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NATIONAL NEWS

Cabinet approves 6 multi tracking projects across Indian Railways

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi approved 6 (Six) projects of Ministry of Railways with total estimated cost of **Rs. 12,343 crore (approx.)** with 100% funding from Central Government.



- The multi-tracking proposals will ease operations and reduce congestion, providing the much-required infrastructural development on the busiest sections across Indian Railways.
- The 6 (Six) projects covering 18 Districts in 6 States i.e., Rajasthan, Assam, Telangana, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Nagaland will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by 1020 Kms. and will provide employment of about 3 (Three) crores man-days to the people of the States.

Parliament passes Constitution Amendment Bills to include over 50 communities in ST list

The Parliament passed three Bills to include more than 50 communities, including seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Jammu & Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.



- **The Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024** was passed by the Parliament, to include 'Pahari Ethnic Group, Paddari

Tribe, Koli and Gadda Brahmin' communities in the list of STs of UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

- **The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024** is intended to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes regarding Andhra Pradesh.
- **The Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Orders (Amendment) Bill, 2024** proposed to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 to modify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in relation to Odisha.

Cybersecure India: Global Cybersecurity Association launches GCA Index

The **Global Cybersecurity Association (GCA)**, a dedicated non-profit body, announced the launch of 'GCA Index' at a conference in New Delhi titled '**Empowering Cybersecurity: Bringing youth, industry citizen & government on a common platform**'.



- This first-of-its kind index will serve as a go-to reliable resource, offering insights into various use cases and highlighting products, services, and solutions available in the market.
- The GCA aims to become India's premier cybersecurity advocate by providing reliable resources to individuals and organizations on all aspects of cybersecurity threats, and its protection through various tools.
- It also aims to empower individuals and organizations to help navigate this dynamic and critical aspect of digital security with confidence as 76 crore citizens and an average of 40 crore e-transactions are happening on a daily basis (as per MeitY Annual Report 2022-23), it said.

Ministry of Defence achieves milestone with Rs 1 lakh crore orders on Government

The **Ministry of Defence** has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the **only Ministry to cross the figure of one lakh crore rupees Gross Merchandise Value of procurement** through Government e-Marketplace since its inception in 2016.

- In the current fiscal so far, the Defence Ministry has placed orders worth around **46,000 crore rupees on GeM**. The order value of the Ministry in 2022-23 was worth 28,732 crores, while it was over 15,000 crores in 2021-22.
- The Defence Ministry said in a statement that the significant increase of over 60 per cent from the previous financial year is a testament to its continuous efforts, and commitment to adoption of GeM platform to undertake its procurement activities.



Narayan Rane inaugurates 4 technology centers, 2 extension centers to support MSMEs

Union Minister for MSME **Narayan Rane** has said MSMEs are the backbone of India's economy and the government is making all possible efforts to ensure that the MSMEs are duly supported.



- Inaugurating **four technology centers, two extension centers in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh**, Rane said these centers will, go a long way in hand holding the MSMEs of the adjoining areas. He also stressed that the MSMEs should strive and become world class, so that India can become self - reliant.
- Narayan Rane inaugurated MSME Technology Centres at Greater NOIDA; Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh); Baddi (Himachal Pradesh) and Imphal (Manipur) along with two extension centres at Karimnagar and Bhavanipatna (Odisha). Development and Facilitation Office of DC (MSME) at Dehradun (Uttarakhand) and Development and Facilitation Office (Nucleus Centre) at Ladakh were also inaugurated on this occasion.

IREDA partners with IIT Bhubaneswar for clean energy innovation

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (**IREDA**) has taken a significant step towards fostering innovation and research in the renewable energy sector, by signing a memorandum of understanding (**MoU**) with **Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar**.

- The MoU, signed at the '100 Cube Start-up Conclave' held at IIT Bhubaneswar, aims to support collaborative efforts in innovation and research initiatives, technology transfer, and nurturing the start-up ecosystem.



- The collaboration between IREDA and IIT Bhubaneswar is poised to facilitate joint research efforts, facilitate technology transfer, and provide comprehensive support for the start-up ecosystem.

National Generic Document Registration System, ULPIN launched across Assam

Secretary, Department of Land Resources, **Nidhi Khare** rolled out **National Generic Document Registration System (NDGRS)** throughout **Assam** along with the launch of **Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)** seeding of geo referenced cadastral maps.



- Special Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, **Syedain Abbasi** launched the **Blockchain application** in land records in Darrang district as a pilot.
- Addressing the event, **Nidhi Khare** pointed out that **NGDRS**, a project initiated by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, is a common, generic application developed for registration departments across the country. She said that the **NGDRS** application is developed by **NIC Pune** and the Assam instance of **NGDRS** is hosted in **State Data Centre (SDC)**.

Nasscom's FutureSkills Prime ropes in SANS Institute to cultivate India's cybersecurity talent

Globally renowned **SANS Institute** joined hands with **FutureSkills Prime**, a joint initiative by **nasscom** and **MeitY**, aimed at **making India a Digital Talent Nation, and TechSkill India**, which is engaged in providing practical working knowledge, skill testing, validation of

skilled personnel and skill enhancement in process and engineering, manpower secondment for onshore and offshore plants.



- This collaboration marks a pivotal milestone in the Government of India's vision to cultivate elite cybersecurity talent and skill enhancement.
- SANS introduced the 'SANS Foundations: Computers, Technology, and Security' course, which is now accessible through FutureSkills Prime. Designed to meet the demands of a diverse audience, the course is a blend of foundational knowledge and hands-on expertise in technology and security.

C-DOT collaborates with IIT Roorkee for developing 140GHZ fully integrated transmitter-receiver module for 6G

C-DOT, the premier telecom R&D center of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and **Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee (IIT-R)** signed an agreement for **developing a 140GHz fully integrated transmitter and receiver module for 6G** and beyond.



- The agreement was signed under the Telecom Technology Development Fund **(TTDF) scheme** of Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, which has been designed for providing funding support to domestic companies and institutions involved in technology design, development, commercialization of telecommunication products and solutions to enable affordable broadband and mobile services in rural and remote areas.
- The objective of this agreement is to develop a 140 GHz fully integrated transmitter and receiver module to enable applications for 6G and beyond.

SIDBI opens Swavalamban Connect Kendras in Nagaland to enhance entrepreneurship ecosystem

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) in association with Government of Nagaland inaugurated Swavalamban Connect Kendras (SCKs) in 16 districts of Nagaland to lead the change in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state.



- With a view to nurturing local talent and promoting economic growth, these interventions are significant milestones in SIDBI's effort to drive sustainable development in Nagaland, the bank said.
- The SCKs are aimed to emerge as one-stop center to guide aspiring entrepreneurs to become job creators through awareness, mapping gaps, skill connect, create localized project profiles, credit connect, post-handholding support like market connect.

Telangana State Aviation Academy signs MoU with ISRO's NRSC for drone pilot training

Telangana State Aviation Academy has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for getting advanced training for Drone Pilots with the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of ISRO in Hyderabad.

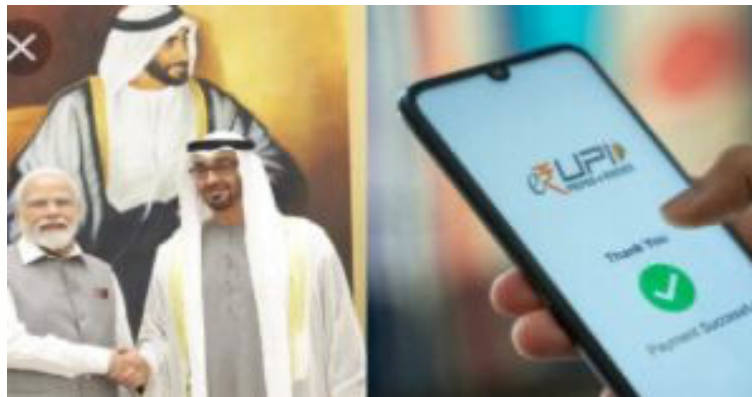


- As part of the MoU, the NRSC scientists and trainee drone pilots will receive training in drone piloting, drone data management and analysis and mapping for 15 days.
- Officials explained that the use of drones increased in all sectors, particularly in farming as the farmers used drones to spray fertilisers and pesticides and the Self-Help Groups also chose drones as a means of employment.

BANKING & FINANCE

India signs MoU to interlink UPI with UAE's instant payment platform AANI

Multiple memoranda of understanding, including an **MoU on interlinking of the instant payment platforms - UPI and UAE's AANI**, were exchanged between India and the United Arab Emirates in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.



- The MoUs covered multiple areas, ranging from **investment treaty, digital infrastructure projects** and the interlinking of debit cards, credit cards and the online payment platforms, will facilitate seamless cross-border transactions between the two countries.
- The MoU for the Bilateral Investment Treaty will be a key enabler for further promoting investments in both countries. India has signed both a bilateral investment treaty and a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with UAE.

IRDAI mandates AYUSH options in health covers from April 1

Insurance regulator **IRDAI** has set **April 1 as deadline** for insurers to include **AYUSH treatment under health covers**.



- General insurance companies are required to establish board-approved policy guidelines for AYUSH coverage and offer policyholders the choice to select their preferred treatment option.

- Insurance companies have also been instructed to implement adequate controls and standard operating procedures. The General Insurance Council (GIC), representing these companies, has recently initiated a program to offer cashless treatment to policyholders even in hospitals not listed in their network but registered under the Clinical Establishment Act.

Punjab & Sind Bank, WDR A agreement to offer low-interest loans for farmer

In a move to support farmers and traders with low-interest rate loans, the **Warehousing Development Regulatory Authority (WDR A)** and **Punjab & Sind Bank (PSB)** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**).



- The primary objective of the MoU is to **raise awareness about funding against electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs)**. The NWR system enables farmers to store the produce safely and scientifically at warehouses near their farms.
- It also allows farmers to receive loans from banks using the issued NWRs against their deposited stock. The e-NWR is a digital receipt that is issued by the regulatory body, WRDA. The eNWR can be used by farmers to finance and trade in settlements without physically exchanging goods.

LIC raises stake in SBI Cards

Life Insurance Corporation of India's (LIC) **shareholding in SBI Cards and Payments Services crossed 5%** with the insurer, as an investment function, acquiring recently a little more than three lakh shares in the non-banking financial company at an average cost of ₹716 per share.



- This acquisition, completed on February 9, 2024, marks LIC's increased ownership in the non-banking financial company.
- This purchase elevates LIC's shareholding in SBI Cards from 47,410,710 to 47,711,794 equity shares, constituting a **rise from 4.99% to 5.02%**.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

AlgoBharat in partnership with T-Hub invites applications for Algorand Startup Lab Program

AlgoBharat, Algorand Foundation's India-focused initiative, announced the official launch of its **Startup Lab program at T-Hub**, the Telangana government-led tech incubator.



- Startup Lab is a year-long program that will offer intensive technical and business mentorship and access to pre-seed funding to twenty select Web3 startups as they move toward product, market, and funding readiness.
- Algorand Foundation and T-Hub announced the commencement of the application process for pan-India startup teams that are invited to demonstrate their innovative and impact-driven Web3 solutions.

Baidu partners with Lenovo in third China AI smartphone deal

China's **Baidu** has partnered with **Lenovo** to feature its **generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology on Lenovo's smartphones**, in the latest team up with a phone manufacturer as it seeks practical applications for its AI model.



- This partnership involves Lenovo using its Ernie large language model (LLM) and is similar to collaborations with Samsung and Honor announced last month.
- Lenovo sells its own branded phones and also owns the phone brand **Motorola**. Ernie is already embedded in the browser and app store apps of Lenovo's personal computers and tablets.

IGL signs MoUs to set up 19 CBG plants in four states

Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **two technology partners** during **India Energy Week 2024** to establish Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants across the four States of **Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**.



- Additionally, the company had already empanelled two other partners for the same purpose. The biogas produced from these 19 plants would be fed into IGL's City Gas Distribution network.
- This partnership aims to produce 0.45 MMSCMD (Million Metric Standard Cubic Meters per Day) of biogas from waste, equivalent to approximately 5% of IGL's daily requirements.

India's tax-to-GDP ratio to hit a record high of 11.7% of GDP in 2024-25: Revenue Secretary

India's tax-to-GDP ratio is expected to hit a **record high of 11.7% of GDP in 2024-25**, led by an uptick in the more 'equitable' direct taxes, and the government will continue to simplify and rationalise the tax regime to reduce disputes, litigation and intrusive means of enforcement, Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra has said.



- Growth in Personal Income Tax collections stands at 28% so far this year, and may moderate to 20%-22% by the end of March, the Secretary said.

CIAL signs MoU with BPCL for setting up green hydrogen plant at Cochin airport

In a strategic move to bolster its pathbreaking green energy initiatives, **Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL)** has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)** for setting up a **green hydrogen plant** in the premises of Cochin Airport.



- This collaborative effort will result in the world's first green hydrogen plant and fueling station located within an airport setting, CIAL said.
- Green hydrogen, produced from water using renewable energy sources, is recognized as a future fuel and aligns with zero-carbon energy strategies, it said.

Indian economy to grow at 6.7% between fiscals 2024 to 2031: CRISIL

The **Indian economy** is expected to grow at an average rate of **6.7% per annum** until the end of the decade, CRISIL said in its latest report.



- The economy will grow at this rate between the financial years 2024 to 2031, a notch above the pre-pandemic average of 6.6%.
- CRISIL attributes this growth trend to capital, highlighting the government's investment-driven approach during a period when the private sector hesitated to make substantial investments.

- The government's notable increase in capital expenditure, supporting infrastructure projects and offering interest-free loans to states, is identified as a pivotal factor, it said.

C-DAC, Prama India collaboration to spur R&D, innovation in thermal camera tech

Video security solution provider **Prama India** said it has partnered Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (**C-DAC**), under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), for **research and development and innovation in thermal camera technology**.

- Prama India recently signed a transfer of technology (ToT) agreement with C-DAC.
- The company has a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility near Mumbai to help transform India into a global manufacturing and export hub for video security products.
- During the launch event of " Digital India FutureLABS Summit 2024" held at IIIT-Delhi, three Indigenous Technologies - **Thermal camera, CMOS camera and Fleet Management System** designed and developed by CDAC Thiruvananthapuram under InTranSE Program of MeitY were transferred to 12 Industries.

Prabhaav: SIDBI unveils the CRISIL study on impact of Fund of Funds on startup ecosystem

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (**SIDBI**) has unveiled the **report of the impact assessment of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)**, a key component of the startups.



- The third-party assessment of the scheme was undertaken by CRISIL, India's premier analytics company and pioneer of AIF benchmarking in the country. **CRISIL's impact assessment report viz. Prabhaav**, was unveiled by SIDBI.
- Funds of Fund for Start Ups (FFS) under the Startup India Action Plan, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016, is today one of the flagship programmes of DPIIT, Government of India, and has proven to be a game changing intervention of Government of India in country's Startup Ecosystem.

EPIC Foundation unveils the 1st designed in-India education tablet powered by BharatGPT

Epic Foundation, a non-profit organization, unveiled the first ‘designed in India’ tablet, built for the educational needs of school children.



- It is the first product designed ground up in India, which is fully repairable and upgradable. With the all-new Android tablet, India is getting a taste of the AI boom.
- The tablet is powered by the BharatGPT and uses a MediaTek chipset for performance. The MILKYWAY tablet has a lot of AI-centric features to offer, caters to the education segment, and aims to populate the market with its focus on government schools across the country.

APPOINTMENTS

Sanjay Kumar Jain assumes charge as IRCTC Chairman and Managing Director

Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jain, an Indian Railway Traffic Services (IRTS) Officer of 1990 batch has taken over the charge of **Chairman & Managing Director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC)**.



- Prior to this role, Jain was Principal Chief Commercial Manager (PCCM) of Northern Railway, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC) said in an exchange filing.

- Jain has relinquished the charge of PCCM/Northern Railway on February 13, 2024 and has assumed the charge of the post of IRCTC Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) on regular basis with effect from February 14, 2024.

AWARDS

Tata Steel's Kalinganagar, Meramandali plants in Odisha receive Responsible Steel certification

Tata Steel's Kalinganagar and Meramandali plants in Odisha have received the prestigious **Responsible Steel certification**, a company statement said.



- Responsible Steel is a global multi-stakeholder standard and certification initiative that works with steel producers, consumers, and intermediaries towards building a sustainable steel industry by addressing pressing challenges including climate change, diversity and human rights.
- Its certification process involves a detailed review of key policies and work at the site by an independent external assessor.

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