number of fields, including trade, investment, and critical minerals.

Highlights of his visit:

- He has addressed the '**India-Australia CEO Forum**' in Mumbai, Maharashtra.
 - During his visit, India & Australia have signed an **audio-visual co-production agreement** that seeks to offer filmmakers financial incentives amounting to up to 30 per cent of the expenditure incurred in the respective countries. Australia is the **16th** country with which India has a co-production agreement.
 - Both nations have signed a **Framework Mechanism for Mutual Recognition of Qualifications**, which will facilitate student and professional mobility between the two countries.
 - NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (**AIM**) and Australia's national science agency Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (**CSIRO**) have joined hands to encourage cooperation on innovations in areas of national challenges and shared priorities.
 - The Australia India Trade Association (**AITA**) has signed an MoU with the **SMART Energy Council** of Australia to usher renewable technology and investment in India and Australia.
2. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted two consecutive flight tests of **Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)** missile at the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.
 - VSHORADS is a Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) meant for neutralising low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges.
 - It has been designed and developed indigenously by **Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad** in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian Industry Partners.
 - The missile incorporates many novel technologies including Dual-band IIR Seeker, a miniaturised Reaction Control System and integrated avionics.
 - The propulsion is provided by a dual-thrust solid motor.
 3. The **third edition** of the multilateral exercise **La Perouse 2023** led by **France** has been conducted in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The exercise has witnessed the participation of personnel, ships and integral helicopters of Royal Australian Navy (RAN), French Navy, Indian Navy (IN), Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), Royal Navy (RN) and the United States Navy.

Indigenously built guided missile frigate **INS Sahyadri** and fleet tanker **INS Jyoti** have participated in this edition of the exercise.

The exercise aims to enhance maritime domain awareness and optimise maritime coordination amongst the participating navies in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Exercise La Perouse:

- It is a multilateral naval exercise being conducted biennial since 2019.
- The first edition saw the participation of the navies of Australia, Japan, and the USA.
- India participated for the first time in 2021.

4. DRDO has also successfully conducted a maiden flight-test of the **Power Take off (PTO) Shaft** on Light Combat Aircraft (LCA Tejas) Limited Series Production (LSP) -3 aircraft in Bengaluru. The PTO shaft is indigenously designed and developed by the Combat Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (**CVRDE**), Chennai of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

5. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, NITI Aayog has launched “**ATL Sarthi**”, a comprehensive self-monitoring framework to strengthen the ever-growing ecosystem of Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL).

ATL Sarthi will enable the ATLs to be efficient and effective.

The initiative has four pillars:

- **‘MyATL Dashboard’**: To ensure the performance enhancement of ATLs through regular process improvements like a self-reporting dashboard.
- **Compliance Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs)**: For schools to ensure financial and non-financial compliances.
- **Cluster-based Approach**: On-ground enablement of ATLs in collaboration with relevant local authorities.
- **Performance-Enablement (PE) Matrix**: To provide ownership to schools to analyze their performance.

AIM is establishing Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India to foster curiosity, creativity, and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design thinking mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc. As of date, AIM has funded 10,000 schools to establish Atal Tinkering Labs (ATLs).

6. The **Singapore Army** and **Indian Army** have participated in the **13th edition** of **Exercise Bold Kurukshetra**, a bilateral armour exercise, held at **Jodhpur Military Station**, Rajasthan.

- The exercise, hosted by the Indian Army, involved soldiers from the 42nd Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment and an Armoured Brigade of Indian Army.
- For the first time in the exercise series, both armies participated in a command post Exercise, which involved Battalion and Brigade level planning elements and computer wargaming.

Exercise Bold Kurukshetra:

It is conducted under the ambit of the bilateral arrangement for the joint Army Training and exercises between the Singapore Army and the Indian Army. It was first conducted in 2005. This exercise underscores the strong and long-standing bilateral defence relationship between both countries and enhances cooperation between the two armies.

7. The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**, the national standards body of India, has launched '**Learning Science via Standards**' series for students.
- The initiative focuses on a series of lesson plans aimed to use scientific concepts, principles and laws to help students understand their practical applications in manufacturing, functioning and testing of quality characteristics of different products as stated in the relevant Indian Standards.
 - The subjects for the lesson plans are largely related to products used in day-to-day life and have been chosen based on their relevance to education as part of the course curriculum as well as to industrial applications.
 - This initiative runs in a continuum with an earlier BIS '**Standards Clubs**' Initiative.
8. **Indian Coast Guard Region (North East)** has recently (March 2023) conducted a **fourth** edition of **Table top exercise in Kolkata**, West Bengal under Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) to discuss maritime challenges in Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The representatives of member nations of CSC, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius, along with observer countries, Bangladesh and Seychelles, have participated in the exercise.

Colombo Security Conclave (CSC):

It was formed in 2011 as a trilateral maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Later Mauritius joined as fourth member. It aims to make maritime security, marine pollution response and maritime search & rescue priorities for the IOR.

9. Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has addressed the **28th** edition of the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Partnership Summit 2023** held in New Delhi under the theme '*Partnerships for Responsible, Accelerated, Innovative, Sustainable, and Equitable Businesses.*'

The summit has been organized in partnership with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.

10. The Government of India (GoI) has recently announced the sites for setting up of **7 PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks** for the Textile industry. The parks will come up in *Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.*

PM MITRA Park Scheme:

- PM MITRA was announced in **FY22 Budget**.
- It is a **Rs.4,445-crore** Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) that will be in operation for the period 2021-22 to 2027-28 under the Ministry of Textiles.

- The park will be developed by a **Special Purpose Vehicle** which will be owned by the Central and State Government and in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode.
- The centre will provide development capital support for the development of common infrastructure of Rs 500 crore for each greenfield MITRA park and upto Rs 200 crore for each brownfield park.
- A Competitive Incentive Support (CIS) of up to Rs 300 crore per park to the units in PM MITRA Park shall also be provided to incentivise speedy implementation.
- State governments will provide a contiguous and encumbrance-free land parcel of at least 1000 acres of land.
- It is inspired by 5F vision of PM (i.e. Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign).

Note: India has a target of increasing textile exports to USD 100 billion by 2030.

11. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the **Global Millets (Shree Anna) Conference 2023** at Subramaniam Hall, PUSA **New Delhi** to promote millets exports from India and give producers access to the market.

The conference has been organized by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (**APEDA**), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI).

- During the occasion, an Exhibition cum Buyer Seller Meet Pavilion has been inaugurated.
- A compendium of Indian Millet startups and a book of millet **“Shree Anna: A Holistic Overview”**, based on millet standards have been launched.
- He has also designated the Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR) of ICAR, located in Hyderabad, Telangana, as a Global Center of Excellence (CoE).
- During the conference, India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) with the **World Food Programme (WFP)** of the UN for cooperation between **2023-27**.

Note: United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of Millets (IYM).

Millets, also known as nutri-cereals, are a collective group of small, round seeded (coarse grains) annual grasses that are grown as cereal crops/grains for human food and as fodder. India accounts for 80% of Asia’s production and 20% of global production.

12. The Ministry of Women and Child Development has observed the **5th Poshan Pakhwada** from 20th March to 3rd April 2023. It aims to raise awareness about the importance of nutrition and promote healthy eating habits through Jan Andolan and Jan Bhagidari.
- Theme of the 5th Poshan Pakhwada is **“Nutrition for All: Together Towards a Healthy India”**.
 - The main focus is to popularise ‘Shree Anna’-the mother of all grains as a valuable asset to resolve the problem of malnutrition.
 - During the Poshan Pakhwada, campaigns have been organised to increase awareness and popularise Saksham Anganwadis with upgraded infrastructure and facilities.

Every year, Poshan Pakhwada is celebrated in the month of March for 15 days.

Poshan Abhiyaan:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Poshan Abhiyaan on 8th March 2018. It was launched to improve nutritional outcomes in a holistic manner.

13. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) has set up a task force for framing a draft roadmap for the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ecosystem. The task force will draft **IndiaAI Roadmap**.
- IndiaAI platform will focus on boosting research and facilitating tools required for the start-up community for growth.
 - IndiaAI platform will focus on promoting Indian Startups, Research and Innovation.

According to estimates, AI is expected to add **USD 967 billion** to the Indian economy by **2035** and USD 450-500 billion to India's GDP by 2025, accounting for 10 percent of the country's USD 5 trillion GDP target.

14. The **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the capital acquisition of indigenously-developed military hardware worth **Rs.70,584 crore** under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured) category as part of a mega procurement plan that is expected to significantly boost domestic defence manufacturing.

Approvals are granted for:

- BrahMos missiles, Shakti Electronic Warfare systems & Utility Helicopters-Maritime (Indian Navy);
- Long Range Stand-Off Weapon to be integrated on SU-30 MKI aircraft (Indian Airforce);
- High Mobility & Gun Towing Vehicles etc. (Indian Army);
- Advanced Light Helicopters MK-III from HAL (Indian Coast Guard)

STATES AFFAIRS

15. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has recently unveiled **India's first and world's second 100% methanol-powered 10-tonne prototype truck** in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.
- The technology of converting diesel, petrol and CNG engines into operating on 100% methanol (M100) is an initiative under a developmental programme undertaken by the NITI Aayog along with Ashok Leyland and Indian Institute of Science (IISc) with financial assistance from the Department of Science & Technology.

He has also launched **10 MD15** (15 percent blending of methanol and diesel) Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (**BMTC**) **buses**.

16. The first international conference of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on "**Shared Buddhist Heritage**" has been held at Vigyan Bhawan in **New Delhi**, with focus on India's civilizational connect with the SCO nations.
- It has been organized by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC-as a grantee body of the Ministry of Culture).

- **Aim:** To re-establish trans-cultural links and seek out commonalities, between Buddhist art of Central Asia, art styles, archaeological sites and antiquity in various museum collections of the SCO countries.
- The event, a first of its kind, under **India's leadership of SCO** (for a period of one-year, from 17 September, 2022 until September 2023) brings together Central Asian, East Asian, South Asian and Arab countries on a common platform to discuss "Shared Buddhist Heritage".

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation of Eurasian Nations with a secretariat in Beijing, China. It is a political, economic and military organisation that aims at maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.

Members: China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

17. Bumchu Festival has recently been observed in **Tashiding Monastery** in **Sikkim**. It is observed on the 14th or 15th day of the first month of the Lunar calendar corresponding to the month of February/March.

- The festival commemorates a supernatural occurrence that took place in 18th century under Chogyal Chakdor Namgyal.
- Bumchu means "**pot of sacred water**" in Tibetan.

Tashiding Monastery, one of the most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites, belongs to Nyingmapa order and was built in 17th century on top of a hill between two rivers, Rangit and Rathong.

18. Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar has inaugurated a 5-day cultural program, "**AgriUnifest**", in **Bengaluru, Karnataka**.

- The program has been organized by Bangalore Agricultural University in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- More than 2500 talented students from 60 State Agricultural Universities/Deemed Universities/Central Universities have participated, showcasing their skills in 18 events under 5 disciplines (Music, Dance, Literature, Theatre, Fine Arts).

19. The **Matua Dharma Maha Mela 2023** has recently been organized at Shreedham Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas district of **West Bengal** to mark the **212th** birth anniversary of **Shree Shree Harichand Thakur**. It is organized every year.

The Mela has been organised by All India Matua Mahasangha from 19th to 25th March 2023. The Mela showcases the vibrant culture of the Matua community.

Matua community:

Matua is a sect of depressed class Hindus who are Namasudras, a Scheduled Caste group. Matuas constitute the second largest SC population of West Bengal. They were originally from East Pakistan. Later, they migrated to India during partition and after the creation of Bangladesh.

20. **Uttarakhand** has become the first state in India to start "**Resham Keet Bima**" scheme for protecting its sericulturists. This means the state government has implemented the Silkworm

Insurance Scheme for Farmers of the state under which crop insurance will be provided to all farmers cultivating silk.

The scheme is being implemented and managed by Saral Krishi Beema.

In the first phase, 200 sericulturists from five blocks of four districts, Dehradun, Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar and Nainital, have been insured from the ill effects of climate change, scarcity of water and other hazards.

- 21.** The Government of **Rajasthan** has announced to form **19 new districts** and **three new divisions** in the state. This is the first time since 2008 that new districts are being carved out, taking the number of districts to **50** in the state.
- The new districts are Anoopgarh, which was part of Ganganagar; Balotra (Barmer); Beawar (Ajmer); Kekri (Ajmer); Deeg (Bharatpur); Deedwana-Kuchaman (Nagaur); Dudu (Jaipur); Gangapur City (Sawai Madhopur); Jaipur North; Jaipur South; Jodhpur East; Jodhpur West; Kotputli-Behror (Jaipur-Alwar); Khertal (Alwar); Neem ka Thana (Sikar); Phalodi (Jodhpur); Salumber (Udaipur); Sanchore (Jalore); and Shahpura (Bhilwara).
 - The three new divisions will be in Banswara, Pali and Sikar.
- 22.** The Chief Minister of Jharkhand Hemant Soren has recently (March 2023) inaugurated the '**Jharniyojan Portal**', created by the Department of Labour Planning, Training and Skill development, for **employment registration**.
- The objective is to provide 75% employment of Local candidates in the private sector by employers in the state.
- 23.** India's **Mayurbhanj** district in Odisha and the Union Territory of **Ladakh** have been featured in TIME's 2023 list of World's Greatest Places, which is highlighting 50 extraordinary destinations across the globe to explore.
- Ladakh and Mayurbhanj have been selected for their 'rare tigers and ancient temples', and 'adventures and eats', respectively.
- Note:** In 2022, Ahmedabad & Kerala were listed in the World's Greatest Places 2022.
- 24.** '**Kashi**' has been declared as the **First Tourism & Cultural Capital** of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (**SCO**) at the Meeting of Heads of SCO Tourism Administrations held in Kashi, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

The meeting has also adopted the Action Plan for "Year of Tourism Development in the SCO Space in 2023."

Note: The next meeting of the SCO Heads of Tourism Administrations will be held in Kazakhstan in 2024.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

SCO is an intergovernmental organization founded on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai. The SCO currently comprises Eight Member States (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan).

- 25.** The President of India Droupadi Murmu has attended the civic reception hosted in her honour by the **Government of Kerala** at Thiruvananthapuram.

- During the occasion, she has inaugurated the silver jubilee celebration of '**Kudumbashree**', one of the largest women's self-help networks in the world.
- She has also launched '**Unnathi**', an umbrella programme to create opportunities for employment and self-employment, among the youth belonging to SC and ST communities.
- She has also witnessed the release of technical, engineering and diploma books translated into Malayalam.

Kudumbashree:

- It is the Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission that was launched in 1998.
- It is one of the largest women's self-help networks in world that brings women from all spheres of life to fight for their empowerment rights.
- It is recognised as state Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM).

26. Sokra Misawa Festival is observed annually by **Tiwas tribals** in Karbi Anglong district of **Assam**. It is a spring time festival of the Tiwas where they worshipped the deities of nature.

- Tiwa tribal boys wearing headgears called *Sakrashata* which is made of the inner part of a tree and perform their traditional rituals during the Sokra Misawa festival.
- It is believed that people of Tiwa community who inhabit in the hills are not permitted to prepare their paddy field for the next harvest before performing this ritual.

Tiwa tribe:

It is also known as lalung tribe. It is the indigenous tribal people living in Assam and Meghalaya. They are recognized as Scheduled Tribe (ST). It consist of two groups:

- Hill Tiwas (speak Tibeto Burman language)
- Plains Tiwas (speak Assamese)

27. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) has recently planned to set-up a **Desalination plant** in **Lakshadweep**. The plant will be emission free.

- Currently the desalination plants, each of which provides at least 100,000 litres of potable water every day, are powered by diesel generator sets.
- NIOT has established Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) plants on six Lakshadweep islands and one at Northern Chennai.

Note: Desalination is the process of obtaining freshwater from either seawater or brackish water from estuaries.

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28. The 3rd annual edition of the **International SME Convention 2023 (ISC)** has been held in **New Delhi** from 19th to 21st March 2023.
- ISC 2023 has been organized jointly by the Ministry of MSME & Ministry of External Affairs, India SME Forum, along with Govt. of Madhya Pradesh as a Key State Partner and Govt. of Uttar Pradesh as Associate State Partner.
 - International Network for SMEs (INSME) and World Union of Small and Medium Enterprises (WUSME) are the international partners and TATA AIA is the insurance partner for the ISC 2023.
 - **Narayan Rane**, Union Minister for MSME, is the chief guest of the inaugural function.
 - The main focus areas of ISC 2023 is on India's major four Sunrise Sectors, which are Cleantech & Green Energy, Manufacturing, Services Sector and Agro food Processing & Agri-equipment sector.
29. The **Labour-20 (L-20) engagement group** of the G-20 (Group of Twenty) has adopted two Joint Statements as the final outcome of the two-day discussions at its inception meeting held in **Amritsar, Punjab**, as part of India's G20 presidency.

The two Joint Statements are as follows:

- Joint Statement on Universalisation of Social Security.
- Joint Statement on Women and Future of Work.

Hiranmay Pandya is the Chair of L20 in 2023.

Labour-20 (L-20):

- The L-20 is one of the G20 Engagement Groups that advocates for the interests of workers at the G20 level.
- The L-20 summit first took place formally during the French Presidency in 2011.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

30. The **5th UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5)** has been held in Doha, Qatar. The conference aims to mobilize international community's commitments towards the implementation of the Doha Programme of Action (DPoA) for the LDCs (2022-2031) adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2022.

The conference has been held under the theme **"From Potential to Prosperity"**.

The conference has been concluded with adoption of **Doha Political Declaration** by the world leaders that focuses on DPoA.

DPoA is a 10-year plan (2022-2031) to put the world's 46 most vulnerable countries back on track to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

DPoA consists of 6 key focus areas:

- Investing in people, eradicating poverty and building capacity
- Leveraging the power of science, technology & innovation
- Supporting structural transformation as a driver of prosperity

- Enhancing international trade and regional integration
- Tackling climate change, COVID-19 & building resilience
- Mobilizing international partnerships for sustainable graduation

31. The **Secretary General** of the conference is **Rabab Fatima**, High Representative for United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS).

Least Developed Countries (LDCs):

The United Nations has recognized the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as the “poorest and weakest segment” of the international community. LDCs account for 13% of world population but only about 1.3% of global GDP and less than 1% of global trade and FDI.

32. **Denmark** has launched a project named "**Greensand**" to store carbon dioxide (CO₂) 1,800 metres below the North Sea, making it the **first country** in the world to bury CO₂ imported from another country.

- The project is being led by British chemical Giant Ineos and German oil company Wintershall Dia.
- The project aims to store eight million tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2030.
- CO₂ will be shipped from Antwerp in Belgium to the Nini platform in the North Sea.

33. The **3rd edition** of **Exercise Sea Dragon 23** has been held in waters off **Guam, USA** from 15th to 30th March 2023. The exercise aims to achieve high levels of synergy and coordination between the friendly navies, which is based on their shared values and commitment to an open, inclusive Indo-Pacific.

- The Sea Dragon is an annual, multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise conducted by the United States Navy.
- The exercise was launched in 2014.
- **Participating Countries:** India, USA, Japan, Canada and South Korea.
- The Exercise has witnessed representation by an Indian Navy **P8I aircraft**, along with P8A of the US Navy, P1 from the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, CP 140 from the Royal Canadian Air Force and P3C from the RoKN.
- The exercise consists of 3 parts: introduction and warm ups, training exercises, and the Dragon belt competition.

34. Researchers from Brazil have found **plastic rocks** on **Trindade Island** in the state of Espirito Santo, Brazil. The plastic was found in the rocks called plastiglomerates, a mixture of sedimentary granules and other debris held together by plastic. This intertwining of plastic with rocks is evidence of humans' pollution reaching earth's geological cycles.

REPORTS & INDICES

35. Swiss firm IQAir has released the 5th edition of the **World Air Quality Report 2022**. As per the report, **Lahore (Pakistan)** has become the city with the **worst air** in the world in 2022, (up from

15th in 2021). Lahore's PM2.5 level used to be 86.5 in 2021; it went to 97.4 micrograms per cubic meter in 2022.

Lahore is followed by Hotan (China), Bhiwadi (India), Delhi (India), and Peshawar (Pakistan). Chad in central Africa replaced Bangladesh as the country with the most polluted air in 2022 with PM 2.5 levels of 89.7 micrograms per cubic meter.

India's position:

- India has been ranked the world's **eighth most polluted country** in 2022 with PM 2.5 levels of 53.3 micrograms per cubic meter.
- **Bhiwadi** in Rajasthan is the most polluted city in India with alarming PM levels of **92.7**.
- Delhi has emerged the most polluted Metropolitan city in the world with PM levels of 92.6.

Best Air Quality:

- Guam, an American Island in the Pacific, has the cleanest air of any nation with PM 2.5 levels of 1.3 micrograms per cubic meter.
- Canberra (Australia) has the cleanest air of any capital city with PM 2.5 levels of 2.8 micrograms per cubic meter.

Note: The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a maximum PM2.5 concentration of 5 micrograms per cubic meter.

- 36.** The **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), in its 78th round survey, has released the findings of the **Multiple Indicator Survey (MIS)** for the first time to collect information for developing estimates of some important Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) indicators and to collect information about purchase/construction of house(s)/flat(s) for residential purposes after 3rd March 2014 and information on migration.

Key findings of the survey:

- As per the survey, **34.9 %** persons aged 15-29 years were in formal and non-formal education and training for the 12 months preceding the survey.
- A total of **29.3 %** persons aged 15-24 years are not in education, employment or training.
- A total of **49.9 %** of the households reported the purchase or construction of a new house or flat for the first time, among the households which reported the purchase or construction of a new house or flat after March 3, 2014.
- **63.1 %** of the households were using clean fuel as the primary source of energy for cooking.
- As per the survey report, **72.7 %** persons aged 18 years and above used mobile phones during the three months preceding the survey.
- The survey said that **95.7 %** persons reported to have improved sources of drinking water.
- **98 %** persons reported access to improved toilets, among those who reported access to toilets.
- As per the survey, **81.9 %** persons reported access to hand washing facilities with water and soap/detergent within the premises.

National Statistical Office (NSO):

NSO consists of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). It acts as the nodal agency for planned development of the statistical system in the country.

37. Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying Parshottam Rupala has unveiled the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying annual publication, the 'Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2022'.

Major highlights of the “Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2022”:

- India’s milk production has increased to **221.06 million tonnes (MT)** in FY22 from 209.96 MT in FY21. It has registered an annual growth rate of 5.29%.
- **Top milk-producing states:** Rajasthan (15.05%), Uttar Pradesh (14.93%), Madhya Pradesh (8.06%), Gujarat (7.56%) and Andhra Pradesh (6.97%).
- In 2021-22, the total egg production in the country stood at **129.60 billion**, up 6.19% as compared to FY21.
- **Top egg-producing states:** Andhra Pradesh (20.41%), Tamil Nadu (16.08%), Telangana (12.86%), West Bengal (8.84%) and Karnataka (6.38%).
- The total meat production in the country is **9.29 million tonnes** for the year 2021-22 with an annual growth rate of 5.62%.
- **Top meat producing states:** Maharashtra (12.25%), Uttar Pradesh (12.14%), West Bengal (11.63%), Andhra Pradesh (11.04%), and Telangana (10.82%).
- The total wool production during 2021-22 is **33.13 thousand tonnes**, which has declined by 10.30% as compared to previous year.
- The per-capita availability of milk is **444 gram/day** during 2021-22.
- In 2021-22, the per-capita availability of egg is **95 nos/annum**.
- The per-capita availability of meat is **6.82 kg/annum** during 2021-22.

38. A report on “**Lion@2047: A vision for Amrutkal**”, prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India for Gujarat government, has identified the **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS)** as a suitable location for relocating a population of 40 adult and sub-adult Asiatic lions from Gir National Park (NP).

The Gujarat Government has recommended the Barda WLS as a second home for Asiatic Lions (*Panthera Leo Persica*) in Gujarat, approx. 100 kms from their current home at Gir NP. The project has received in-principle approval from the Union government.

Barda Wildlife Sanctuary:

Barda WLS area falls into two districts, Porbandar and Jamnagar in the state of **Gujarat**. It is characteristically abundant in floral diversity, which consists of a good number of medicinal plants. The area has the maximum floral diversity in the state (650 plant species), Gorad, Babul, Dhav, Rayan, Ber, Jamun, Amlī, Dhudhlo, Bamboo.

Note: IUCN status of Asiatic Lion is 'Endangered'.

- 39.** The tenth edition of the **Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2023** has been released by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) using data from TerrorismTracker and other sources. This report provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over the last decade.
- Afghanistan remains most impacted by terrorism for fourth consecutive year, followed by Burkina Faso and Somalia.
 - **India** remained at **13th** while Pakistan ranked at 6th.
 - The deadliest terrorist groups in the world in 2022 were Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by al-Shabaab, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).
 - Climate change is helping terrorist groups to raise funds, propagandize and recruit people.
- 40.** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the **24th** annual publication "**Women and Men in India 2022**" report.

Key findings of the report:

- The sex ratio at birth went up by three points to **907** in 2018-20 from 904 in 2017-19.
 - India's sex ratio (females per 1,000 males) is expected to improve to **952** by **2036**, up significantly from 943 in 2011.
 - India's Labour Force Participation Rate for those above 15 years of age has been **increasing** since 2017-2018. However, women are severely lagging behind men.
 - The population growth, already on a downward trend from 2.2% in 1971 to 1.1% in 2021, is projected to fall further to **0.58%** in 2036.
 - India's age and sex structure, as per which the population under 15 years of age is expected to decline and the population above 60 years is expected to increase by 2036.
 - The age-specific fertility rate for the 20-24 year and 25-29 years age group between 2016 and 2020 reduced from 135.4 and 166.0 to 113.6 and 139.6 respectively. The same indicator for the 35-39 years age group increased from 32.7 in 2016 to 35.6 in 2020.
- 41.** The 11th edition of the **World Happiness Report 2023** has been published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network of the United Nations (UN). The report ranks global happiness in more than 150 countries around the world.

Top 3 Happiest Countries	
1	Finland
2	Denmark
3	Iceland

Top 3 Unhappiest Countries	
1	Afghanistan
2	Lebanon
3	Sierra Leone

India's position in the World Happiness Report 2023 has improved from 136 to **126**, but India is still behind close neighbours like Sri Lanka (112), Pakistan (108) and Nepal (78). Bhutan is not listed in the WHR 2023.

The ranking uses six key factors to measure happiness: social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption.

- 42.** The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in its latest interim outlook released titled “Fragile Recovery” has raised India's **FY24** growth forecast by 20 basis points to **5.9%** from 5.7% earlier.
- India’s growth is projected to moderate to about 6 percent in FY2023-24, amid tighter financial conditions before picking up to recover to around 7 percent in FY 2024-25.
 - Global growth is projected to remain at below trend rates in 2023 and 2024, at 2.6 percent and 2.9 percent, respectively.
- 43.** As per the rating agency CRISIL annual growth forecast, India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth will touch **6%** in **FY24**, compared with 7% estimated by the National Statistical Organisation (NSO) for FY23.
- Indian economy averaging a growth rate of 6.8% over the next five fiscals.
 - The risks to inflation are “tilted upward”, given the ongoing heat wave and the World Meteorological Organization’s prediction that an El Niño warming event is likely over the next couple of months.
- 44.** The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), **Rao Inderjit Singh**, has released the **24th** issue of publication titled “**Women and Men in India 2022**” in New Delhi.
- The publication “Women and Men in India” is a comprehensive and insightful document that provides data on a wide range of topics such as education, health, employment, and political participation, among others.
 - It presents data disaggregated by gender, urban-rural divide, and geographical region, which helps us understand the disparities that exist between different groups of women and men.
- 45.** According to the Global Commission on Economics of Water (GCEW) report ‘**The What, Why and How of the World Water Crisis: Global Commission on the Economics of Water Phase I Review and Findings**’, India will face a reduction of over **16%** in food supply due to water and heat stress in **2050**, increasing the food insecure population by over 50%.
- The report has placed China at the top, where food supply would be reduced by 22.4%, followed by South America by 19.4%.

- The water supply availability in India is between 1100-1197 billion cubic meters (bcm).
- The report points out that India's poor water policy design is a major barrier in addressing water stress.
- The demand is expected to grow from 550-710 bcm in 2010 to around 900-1,400 bcm in 2050.

46. As per the **Monthly Economic Review-February 2023**, published by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the **Indian economy** is projected to grow at **7 percent** in the fiscal year 2022-23 (**FY23**) despite global challenges.

Retail inflation is anticipated to decline in accordance with wholesale inflation, which dropped to a 25-month low in January 2023.

India's current account deficit (CAD) is expected to decrease in FY23 and FY24, giving the rupee a safety net in tumultuous times.

47. According to the latest data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), India's inflation based on **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** has declined to 25-month low of **3.85%** in **February 2023** amid a drop in the prices of manufactured products. WPI was at 4.73% in January 2023 and 13.4% in February 2022.

The Retail Inflation based on **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** is also declined to **6.44%** in **February 2023** against 6.52% in January 2023.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES & PROGRAMMES

48. **REACHOUT (Research, Education, and Training Outreach) scheme** is being implemented by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** for capacity building. It was launched in 2016. The main objective is to support various R&D activities, develop useful collaborations with international organizations, and develop skilled & trained manpower in Earth Sciences etc.

It consists of several sub-schemes including:

- R&D in Earth System Science.
- International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography.
- BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate.
- Program for Development of Skilled manpower in Earth System Sciences.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

49. The Indian Institute of Information Technology Design and Manufacturing, Kurnool (**IIITDM Kurnool**) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Association (UNA) mission group for **Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana**.

Under this MoU, students of IIITDM will adopt two to three villages in the Mahanandi (AP) to Achampet (Telangana) region and educate the people including students about the importance of conserving forests, land, and quality of air for the next five years as part of this programme.

50. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has signed a contract for refit of the **Sindhukirti submarine** at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited, Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, at an overall cost of **Rs 934 crore**.

INS Sindhukirti (S61):

- It is the seventh **Sindhughosh-class** diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy.

- It was built at the Admiralty Shipyard and Sevmash in Russia.
- It is the 3rd Kilo Class Diesel Electric submarine.
- It was commissioned on 9 December 1989 in the Soviet Union

51. The **National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)** and the **International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen evidence-based research and capacity building on critical development issues.

- The MoU aims to promote collaboration between the two institutions in areas such as climate change adaptation, rural entrepreneurship development, value chain development, sharing international best practices, scaling-up of identified agricultural and rural technologies, and livelihood development.
- The MoU promote Dryland crops and climate-smart farming in Rurban Clusters.

52. Hyderabad-based **Svaya Robotics** has developed **India's first indigenous quadruped (four-legged) robot** and **wearable exoskeleton** for the defence sector as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

- Currently, these robots are being imported from USA & Switzerland.
- The indigenous robots and wearable exoskeletons have been developed in collaboration with the DRDO Labs, Research and Development Establishment (R&DE), Pune, and the Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL), Bengaluru.
- These robots are designed for traveling in unstructured terrains to enable remote reconnaissance and inspection for the military and security forces in environments that are otherwise unsafe for human operation.
- These robots can carry a 25 kg payload and accompany a soldier, and can also be used in nuclear plants and other industries.

Note: Quadruped robots are four-legged robots that can walk or run over uneven and rough terrain.

53. The **Ministry of Ayush** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Ministry of Rural Development** to transform the rural youth into economically independent and globally relevant workforce.

- This MoU will ensure that 22,000 rural poor youth will be trained in National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)-compliant courses such as Panchakarma Technician, Panchkarma Assistant, Ayurvedic Masseur, Kshara Karma Technician, Cupping Therapy Assistant, etc.
- The course will include training of rural youth as panchakarma technicians, which will be started on a pilot basis.

- The proposed training will be imparted under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya-Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (**DDU-GKY**).
- The signed MoU is valid for 3 years.

54. India Post, a government-operated postal system, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with logistics aggregator firm **Shippocket and Pickrr** to enhance its last-mile delivery services for various e-commerce products.

This integration has been done through various application programming interface (API) for tariff, booking, label generation, pickup and track & trace systems.

55. Jindal Steel and Power (JSP) has received **BIS certification** to manufacture India's first **fire-resistant steel** structures at its Rail Mill and Special Profile Mill in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.

The BIS 15103 grade steel structural steels are designed to withstand temperatures up to 600 degrees Celsius for 3 hours.

The new grade steel structures will help the nation to reduce dependence on imports.

56. Hindustan Zinc, a Vedanta Group company, has received the **GreenCo Silver rating** by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for its sustainable mining operations. Company's **Rampura Agucha Mine** and **Zawar Group of Mines** have received the Silver Rating for their exemplary performance in waste & material management, green infrastructure & ecology, green supply chain, GHG emissions reduction, and renewable energy initiatives.

57. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina have jointly inaugurated the **India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (IBFP)** in a virtual mode. The foundation stone for the construction of this pipeline was laid by both Prime Ministers in September 2018. This is the second cross-border energy pipeline between India and its neighbours.

- IBFP, running from **Siliguri** in India to **Parbatipur** in Bangladesh, is the first cross border energy pipeline between India and Bangladesh.
- The **132-km** pipeline has a capacity to transport **1 Million Metric Ton Per Annum (MMTPA)** of High-Speed Diesel (HSD) to Bangladesh.

In 2019, India-Nepal opened South Asia's first cross-border oil pipeline i.e., **Motihari (Bihar)-Amlekhgunj (Nepal)** oil pipeline. South Asia, sub-region of Asia, includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

58. The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (**NAFED**) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (**MoA&FW**) to extend its support to **Millets** initiatives, under which start-ups will get additional market access to sell their products.

59. The **Ministry of Steel** has signed **57 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs)** with 27 companies for specialty steel under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme at an event held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. Under the PLI scheme, the Government has approved **Rs.6322 crores** to give a new impetus to the Steel sector.

60. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has granted exemption to **NTPC Limited** from the extant guidelines of delegation of power to Maharatna CPSEs for making investment in **NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL)**, a subsidiary company of NTPC Ltd.
- The CCEA has also exempted NGEL's investment in NTPC Renewable Energy Limited (NREL) and its other JVs/subsidiaries subject to a ceiling of 15% of its net worth beyond the monetary ceiling of Rs.5,000 crore to Rs.7,500 crore, towards achieving a target of 60 GW Renewable Energy (RE) Capacity by NTPC Limited.

The CCEA has also approved listing of **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA)** on the stock exchanges through an initial public offer (IPO). The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) will drive the listing process.

61. **NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL)**, a wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited, has signed a Joint Venture Agreement with **Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL)** for setting up of renewable energy projects to meet Round the Clock power requirement of IOCL Refineries.

NTPC has set a target of 60 GW of renewable generation over the next decade.

BANKING & FINANCE

62. **Deepak Mohanty**, the Whole-Time Member (Economics) of PFRDA, has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (**PFRDA**). He will hold this post from the date of assumption of charge till attaining the age of 65 years or until further orders, whichever is earlier. He has succeeded **Supratim Bandyopadhyay**.
63. The Government of India (GoI) and the **World Bank** have signed an agreement for the construction of **Green National Highway Corridors Project (GNHCP)** in an aggregate length of 781 km in the states of **Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh**, with loan assistance of **USD 500 million** against total project cost of USD 1288.24 million (Rs.7,662.47 crore).
- The objective of the GNHCP is to demonstrate safe and green highway.
64. **ICICI Bank** has announced '**Startup Ecosystem Banking**' to offer digital and physical solutions to cater to the banking needs of startups. This will provide treasury and transaction banking solutions, lending solutions, digital integrations, handling FDI and regulatory compliances, personal banking services for employees and founders.
65. **PNB MetLife India Insurance** has introduced a **Sustainable Equity Fund** which is a part of the PNB MetLife Goal Ensuring Multiplier plan to enable customers to maximise returns while having a good influence on society.

66. Jammu and Kashmir Bank (J&K Bank) has signed a corporate agency agreement with **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)**. The bank will service and solicit LIC's life insurance products through its branch network.

The said agreement will be operational from April 1, 2023.

67. Suryoday Small Finance Bank has launched a new savings account specially designed for women customers called the '**Blossom Women's Savings Account**'. The account gives a monthly interest credit and an interest rate of 7% each year.

- 1 complementary account for child(Savings Aditya Account)
- Concession processing fees on 2-wheeler loan (*select cities only)
- Door-step banking as per availability
- Insurance as per the Debit card variant
- Average Monthly Balance (AMB) of Rs.10,000

68. Tablesh Pandey, the Executive Director of LIC, has been appointed as the **Managing Director (MD)** of the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). He has been appointed with effect from the date of assumption of charge of the office on or after 1st April 2023. He has replaced **Bishnu Charan Patnaik**.

Currently, the LIC has 4 Managing Directors. The other 3 MDs are Siddhartha Mohanty, Mini Ipe, and M Jagannath.

69. Chennai-based VA Tech Wabag, a water technology firm, has won an **Rs.800 crore** project funded by the **World Bank** and **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** in **Bangladesh**.

The company will design, build and operate a sewage treatment plant with a capacity of 200 million litre per day (MLD) in Dhaka.

70. The Income Tax Department has launched an **Annual Information Statements (AIS)** application for taxpayers to provide detailed information about each transaction to taxpayers. The AIS app is basically a free mobile solution providing a comprehensive view of the Annual Information System, which is a collection of various information about taxpayers.

The objectives of AIS are:

- To display complete information to taxpayers with a feedback facility
- To promote voluntary compliance and enabling seamless prefilling of returns
- To deter non-compliance

71. Canara Bank, in collaboration with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has launched the **Rupay Credit Card** through UPI using the BHIM app.

This will enable the customers to link their active Rupay Credit Card to UPI and make merchant payments without the physical use of a card, similar to account-based UPI transactions.

72. Axis Bank has entered into a co-lending pact with Gurgaon-based **Autotrac Finance Limited (AFL)**, a Non-Banking Financial Company, through the Yubi Co.Lend platform. Under this pact, both lenders will offer 'New Tractor Loans' for the Agricultural and Allied activities to cater the financial needs of the rural segment in the country.

73. Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority (**WDRA**) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Punjab National Bank (**PNB**) to facilitate loans to farmers and traders against **e-NWRs (electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt)** with features such as no additional collateral and attractive interest rates.

NWR:

NWR system was launched in 2011 allowing the transfer of ownership of a commodity stored in a warehouse without having to deliver it physically. These receipts are issued in negotiable form, making them eligible as collateral.

WDRA implements NWR as per provisions of Warehousing (Development & Regulation) Act, 2007.

74. **Anup Bagchi**, executive director of ICICI Bank, has been named the new Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company Limited with effect from 19th June 2023. He will succeed **N S Kannan**, who will superannuate on 18th June 2023.

75. The **Bank of Baroda (BoB)** has tied up with the **Government of Tamil Nadu** to offer co-branded RuPay Platinum Debit Card to the beneficiaries of the state government's '**Pudhumai Penn**' scheme.

The card offers personal accident insurance coverage upto Rs.2 lakh per annum.

'Pudhumai Penn':

The scheme aims to enhance the enrolment ratio of girls from government schools to higher educational institutions. Through this scheme, financial assistance of Rs 1,000 per month will be provided to every girl till the completion of their degree course.

76. **OmniCard**, India's first omnichannel Payment Platform for end-to-end Spending Solutions, has launched Unified Payments Interface (**UPI**) services with its own UPI handle, @OMNI, for its users which do not require them to link a bank account.

Omnocard is a PPI (**Prepaid Payment Instrument**) licensed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that provides India's 1st Omnichannel spending platform with UPI services for individuals as well as businesses.

This development comes after RBI approved & the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) enabled PPIs to provide UPI services that will make UPI more inclusive & convenient.

77. The Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has provided **60 days** initial relaxation to all **Registrars to an issue/ Share Transfer Agents (RTAs)** to comply with enhanced responsibilities through adoption and implementation of an internal policy framework and periodic reporting requirements.

- An RTA will be categorised as QRTA if at any time during a financial year, the combined number of physical and demat folios being serviced by the RTA for listed companies exceeds 2 crore.
- In case of the categorisation as a QRTA, an intimation needs to be sent by the RTA within five working days to SEBI.

- An RTA will be considered as a QRTA from the date of categorisation as a QRTA and will be considered as such for the next 3 financial years, irrespective of subsequent fall in number of folios and will be liable to comply with all requirements specified by the regulator.

Registrar and Transfer Agents (RTA):

RTA are SEBI-registered entities that provide services related to share registry maintenance and share transfer activities on behalf of companies that have issued shares to the public.

- 78. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited** has won the 13th Aegis Graham Bell Awards (AGBA) in the "Innovation in Consumer Tech" category for its **Hello Ujjivan app**, India's first visual-voice vernacular banking app.

Aegis Graham Bell Awards:

It is a homage to the renowned innovator, Alexander Graham Bell. Aegis School of Business, Data Science and Cyber Security established the awards in 2010 to celebrate innovators and their innovations. The awards are supported by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; NITI Aayog, Government of India and Skill India.

- 79. Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** has sold 2 percent of its equity stake in state-owned **NMDC Limited**. With this, LIC holding in NMDC has decreased from 13.69 percent to **11.69 percent** during the period between December 29, 2022 and March 14, 2023, at an average price of Rs.119.37 a share.
- 80. HDFC Bank and Flipkart Wholesale**, the omnichannel B2B platform of the Flipkart Group, have launched a co-branded credit card exclusively for Flipkart Wholesale members.
- The credit card will offer users five percent cashback on Flipkart Wholesale online spending.
 - This will enhance access to credit and accelerate the adoption of digital payments while offering multiple benefits to smaller merchants in India.
- 81. Go Digit General Insurance** has launched three new plan under Digit Health Insurance policy, **Digit Double Wallet plan, Digit Infinity Wallet plan, and Digit Worldwide Treatment plan**, aimed at catering to the newly evolved health insurance needs post the pandemic.
- 82. ICICI Prudential Life Insurance** has launched '**ICICI Pru Gold**', an innovative long-term savings product designed to enable customers to create an additional income stream to meet their diverse income requirements.

RBI IN NEWS

- 83.** The Reserve Bank of India Governor, **Shaktikanta Das** has been awarded the title '**Governor of the Year**' for 2023 at the Central Banking Awards 2023 by Central Banking, an international economic research journal.

The year 2023 marks the 10th annual Central Banking Awards.

This is the second time that an Indian central bank governor has received this award, with Raghuram Rajan being the previous winner in 2015.

The **National Bank of Ukraine** has been awarded the Central Bank of the Year award.

84. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates (CBUAE)** to enhance cooperation and jointly enable innovation in financial products and services.

Under the MoU, the two central banks will collaborate on various emerging areas of FinTech, especially Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and explore interoperability between the CBDCs of CBUAE and RBI.

85. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has permitted banks from **18 countries** to open **Special Vostro Rupee Accounts (SVRAs)** to settle payments in rupees. These 18 nations include:

Botswana, Fiji, Germany, Guyana, Israel, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Russia, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and the United Kingdom.

Special Vostro Rupee Accounts (SVRAs):

SVRA is an additional arrangement to existing system that uses freely convertible currencies and works as a complimentary system. SVRAs are used to keep the foreign company's holdings in the Indian bank in the form of the Indian rupee. For opening SVRA, prior approval of RBI is required.

Internationalization of Rupee:

It is a process of increasing rupee acceptance (credibility) across world through its increased use in invoicing and settlement of cross-border transactions.

Advantages of Internationalization of Rupee:

- The need for holding foreign exchange reserves and dependence on foreign currencies will be reduced.
- This will promote Indian rupee as an international currency in long run.
- The vulnerability to External Shocks and Currency Risks will be reduced
- The bargaining power of Indian enterprises will increase.

Disadvantages of Internationalization of Rupee:

- This will **complicate domestic monetary policy** by limiting its effectiveness and independence.
- This will heighten Exchange Rate Volatility.

86. The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has granted an '**Infrastructure Finance Company (IFC)**' status to **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)**. With IFC status, IREDA will be able to take higher exposure in renewable energy financing.

- With IFC status, IREDA will contribute to the government's target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel installed capacity by 2030.
- IREDA was earlier classified as 'Investment and Credit Company (ICC)'.

Infrastructure Finance Company:

- It is a non-deposit accepting, loan company that have a minimum of 75% of the total assets of the company deployed as infrastructure loans.

- The company should have a minimum net-worth of Rs.300 crores, CRAR at 15% with Tier I capital at 10% and a minimum credit rating of A from CRISIL, FITCH, CARE, ICRA, BRICKWORK or equivalent rating by any other accrediting rating agencies.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

87. Renowned Hindi writer **Dr Gyan Chaturvedi** has been awarded the **32nd Vyas Samman, 2022** for his novel '**Pagalkhana**' (mental asylum). The 2018 satirical novel tells a poignant story of innocent common people in a heart-touching manner. The book is published by Rajkamal Prakashan.

Vyas Samman Award:

It is instituted by the KK Birla Foundation in 1991. The annual Vyas Samman is given to an outstanding Hindi literary work by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years. It carries an award money of Rs.4 lakh.

88. The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** has released the list of its **Young Global Leaders Class of 2023** to its Forum of Young Global Leaders (YGLs). Six Indians have been inducted in the list, including Shiv Sena (UBT) leader **Aaditya Thackeray** and national vice president of BJP youth wing **Madhukeshwar Desai**.

Other Indians who made to the list were from the fields of business and academia are:

- Tanvi Ratna, Founder and CEO, Policy 4.0. Research Foundation;
- Aakrit Vaish, Co-Founder and CEO, Jio Haptik Technologies Limited;
- Sudarshan Venu, Managing Director, TVS Motor Company Limited;
- Vibin B Joseph, Executive Director and CEO, BIOZEEN

Forum of Young Global Leaders (YGLs):

The Forum of Young Global Leaders is an initiative of the World Economic Forum (WEF). It was established in 2004. It selects and convenes the world's most promising public figures under the age of 40 every year.

89. **Bengaluru** has won a USD 150,000 **2023 Partnership for Healthy Cities Award** by the World Health Organization (WHO) at the inaugural Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit held in London, UK. It has been recognised for achievements in preventing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries, and efforts in tobacco control.

Bengaluru has been honoured along with Montevideo in Uruguay; Mexico City, Mexico; Vancouver, Canada and Athens, Greece.

Partnership for Healthy Cities:

The Partnership for Healthy Cities, established in 2017, is a global network comprising 70 cities working together to prevent NCDs and injuries. The initiative enables cities worldwide to deliver a high-impact policy or programmatic intervention to reduce NCDs and injuries in their communities.

90. **Changi Airport of Singapore** has been named the "**World's Best Airport**" in 2023 at the Skytrax World Airport Awards 2023 ceremony held at Passenger Terminal EXPO in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Changi Airport had previously won first place in Skytrax's annual ranking for eight consecutive years from 2013 to 2020.

- Changi Airport is followed by Doha's Hamad International Airport and Tokyo's Haneda Airport.
- Changi Airport has also been named World's Best Airport for Dining, Best Airport for Leisure Amenities, and Best Airport in Asia in 2023.

Skytrax World Airport Awards 2023: Indian Airports:

- **Indira Gandhi International Airport (Delhi)** has been named the 'Best Airport in India and South Asia' and is ranked 36th in 2023.
- **Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA)** in Hyderabad has been ranked 65th in 2023.

91. Tamil writer **Sivasankari** has been awarded the **Saraswati Samman 2022** for her book *Survya Vamsam*. It is a book of memoirs in Tamil language and was published in 2019.

Saraswati Samman:

It is instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in 1991. It is recognized as the most prestigious and the highest literary award in the country. It carries an award money of Rs.15 lakh, a Citation and a Plaque.

92. **Bombay Jayshri**, Padma Shri Awardee and Carnatic vocalist, has been honoured with the **Sangita Kalanidhi Award 2023**, the highest accolade in the field of Carnatic music, of the Music Academy Awards.

Other awardees:

- **Vasanthalakshmi Narasimhachari**, an exquisite dancer and acharya par excellence of both Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, has been honoured with the **Nritiya Kalanidhi award 2023**.
- **Sangita Kala Acharya award 2023:** Palkulangara Ambika Devi (Vocalist) and KS Kalidas (Mridhangam)
- **TTK Award 2023:** Thirunageswaram TR Subramaniam (Thavil) and Sargunanatha Odhuvar (Odhuvar)
- **Musicologist Award 2023:** Dr Arimalam S Padmanabhan (Musicologist)

93. The Telugu movie '**RRR**', which won the Best Original Song for 'Naatu Naatu' at the 2023 Oscars, is inspired by the lives of Indian freedom fighters Alluri Sitharama Raju and Komaram Bheem.

Alluri Sitharama Raju:

Alluri Sitarama Raju, born in Andhra Pradesh in 1897/1898, led the **Rampa or Manyam Rebellion** of 1922 and was involved in opposing the British in response to the 1882 Madras Forest Act.

Komaram Bheem

Komaram Bheem was born in 1900/1901 in the Gond tribal community at Sankepally village in Komaram Bheem District of Telangana. He led the rebellion against the **feudal Nizams of Hyderabad**.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

94. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has released a book titled **“Mundaka Upanishad: The Bridge to Immortality”**. The book is originally authored by former Member of Parliament (MP) **Dr Karan Singh** and published by Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan in 1987.

The current edition contains the Hindi translation of Dr Karan Singh’s texts by Dr Kamal Kishor Mishra who has also transliterated the Sanskrit text in accordance with international standards.

95. **Rachna Bisht Rawat**, an Indian journalist and writer, has authored a new book titled **‘Bipin: The Man behind the Uniform’** which is the story of General Bipin Rawat’s personality, his personal life and his principles.

The book is published by **Penguin Veer**, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

The book is a befitting tribute to General Bipin Rawat, India’s 1st Chief of Defence Staff and one of India’s greatest military leaders, who was killed in a chopper crash in 2021.

96. **Shrimant Kokate**, popular Marathi author and historian, whose first book in English, **“Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (illustrated)”**, has been launched. The book originally authored in Marathi and published by Marathi Prakashan has been translated into English by **Dilip Chavan**.

Shrimant Kokate has written 4 books on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, which have been widely read and have received rave reviews.

PERSON IN NEWS

97. **Surekha Yadav** from Satara, Maharashtra has become **Asia’s first female loco pilot** by becoming the 1st woman to operate the recently launched semi-high-speed **Vande Bharat Express train**.

She piloted the semi-high-speed train between Solapur station and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in Mumbai.

- She became India’s first woman train driver in 1988.
- She also became the first loco pilot of the ‘Ladies Special’ local train for Central Railways in 2000.

98. **Viacom 18 Media Private Limited**, who has bagged the digital streaming rights of the upcoming IPL 2023, has roped India’s most celebrated cricket captain and four-time IPL-winning skipper **MS Dhoni** as its new brand ambassador. He will participate in several network initiatives featured on the JioCinema, Sports18 and his social media accounts.

99. **Li Qiang**, the former Communist Party chief of Shanghai, has been elected as the new **Premier of China**. He has succeeded Li Keqiang, who has been in charge of the second-largest economy for the past 10-years.

100. **Kavilmadam Ramaswami Parvathy** of India, who has served in leading roles at the World Food Programme in Turkey and Afghanistan, has been appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as the **United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan**.

101. **Eric Garcetti**, former Los Angeles Mayor, has been appointed as the **United States’ ambassador to India**. The position had been vacant for more than 2 years. He has succeeded Kenneth Juster who stepped down in January 2021.

In 2022, A. Elizabeth Jones was appointed Chargée d'affaires ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

102. The Board of Directors of **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)** has appointed **Krithi Krithivasan** as the new **CEO-designate** of TCS with effect from 16th March 2023. He will be appointed as MD & CEO in the fiscal year 2023-24, subject to shareholder approval.

He will succeed **Rajesh Gopinathan**, the current MD & CEO, who unexpectedly resigned 4 years ahead of the completion of his tenure.

103. Gianni Infantino, Swiss football administrator, has been re-elected as the **President** of the International Federation of Football Association (**FIFA**) for the 3rd time at the 73rd FIFA Congress held in Kigali, Rwanda.

He has been re-elected for a 4-year term from 2023 to 2027.

104. Boat, an electronics brand, owned by Imagine Marketing Limited, has elevated **Vivek Gambhir**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Boat, to the position of Chairman.

Sameer Mehta, co-founder of Boat, has been elevated to the position of CEO and Managing Director (MD).

105. Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav of the Janata Samajbadi Party has been elected as the **Vice-President of Nepal**. He has secured 30,328 votes against 16,328 secured by his nearest rival Ashta Laxmi Shakya of CPN-UML.

He has become the 3rd Vice-President of Nepal and the **first** from the Madhes region, bordering India.

106. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the proposal of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG) for the appointment of **G.Krishnakumar** as the new Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) of the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL). He has succeeded **Arun Kumar Singh**, who retired as Chairman in October 2022.

He will hold the position of CMD until April 2025 or until any further notice, whichever is earlier.

107. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of **Lalit Kumar Gupta** as the new Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of the **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)**. He is currently serving as Director (Finance) in CCI.

OBITUARIES

108. Veteran actor **Sameer Khakhar**, best known for his role Khopdi in 1980s classic 'Nukkad', has recently passed away due to multiple organ failure in Mumbai, Maharashtra. He was also featured in 'Shrimaan Shrimati', and 'Adaalat'. He played vital roles in films, including 'Hasee Toh Phasee', 'Jai Ho', 'Patel Ki Punjabi Shaadi'.

109. Richard Douglas Fosbury, an American High Jumper & Olympic Gold Medallist, has recently passed away at the age of 76 in Utah, the USA. He was born on 6th March 1947 in Portland, Oregon, USA.

He was well known for revolutionising the high jump event with a “back-first” technique now known as the “**Fosbury flop**”.

He won a gold medal in the men’s high jump at the **1968 Olympics** held in Mexico City, Mexico.

- 110.** British writer, historian, and academician **Patrick French** has recently passed away in London, UK. He was born on 5th March 1966 in England. He was the author of several books including: *Youngusband: the Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (1994), a biography of Francis Youngusband; *The World Is What It Is* (2008), an authorised biography of Nobel Laureate V. S. Naipaul that won the National Book Critics Circle Award in the United States of America; and *India: A Portrait* (2011).

SPORTS

- 111.** **Indian cricket team** has recently won the **Border–Gavaskar Trophy 2023** by defeating **Australia** 2–1 for the record 10th time in the final match held at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

With this, India booked their place into the final of the World Test Championship.

Top performers of the series:

- **Most runs:** Usman Khawaja (Australia) (333 runs)
- **Most wickets:** Ravichandran Ashwin (India) (25 wickets)

Border-Gavaskar Trophy:

The Border–Gavaskar Trophy is an International Test cricket series played between India and Australia. The series is named after distinguished former captains and cricket legends, Australia's Allan Border and India's Sunil Gavaskar. Its first edition was played in the year 1996-97.

- 112.** **Rest of India cricket team**, led by Mayank Agarwal, has won the 59th edition of the **Z.R. Irani Cup 2022-23** by defeating **Madhya Pradesh**, 2021-22 Ranji Champions, led by Himanshu Mantri, in the final match held in Captain Roop Singh Stadium, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

Man of the Match: Yashasvi Bhupendra Jaiswal

Irani Cup:

It is a first-class cricket tournament organised by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). It is played annually between the winners of the Ranji Trophy and a Rest of India cricket team. Rest of India cricket team is a first-class cricket team in India that continually changes, being composed from players across the country except for those from the season's current Ranji Trophy winner.

- 113.** Wicketkeeper **Timothy David Paine**, a former Australia Test Cricket Captain, has announced his retirement from **first-class cricket** following the conclusion of the Sheffield Shield first-class match of Tasmania against Queensland at Blundstone Arena, Australia.
- He made his debut in cricket in 2005 and played for Tasmania for more than 18 years.
 - He ended his career after playing 154 first-class games.
 - He played 35 ODI's for the Baggy Greens.

- 114.** **Carlos Alcaraz** of **Spain** has won the singles title at **BNP Paribas Open 2023** by defeating Daniil Medvedev of Russia. The tournament has been held in Indian Wells Tennis Garden, Indian Wells, California, the USA.

BNP Paribas Open 2023

Category	Winners
Men's Singles	Carlos Alcaraz (Spain)
Men's Doubles	Rohan Bopanna (India) and Matthew Ebden (Australia)
Women's Singles	Elena Rybakina (Kazakhstan)
Women's Doubles	Barbora Krejčíková and Kateřina Siniaková (Czech Republic)

115. Indian archers has finished with **10 medals**, five gold, four silver and one bronze, at the **Asia Cup 2023** archery stage-1 world ranking tournament held in Taoyuan, Chinese Taipei.

Gold medals:

- Recurve men – Rahul
- Compound men - Pawan Gat
- Compound women – Pragati
- Recurve men's team - Rahul, Rampal Choudhary and Parth Salunkhe
- Compound women's team - Pragati, Praneet Kaur and Aishwarya Sharma

Silver medals:

- Recurve men - Rampal Choudhary
- Compound men – Priyansh
- Compound women - Parneet Kaur
- Compound men's team - Venkatadri Kunderu, Pawan Gat and Priyansh

Bronze medal:


- Compound mixed team - Priyansh and Pragati

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116. ATK Mohun Bagan Football Club (FC), led by Pritam Kotal, has won the 9th edition of the **Indian Super League (ISL) 2022-23 title** by beating Bengaluru FC via penalty shootout in the finals held in Jawaharlal Nehru stadium in Marga, Goa. This is ATK Mohun Bagan's first ISL title.

Individual & Team Award Winners from Hero ISL 2022-23 Season:

- Hero of the League: Lallianzuala Chhangte (Mumbai City FC)
- Golden Boot: Diego Mauricio (Odisha FC)
- Jindal Panther Golden Glove: Vishal Kaith (ATK Mohun Bagan)
- Emerging Player of the League: Sivasakthi Narayanan (Bengaluru FC)
- KFC Street Baller of League: Noah Sadaoui (FC Goa)
- Best Pitch: Kerala Blasters FC

- Grassroots Award: Bengaluru FC, and FC Goa

117. Red Bull's **Sergio Perez**, Mexican racing driver, has won the **Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2023** held in the Jeddah Corniche Circuit, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, with 25 point.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen has finished 2nd and Aston Martin racing driver Fernando Alonso (Spanish), Two-time world champion, has finished 3rd in the event.

IMPORTANT DAYS

118. National Vaccination Day or National Immunisation Day is observed annually on **16th March** to spread awareness about the importance of vaccines. The day also marks the victory of India against polio disease. The day was first observed in 1995.

Note: India was declared polio-free in 2014.

119. World Sleep Day is observed annually across the globe on **Friday** before Spring Vernal Equinox. The day aims to raise awareness of sleep as a human privilege that is often compromised by the habits of modern life. The day was first observed in 2008 by the World Sleep Society (WSS).

- In 2023, the day falls on **17th March** 2023.
- **Theme 2023:** 'Sleep is Essential for Health'

120. Global Recycling Day is observed annually on **18th March** to help recognise, and celebrate, the importance recycling plays in securing the future of our planet.

- **Theme 2023:** 'Creative Innovation'
- The day was first observed in 2018.
- The day is an initiative of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) based in Brussels, Belgium.

121. Ordnance Factory Day is observed annually across India on **18th March** to mark the foundation of the 1st Ordnance Factory at Cossipore near Kolkata, West Bengal, in 1801 and honour the contribution of the Indian Ordnance Factories (IOFs) in strengthening India's defence capabilities.

122. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has participated in the **84th Raising Day** program of the **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)** on **19th March 2023**. The program has been organized in Bastar district of Chhattisgarh.

- CRPF was came into existence in 1939, as Crown Representative's Police.
- It was renamed as CRPF on 28th December 1949.
- CRPF Raising Day is celebrated to mark the day when the then Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel presented colours to the CRPF in 1950 after the enactment of the CRPF Act and the name of the force was changed to its present name.

123. World Sparrow Day is observed annually on **20th March** to create awareness about the house sparrow and the dangers it confronts. The day was first observed in 2010.

- **Theme 2023:** "I LOVE Sparrows"
- The day was established by Mohammed Dilawar, the founder of The Nature Forever Society.

124. International Day of Happiness, also known as World Happiness Day, is observed annually on **20th March** to spread awareness about the importance of happiness in our lives.

- **Theme 2023:** “Be Mindful. Be Grateful. Be Kind”
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in 2011, adopted a resolution which recognised happiness as a “fundamental human goal” and called for “a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes the happiness and well-being of all peoples”.
- The day was first observed in 2013.

125. World Oral Health Day is observed annually on **20th March** to spread global awareness of the issues around oral health and the importance of oral hygiene so that governments, health associations and the general public can work together to achieve healthier mouths and happier lives.

- The theme for World Oral Health Day 2021-2023 is: **Be Proud of Your Mouth.**
- The day was originally observed on 12th September in remembrance of FDI founder, Dr Charles Godon. It was changed to 20th March in 2013.

126. World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People is observed annually on **20th March** to attract the attention of a wider public to the art of theatre for children and young people. The day is a campaign led by the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ International). The day was first observed in 2001.

127. UN French Language Day is annually observed across the globe on **20th March** to celebrate French multilingualism and cultural diversity. The day is recognized by the International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF) as the International Day of La Francophonie.

Theme 2023: “321 Million French speakers, billions of cultural content”

128. Pakhala Diwas is observed annually on **20th March** in **Odisha**. The day is observed across the globe where people eat a traditional Odia dish, ‘**Pakhala**’ (also known as Dahi Pakhala).

- Pakhala is prepared with rice, curd, cucumber, cumin seeds, fried onions, and mint leaves.
- It is popularly served with dry roasted vegetables such as potato, brinjal, Spanish or fried fish.
- The liquid part of the dish is known as Torani. It is a typical summer-time Odia staple diet.

129. International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on **21st March** to create awareness among people about the negative consequences of racial discrimination. It is observed annually on the day the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid "pass laws" in 1960.

The 2023 theme of the International Day focuses on the urgency of combatting racism and racial discrimination, 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

130. World Forestry Day, also known as International Day of Forests, is observed annually on **21st March** to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests.

- **Theme 2023:** “Forests and health”
- The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21st March the International Day of Forests in 2012.

131. World Down Syndrome Day is observed annually on **21st March** to create public awareness about the syndrome and well-being of people with Down syndrome.

- **Theme 2023:** “With Us Not For Us”
- The day was first observed in 2012.

Down syndrome is a condition in which the child is born with an extra 21st chromosome. The child born with this condition is likely to suffer thyroid or heart-related problems.

132. International Day of Nowruz is observed annually on **21st March** to promote values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families as well as reconciliation and neighbourliness.

- The word Nowruz means ‘new day’.
- The day was first observed in 2010.
- The day is celebrated in many countries having significant Persian cultural influence like Iran, Iraq, India, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia.
- It is celebrated by Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, as well as by the Iranis, Shias and **Parsis** in the Indian subcontinent and diaspora.

133. World Puppetry Day is annually observed across the globe on **21st March** to recognize puppetry as a global art form. The day was first observed in 2003.

Theme 2023: “Call of the Forest”

134. World Poetry Day is observed annually on **21st March** to honour poets, revive oral traditions of poetry recitals, promote the reading, writing and teaching of poetry, foster the convergence between poetry and other arts such as theatre, dance, music and painting, and raise the visibility of poetry in the media. UNESCO first adopted 21st March as World Poetry Day during its 30th General Conference in Paris in 1999. The day was first observed in 2000.

Theme 2023: ‘Always be a poet, even in prose’

135. World Water Day is observed annually on **22nd March** to highlight the importance of freshwater and to spread awareness about it.

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in 1992, adopted a resolution declaring 22nd March as World Water Day.
- The day was celebrated for the first time in 1993.
- **Theme 2023:** ‘Accelerating the change to solve the water and sanitation crisis’

Note: India is the largest groundwater-user globally, followed by China and Pakistan.

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