

**20- Feb 2024**

# **CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**- DAILY**

- NATIONAL; INTERNATIONAL**
- BANKING; FINANCE**
- SPORTS; AWARDS**
- SCIENCE**
- MISCELLANEOUS**



**ALFA  
BANKER**

## NATIONAL NEWS

### **PM Modi virtually inaugurates Mahabharata theme-based Jyotisar Anubhav Kendra, museum in Kurukshetra**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has virtually inaugurated the **Jyotisar Anubhav Kendra**, a museum and interpretation center inspired by the epic **Mahabharata**, from Rewari.



- While the project is still under completion, the opening of two out of its five planned galleries marks a promising start. This initiative, with an investment of approximately **Rs 240 crore**, is set to enhance the cultural and spiritual tourism landscape of **Kurukshetra, Haryana**.
- The Jyotisar Anubhav Kendra is located in Jyotisar, the revered site where, according to Hindu mythology, Lord Krishna imparted the Bhagavad Gita's teachings to Arjuna, igniting the inception of the **Mahabharata war**. This center aims to offer visitors a profound understanding and experience of this pivotal moment in Indian mythology through state-of-the-art galleries and exhibits.

### **Kishan Reddy lays foundation stone for constructions of railway station at Komuravelli in Siddipet**

Union Minister for Tourism, Culture and Development of Northeast Region, **G Kishan Reddy** and **Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Mohan Yadav** laid the foundation stone for the **Komuravelli Railway Station in Siddipet District**, Telangana. The station aims to improve transportation to the renowned Komuravelli Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, attracting millions of devotees annually.

- The Centre has provided close to ₹30,000 crore in the last 10 years for the development of railway infrastructure in Telangana, including the development of 40 major and minor railway stations in the region with free wi-fi facilities said by G. Kishan Reddy.



### **Pashupati Kumar Paras inaugurates "SUFALAM": Launching Groundbreaking Start-Up Conclave for Food Processing Entrepreneurs**

Union Minister of Food Processing **Pashupati Kumar Paras** inaugurated “**SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024,**” stressing the importance of such events in promoting networking, sharing knowledge, and aiding startups in accessing government schemes.



- The event witnessed participation from over 250 industry stakeholders, startups, MSMEs, financial institutions, venture capitalists, and academia.
- Spanning two days, the event comprised four knowledge sessions, two pitching sessions, and an exhibition.
- The knowledge sessions were held in collaboration with various organizations, while the pitching sessions were conducted in partnership with industry giants.

### **Satellite-based toll collection to pilot on Bengaluru Mysuru Expressway**

The Union government has decided to **implement as a pilot project of the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) based barrier less free flow tolling** on access-Controlled **10-lane Mysuru-Bengaluru Expressway (Highway)**.

- In a reply to a question by Rajya Sabha member Lahar Singh Siroya recently, **Nitin Gadkari**, Transport Minister, stated that it has been decided to conduct pilots of satellite-based toll collection on roads including Bengaluru-Mysuru NH-275 in Karnataka.





- The government has appointed a consultant to provide advisory services on the implementation of new technologies like GNSS based barrier-less free-flow tolling. GNSS has the capacity to retrieve the positioning of the vehicle on the National Highway and calculate the user fee based on the distance travelled.

## **MSME Minister Narayan Rane launches Rs 20 lakh scheme under CGTMSE for GST-exempted micro units**

MSME Minister **Narayan Rane** launched a **special scheme for informal micro enterprises (IMEs)**, which are **exempted from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime**, to access **collateral-free loans up to Rs 20 lakh** under the government's Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

- The scheme '**Special Provision for Informal Micro Enterprises under Credit Guarantee Scheme**' enables micro or nano enterprises with credit support from lenders and aims "at moderating the credit risk perception," the MSME Ministry said.
- According to the circular pertaining to the scheme issued by CGTMSE to all its member lending institutions (MLIs) on February 14, up to 85 per cent guarantee cover will be provided to lenders for unsecured loans up to Rs 20 lakh to IMEs registered on the **Udyam portal**.

## **CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurates Bagchi-Sri Shankara Cancer Centre in city**

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the **Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute (BSCCRI)** in **Bhubaneswar**.



- This state-of-the-art facility, established in collaboration with the Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in Bengaluru, represents a leap forward in making high-quality cancer treatment accessible and affordable to patients.

- The establishment of the Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre is the result of a significant collaboration between the Odisha government and the renowned Sri Shankara Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Bengaluru. With an **investment of Rs 410 crore**, this partnership aims to replicate the Bengaluru centre's success in providing top-notch care and research in the field of oncology.

## Haryana CM Khattar launches 'Van Mitra' scheme to encourage participation in tree planting

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar launched the 'Van Mitra' scheme and its portal to encourage community participation in tree planting activities in non-forest areas. The members of families with an **annual income of less than Rs 1.80 lakh** can register to become 'Van Mitras'.



- Khattar said that the objective of this scheme is to directly involve the local public in increasing forest areas across the state, ensuring an increase in the survival rate of afforestation, and promoting tree planting in non-forest areas.

## UP govt hikes grant for Kanya Sumangala plan

Uttar Pradesh Chief minister **Yogi Adityanath** announced that the grant under the **Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana** will be increased from **₹15,000 to ₹25,000 per beneficiary annually** from April this year. The scheme facilitates education of a girl child, right from her birth till graduation.



- Adityanath said under the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, the state government had conducted 3 lakh marriages since 2017, spending ₹51,000 per couple, out of which ₹35,000 were sent to the bride's account.
- Addressing the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Samaroh on the Fertiliser Factory premises on Basant Panchmi, the CM said a daughter contributes to the advancement of an entire family and several schemes were being implemented at the central and state levels to save and empower daughters.
- On this occasion, Adityanath also laid the foundation stone of **91 development projects worth 252 crore.**

### **Tamil Nadu passes resolutions against delimitation, 'one nation, one poll'**

The **Tamil Nadu** legislative assembly has passed **two resolutions opposing the delimitation exercise** and the **"one nation, one election" policy** proposed by the Indian government.

- The resolutions argue that the delimitation exercise should be based on the 1971 census and not the 2026 census, and that the proposed simultaneous elections are impractical and against the constitution.



- The resolutions have been hailed as a decisive stand against the BJP-led government. Southern states fear that the delimitation exercise will reduce their political representation. The BJP opposed the resolution on one nation, one election.

### **Odisha Govt introduces 'Swayam' scheme for Youth Empowerment**

**Odisha** Agriculture Minister Ranendra Pratap Swain introduced **'Swayam' scheme** aims to empower the **youth of Odisha** by providing **interest-free loans of up to Rs 1 lakh** to young entrepreneurs, fostering self-employment opportunities.

- Eligible rural and urban youth aged between **18-35 years** are the primary beneficiaries of the scheme, with the goal of facilitating the establishment or expansion of businesses.
- Further, under this scheme, all rural unemployed youth or those with no outstanding loan for the same purpose from any central or state government-supported schemes in the age group of 18-35 years (18-40 years for a special category) desirous of starting a new business or expanding their existing business will be provided an interest-free bank loan for project costs up to Rs 1 lakh.





- The scheme will be operational for two years and Rs 672 crore will be spent from the state's coffers. The government has also decided to provide two jute bags of 20 kg and 10 kg capacity to each of the PDS families for their daily use, free of cost.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **India chairs the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development**

India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, **Ruchira Kamboj**, chaired the **62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development**, held from Feb 5-15. According to an official statement, the session focused on bolstering international cooperation in social development issues.



- With the priority theme of "Fostering Social Development and Social Justice through Social Policies to Accelerate Progress on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to Achieve the Overarching Goal of Poverty Eradication," the session delved into critical global social challenges.
- Under India's stewardship, four resolutions were successfully adopted. These included resolutions on promoting care and support systems for social development, the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and resolutions outlining priority themes for the 62nd and 63rd sessions of the Commission for Social Development.
- Kamboj extended a warm welcome to **Poland as the incoming Chair**, entrusted with presiding over the 63rd session of the Commission for Social Development in 2025.

## Greece legalizes same-sex marriage in a first for an Orthodox Christian country

Greece has become the **first Orthodox Christian country to legalise same-sex marriage** despite opposition from the church and some politicians.



- The measure was passed by parliament late on Thursday with 176 lawmakers from across the political spectrum voting in favour, and 76 against. Two abstained and 46 were not present.
- The bill required a simple majority to pass in the 300-member parliament. The vote, which came after two days of debate and weeks of public reactions, will now legally allow same-sex couples to adopt children as well.

## BANKING & FINANCE

### LIC launches “Amritbaal” insurance plan for children

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) recently launched ‘Amritpal’, a traditional endowment policy targeting parents seeking to secure their **children’s higher education expenses** in the long term. This unencumbered, non-participating policy is designed to provide financial stability and support to parents who plan to meet their children’s future educational needs.



- Amritpal is open to children aged **30 days to 13 years upon entry**, with a **mature age range of 18 to 25 years**. This policy offers assured additions at a rate of Rs 80 per thousand basic sum assured per annum, which accumulates over the policy term.



- Installment payment terms are flexible, ranging from five to seven years. The **minimum insurance amount is Rs 2 lakh**, with no maximum limit specified.

### **SBI allows customers to digitally enrol under PMJJBY and PMSBY schemes**

The **State Bank of India**, which is the largest public sector bank in the country, has said that **users can use the self-subscribing route to enrol for the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) schemes.**



- PMJJBY provides a death coverage of Rs 2,00,000 to the beneficiary of the policy in the case of the sudden demise of the insured person. As PMJJBY is a pure-term insurance plan, it does not offer any maturity or surrender benefit.
- Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) is an accident insurance scheme offering accidental death and disability cover for death or disability on account of an accident. It would be a one-year cover, renewable from year to year.

### **BUSINESS & ECONOMY**

### **Tata Steel partners with IIT Bhubaneswar REP to drive innovation and entrepreneurship**

In a move aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, **Tata Steel** recently inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **IIT Bhubaneswar Research and Entrepreneurship Park (REP)**. This partnership signifies a strategic alignment between **industry and academia to explore avenues for mutual growth and development.**

- Under the terms of the agreement, Tata Steel and IIT Bhubaneswar REP, a company promoted by IIT Bhubaneswar, are set to embark on a journey of collaboration across various domains.
- This partnership builds upon previous collaborations between the company and the institute, particularly in the realm of battery research.



### SIDBI unveils “Prabhaav” – An Impact Study of the Fund of Funds for Startups

The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has released the **impact assessment report of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)**, a pivotal element of the Start Up India Action Plan initiated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in 2016. Conducted by CRISIL, a leading analytics company in India, the report, titled “**Prabhaav**,” underscores the transformative influence of the FFS scheme on the Indian startup ecosystem.

- As of November 30, 2023, **129 Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) have received commitments** from the FFS across various segments. The scheme has facilitated investments totaling approximately **₹17,534 crore** in 938 distinct startups, marking a significant fourfold increase from the initial investment amount.



- FFS has fostered investments in startups operating in cutting-edge sectors like deep tech, agri/agri solutions, health tech, financial services, and sustainability, thereby promoting innovation across diverse domains.
- The scheme has demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity by directing investments beyond **Tier 1 cities**, with 129 startups from non-metropolitan areas receiving investments amounting to **₹1,590 crore**.
- Despite primarily focusing on early-stage funding, FFS has facilitated the growth of 18 startups into unicorns, indicating its role in nurturing high-potential ventures and fostering their scalability.
- The scheme has contributed to the enhancement of governance standards within startups while also fostering wealth creation opportunities for investors and entrepreneurs alike.

## SPORTS

### **ICC bans UK cricketer Rizwan Javed for over 17 years for match-fixing**

UK-based club cricketer **Rizwan Javed** was banned from all cricket for 17 ½ years after being found guilty of five breaches of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) Anti-Corruption Code for Participants.



- Rizwan was among eight players and officials charged by the ICC on behalf of the ECB (in its capacity as the Designated Anti-Corruption Official under the Code) in **September last year concerning the 2021 Abu Dhabi T10 Cricket League** and attempts to corrupt matches in that tournament, which attempts were disrupted.
- Michael J Beloff KC, Chair of the ICC Code of Conduct Committee (acting as the ECB's Disciplinary Panel), decided after Rizwan failed to respond to the charges and was therefore deemed to have admitted that he has committed the offences charged, to have waived his right to a hearing and to have acceded to the imposition of a sanction.

### **Ravichandran Ashwin completes 500 Test wickets, joins elite list with massive career milestone**

India off-spinner **Ravichandran Ashwin** added yet another feather to his cap on the second day of the third Test match against England. He **completed 500 wickets in Test cricket** in the first innings when he picked his first wicket becoming only the **second Indian cricketer to do so in the format**. Overall, Ashwin is ninth bowler to breach the 500-wicket mark doing it in his 98th Test match.



- Interestingly, the 37-year-old is also the second fastest to the milestone only behind Sri Lanka spinner Muttiah Muralitharan who eventually ended with 800 wickets during his illustrious Test career. The latter completed 500 scalps in Tests in just 87



Tests while earlier, the second fastest in this aspect was Kumble himself having done it in 105 Test matches.

- The other bowlers to breach the rare landmark in the longest form of the game are - Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Nathan Lyon, Courtney Walsh, James Anderson and Stuart Broad.

## APPOINTMENTS

### **Judge Nawaf Salam elected President of the International Court of Justice**

**Nawaf Salam** was elected **president of the ICJ in The Hague, succeeding US Judge Joan Donoghue**. This significant milestone marks him as the **first Lebanese and second Arab** to hold this prestigious position for a three-year term.



- Salam's journey with the ICJ began in 2018, and he currently holds the highest judicial position globally. His appointment highlights his remarkable trajectory within the field of international law.
- Salam follows in the footsteps of former Lebanese Foreign Minister Fouad Ammoun, who served as a judge in the ICJ from 1965 to 1976. Lebanon's historical association with the ICJ underscores its commitment to global justice.

## AWARDS

### **RIL continues as most valuable company, Serum Institute tops in unlisted ones: Study**

**Serum Institute of India** tops the list of most valuable unlisted companies in the country, followed by **National Stock Exchange of India** and the **Megha Engineering and Infrastructure**, according to the '**2023 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500**' list of the 500 most valuable companies in India.

- Zoho Corporation, Swiggy, Intas Pharmaceuticals, Dream11, Parle, Zerodha are the other names who made into the list.
- **Reliance Industries** continues its reign in the top position for the third year in a row on the **Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 with a value of Rs 15,64,663 crore**. Reliance Industries is valued at least Rs 3 lakh crore more than **TCS**, which is number 2 on the list with Rs 12.4 trillion and **HDFC Bank** with Rs 11.3 trillion.



- The merger of HDFC Ltd with HDFC Bank facilitated HDFC Bank to become the third Indian company to surpass Rs 10 trillion capitalization. HCL Technologies and Kotak Mahindra Bank make their return to the top 10 list.
- Suzlon Energy grew at the fastest pace registering a 436 per cent growth, dominating the list of fastest growing companies in 2023 followed by Jindal Stainless and JSW Infrastructure. By absolute value, the biggest gainers were HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro & ITC.
- Jio Financial Services secured a 28th rank, after demerging from Reliance Industries.
- Financial Services and Healthcare sectors led the pack with 76 and 58 companies respectively, closely followed by Consumer Goods, which boasts of 38 companies in the list.

## Government drops names of Indira Gandhi, Nargis Dutt from National Film Awards

The ‘Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director’ and the ‘Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration’, which are part of the National Film Awards, have been **renamed** on the recommendation of the Committee for Rationalisation of Film Awards.

- According to the report, the committee recommended that the ‘Indira Gandhi Award for Best Debut Film of a Director’ be renamed as ‘**Best Debut Film of a Director**’, and the award money be increased to **Rs 3 lakh**.
- It also recommended that the ‘Nargis Dutt Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration’ be renamed as ‘**Best Feature Film Promoting National, Social and Environmental Values**’.
- This award carries a **Rajat Kamal to the director and the producer with Rs 1.5 lakh each**. The committee recommended that it be clubbed with ‘**Best Film on Social Issues and Best Film on Environment Conservation/Preservation**’. The award amount has been increased to **Rs 2 lakh** each to the director and producer.

## Himachal Pradesh tops in 2024's ‘most welcoming region in India’ list

Online travel agency **Booking.com** has revealed the list of **Most Welcoming Regions and Cities in India** according to its **12th Annual Traveller Review Awards 2024**. According to the ranking, **Himachal Pradesh** secured the top spot, jumping from 5th place in 2023, in the category of the ‘Most Welcoming Region in India.’ On the second rank is **Goa** followed by **Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand**, several media reports have stated.



- As per the report, in 2023, **Puducherry** ranked number one in the Most Welcoming Region in India list followed by **Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa, Himachal Pradesh**.
- In addition to this, to aid travelers in enjoying the most hospitable experiences for an unforgettable journey in 2024, the company also revealed the ten 'Most Welcoming Cities in India.'
- As per the list, **Kerala's Mararikulam** which is known for its serene backwaters, coconut trees, peaceful beaches coupled with excellent hospitality has been ranked as number 1 in the 'Most Welcoming Indian cities list. Taking the second spot is Rajasthan's dessert city of Jaisalmer followed by Maharashtra's Bir, Leh, Manali, Tekkady, Dharamshala, Kasol, Pushkar, and Jodhpur.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### **IIT Jammu Professor Develops Sound-Based Anti-Drone System at Rs. 4 Lakh**

In Jammu and Kashmir, a professor in the Electrical Engineering Department of IIT Jammu, **Dr. Karan Nathwani** has developed an **anti-drone system** that works mainly on **sound technology**.



- The drone system is not only cost effective but also user-friendly, making it accessible to the general public. The system is easy to operate, and there are no issues with cameras or radar and was designed considering various challenges, making it versatile.



- The drone system is the first of its kind which is developed based on an entirely new technology called '**sound-based detection**'. This system detects the sound emitted by drones, producing a unique signature that helps in their identification.
- The cost of this system is about **4 lakh rupees**. The Sound-based drone detection systems will detect even drones and birds coming from Pakistan.

## ENVIRONMENT

### **Large deposits of iron ore found in Rajasthan's Karauli**

The **Rajasthan** Mines Department has started preparations for the auction for composite license of iron ore blocks in an area of about 1,888 hectares near **Hindon in Karauli district** after **large deposits of iron ore** were found there, officials said.



- Mines secretary **Anandi** said that according to preliminary indications, there are deposits of **more than 840 million tonnes of iron ore** in Khoda, Dadaroli, Todupura and Liloti near Hindon in Karauli. She added that the new deposits of iron ore will also create new opportunities for industrial development and employment in the state.
- In the initial exploration done by the department, indications of both magnetite and hematite of iron ore have been found. Iron ore deposits have been found in 462.3 hectares at Khoda of Karauli, 754.38 hectares at Dadaroli, 260.71 hectares at Todupura and 410.94 hectares at Liloti.

## OBITUARIES

### **Kavita Chaudhary, star of classic TV show Udaan, passes away**

**Kavita Chaudhary**, who played the role of IPS officer Kalyani Singh in Udaan, passed away in Amritsar after suffering a heart attack. She was 67.



- Chaudhary gained widespread acclaim for her portrayal of IPS officer Kalyani Singh in Udaan, a progressive show focused on women's empowerment that aired on Doordarshan from 1989 to 1991. Udaan received critical acclaim and inspired a generation of women to pursue careers in public service.
- During the pandemic, the show was brought back for a re-run on Doordarshan, further solidifying its impact on Indian television and society.

### Padma Shri Chef Imtiaz Qureshi passes away

**Legendary chef Imtiaz Qureshi**, who was known for having revived the old-Lucknowi tradition of dum pukht style of cooking, died of age-related ailments at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital. He was 93.



- Chef Qureshi, known for his culinary expertise as the master chef at ITC Hotels, gained acclaim for establishing the culinary brand Bukhara.
- Born in Kolkata in 1928, Chef Qureshi began his culinary journey at the age of seven by assisting the royal chefs in his family home. He was one of the essential pillars in popularizing the art of Dum Pukht abroad, making it a global gastronomic sensation.
- In 1979, Imtiaz Qureshi became an integral part of ITC Hotels, leaving an indelible mark on the culinary landscape. In recognition of his unparalleled contributions to the art of cooking, the Government of India honored him with the prestigious **Padma Shri** in 2016.

# FOLLOW US ON:



**ChiragChopra\_786**



**The ALFA Banker**



**@TheALFABanker**



**ALFA  
BANKER**