

21- Feb 2024

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NATIONAL NEWS

PM Modi lays foundation stone of Kalki Dham temple in UP's Sambhal

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham temple in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal. The construction of Shri Kalki Dham is overseen by the Shri Kalki Dham Nirman Trust, led by its chairman Acharya Pramod Krishnam.



- The Kalki Dham is dedicated to the 10th avatar of Lord Vishnu, Kalki, and holds significant cultural and religious importance for Hindus nationwide.
- Later in the day, the Prime Minister is set to inaugurate over **14,000 projects valued at more than ₹10 lakh crore** across the state. These projects stem from investment proposals received during the UP Global Investors Summit 2023 (UPGIS 2023) held the previous year.

Indian Army plans Rs 57,000 cr project to replace ageing T-72 tank fleet

The **Indian Army** is set to issue a **Request for Proposal (RFP)** this year for a project worth an estimated **Rs 57,000 crore to produce 1,770 Future Ready Combat Vehicles (FRCVs)** in India, slated to **replace the ageing Russian-origin T-72 tanks from 2030 onwards.**

- These FRCVs will incorporate cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), drone integration, active protection systems, and enhanced situational awareness. They will also feature manned-unmanned teaming capability and seamless integration into network-centric warfare environments.
- The induction of FRCVs will occur in three phases, with each phase incorporating newer technologies to ensure maximum survivability, lethality, and agility.



U Tirot Sing's bust unveiled in Dhaka Shillong

The **U Tirot Sing Memorial** was inaugurated at the **Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) in Dhaka**, Bangladesh where the bust of U Tirot Sing Syiem, braveheart of Khasi Hills and freedom fighter of Meghalaya was also unveiled.



- This is in line with the celebration of the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mohotsav** in Bangladesh.
- The delegation to Bangladesh was led by Deputy Chief Minister Sniawbhalang Dhar along with the Arts and Culture Minister Paul Lyngdoh, officials, renowned artist of the state Raphael Warjri, who designed the bust and officials.
- Tirot Sing, a tribal chief known as ‘the Hero of the Khasi Hills’ of Meghalaya and of his heroic struggle against the British colonizers that his life story has become a saga and an inspiration to many.

Govt raises authorised capital of FCI from Rs 10000 cr to Rs 21000 cr

The government has **increased the authorised capital of state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) from ₹10,000 crore to ₹21,000 crore** to enhance the operational capabilities and fulfill its mandate effectively, the Food Ministry said.

- The increase in authorised capital is a significant step towards enhancing the operational capabilities of FCI in fulfilling its mandate effectively,” the Ministry said.



- FCI is the central government's nodal agency that undertakes the procurement of foodgrains at a minimum support price (MSP) to protect the interest of farmers. It also maintains strategic stocks and distributes the grains under different welfare schemes.
- FCI resorts to cash credit, short-term loan, ways and means etc. to match the gap in the fund requirement. The increase in the authorised capital will reduce the interest burden, decrease the economic cost and ultimately affecting the government subsidy positively.

UP emerges as top state in total vehicle sales in Oct-Dec 2023; Maharashtra 2nd: SIAM

Maharashtra clocked the **highest passenger vehicle sales** in the October-December period of 2023. The **Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM)** has revealed that Maharashtra recorded 121,030 units of passenger vehicles in the fourth quarter of the last calendar year.

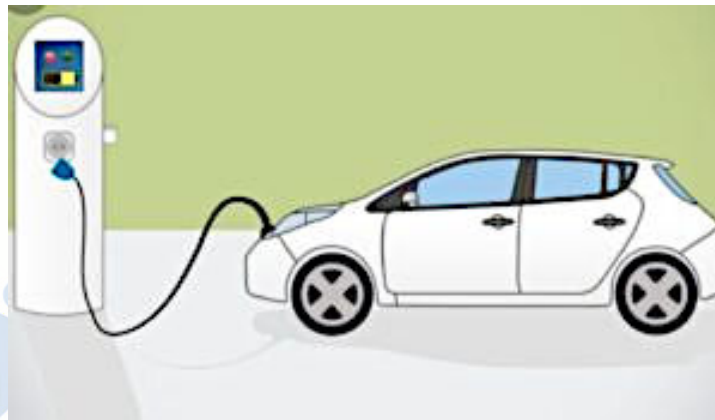


- The second position was held by **Uttar Pradesh** with 101,568 units of passenger vehicle sales, followed by **Gujarat** and **Karnataka** with these states registering 85,599 units and 71,549 units respectively.
- In the **total vehicle sales**, **Uttar Pradesh** emerged as the top position holder, followed by **Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu**, revealed SIAM. Uttar Pradesh reportedly clocked a total sales of 822,472 units of vehicle sales in the last quarter across passenger, two-wheeler, three-wheeler and commercial vehicles.

- SIAM data further revealed that Maharashtra was second with 688,192 units across the four categories followed by Gujarat with 421,026 units and Tamil Nadu with 419,189 units in the last quarter.
- Similarly, in the **two-wheeler category**, **Uttar Pradesh** topped the list with a total of 673,962 units sold in the state, followed by **Maharashtra** which registered 515,612 units during the corresponding period. **Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu** held the third and fourth positions in the chart with 335,478 units and 324,918 units of two-wheelers sold respectively during October-December 2023.

Karnataka tops list with most EV Charging Stations in India

Karnataka tops the country in terms of public electric vehicle charging stations with **5,059**, according to statistics from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), under the Union Ministry of Power.



- **Bengaluru** Urban district has the most public charging stations with 4,281, which constitutes 85% of the charging infrastructure in the State.
- At present, it leads in the number of public charging stations, with **Maharashtra** (3,079), **Delhi** (1,886), Kerala (958), Tamil Nadu (643), Uttar Pradesh (583), and Rajasthan (500) following suit.
- Meanwhile, in terms of the number of EVs, Uttar Pradesh is top with 7.45 lakh, followed by Maharashtra (4.15 lakh), and Karnataka (3.31 lakh).

Sarbananda Sonowal launches ‘Sagar Aankalan’ guidelines for Indian Port Performance Index

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, **Sarbananda Sonowal** launched ‘**Sagar Aankalan**’ guidelines during the stakeholders meet for implementation of the **MoUs signed** earlier at the **Global Maritime India Summit 2023 (GMIS 2023)**.

- The “Sagar Aankalan” Guidelines for National Benchmarking of Indian Ports Performance would be applicable to all Indian seaports with an aim to achieve; Mapping and benchmarking of Indian Port’s – logistics performance and efficiency, Harmonisation of standards, definitions and performance with global benchmarks, Improving competitiveness, efficiency and overall performance of the port sector with focus on improvement, productivity, sustainability and customer satisfaction.
- The Ministry also draws action plan for swift implementation of MoUs signed during the GMIS. Participants engaged in productive discussions, sharing valuable insights

and recommendations to overcome challenges and facilitate the implementation of the MoUs.



- GMIS 2023 emerged as one of the largest maritime summits globally, attracting a record-breaking investment commitment of ₹10 lakh crore. The signing of 360 MoUs, with an investment commitment of ₹8.35 lakh crore, and the announcement of additional investible projects worth ₹1.68 lakh crore, underscored the immense potential of India's maritime sector.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

World's most powerful passports 2024: India slips one notch to 85th, ranked below Maldives, S. Arabia; France tops list

The **Henley Passport Index for 2024** has been released, and **India slipped** one rank down from last year to **85th**. The index ranks 199 nations based on the strength of their passports, and in 2024, **France has topped** the list, as its passport provides visa-free access to 194 countries.

- India slipped one notch down from last year to 85th even as the countries with visa-free access to Indians increased to 62 from 60 in 2023. The rank of political crisis-hit Pakistan remained the same as last year, at 106, while Bangladesh's position slipped from 101 in 2023 to 102 this year.
- **Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain** are the other countries that are standing alongside France on the top. Interestingly, the Maldives, India's maritime neighbour, was ranked 58th with its citizens having visa-free access to 96 countries.
- The ranking of the United States jumped from 7th to 6th position even as its anti-immigration stance seems to be a polarising issue in the upcoming Presidential elections. China witnessed a marginal jump in its ranking from 66 in 2023 to 64 this year, as the country granted visa-free access to many European nations to revive its tourism sector in a post-pandemic economy.

Japan's 1000-year-old 'Naked Men' festival comes to an end

The bizarre annual 'naked festival' of Japan called 'Sominsai' has been impacted, as rural towns hosting it grapple with demographic challenges posed by the country's rapid population ageing.



- Held every February, the cold weather festival involves scores of men wearing just loincloths ostensibly to invoke gods for a bountiful harvest.
- During the 1000-year-old Sominsai festival groups of barely clad local men roaming the streets in freezing temperatures, eating, drinking and chanting while onlookers shower them with freezing cold water. But participant numbers have drastically dropped with small town youth migrating to cities.

BANKING & FINANCE

IREDA, PNB collaborate to enhance financing for renewable energy projects in India

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) and Punjab National Bank (PNB) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at **advancing renewable energy initiatives** across the nation. The MoU comprises various provisions aimed at enhancing support for renewable energy projects.

- The MoU is expected to enable IREDA and PNB to share the financial risks and rewards of larger renewable energy projects, making them more feasible for developers to undertake.
- Additionally, management of the Trust and Retention Account (TRA) for IREDA borrowers will streamline the financial management of project funds, ensuring timely payments and reducing administrative burdens for developers.

IEPFA and DBS Bank ink MoU to spread awareness on investment and fraudulent schemes

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the **Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)** under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs

(MCA), and **DBS Bank**, a prominent financial institution with a strong presence in Asia and Southeast Asia in New Delhi.



- According to the MoU, DBS Bank **aims to support IEPFA's investor awareness activities** by disseminating safety messages via its various digital platforms.
- Leveraging DBS Bank's extensive network of branches and ATMs in 19 Indian states, as well as its digital infrastructure, will significantly increase the reach of IEPFA's investor awareness and protection messages to the end users.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

India 3rd largest digitalised country among G20 nations: Report

India is the **third largest digitalised country** in the world, only behind the **United States of**



America (USA) and China, according to a recent study released by a Delhi based think tank.

- According to the **State of India's Digital Economy Report, 2024**, by Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (**ICRIER**), the state of digitalisation in India is better than some developed countries including the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, compared by their aggregate level of digitalisation. However, at the level of individual users, India is ranked 12th in terms of digitalisation among the G20 countries.
- The study is based on 'CHIPS' framework wherein it has scored countries on five pillars – connect, harness, innovate, protect and sustain.



Outward FDI rises 25.7% to \$2.1 billion in January, shows RBI data

India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments rose by 25.7 per cent on a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) basis to **\$2.09 billion in January 2024**, compared to over \$1.66 billion in January 2023. Sequentially, they declined from \$2.5 billion in December 2023, according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.



- The equity commitments rose to \$760.9 million in January 2024 from \$597.4 million in January 2023. It was lower than the \$834.7 million recorded in December 2023. Debt commitments increased to \$306.2 million in January 2023 from \$215.6 million a year ago. However, it more than halved from \$687.9 million in December 2023.
- Guarantees for overseas units rose to \$1.02 billion in January this year from \$854.1 million in January 2023. They were also up marginally compared to \$988.4 million in December 2023, RBI data showed.

SPORTS

MS Dhoni named captain of IPL's greatest all-time team

Legendary Chennai Super Kings (CSK) skipper **MS Dhoni** added a new feather to his already overflowing hat and was named the **captain of the all-time greatest IPL team** chosen by a selection panel comprising former cricketers and journalists.

- The panel included **Wasim Akram, Matthew Hayden, Tom Moody, Dale Steyn**, and 70 sports journalists. The lineup of 15 players was picked to celebrate the success of the world's most popular T20 league which was launched in 2008.
- All-time leading run-getters of the IPL, Virat Kohli and David Warner were chosen as openers while big-hitter Chris Gayle was given the number three spot in the batting order.
- The middle order of the all-time greatest IPL team saw the likes of Suresh Raina, AB de Villiers, Suryakumar Yadav, and MS Dhoni was named the wicketkeeper-captain. Hardik Pandya and Ravindra Jadeja along with Kieron Pollard were picked as the all-rounders.



- Three spinners made the cut including Sunil Narine, Rashid Khan, and Yuzvendra Chahal. Mumbai Indian greats Lasith Malinga and Jasprit Bumrah were the unanimous choice for the seamers' spots.

India crowned Badminton Asia Team champions for 1st time

India women's badminton team scripted history in Selangor Malaysia as they won the Badminton Asia Team Championships crown, beating Thailand 3-2 in a hard-fought final. This is the **first time India have won** the prestigious continental team championship title in the history of the sport.



- **PV Sindhu, Gayatri Gopichand-Treesa Jolly and teenage sensational Anmol Kharb** won their respective matches as India won the final 3-2 in Shah Alam.
- In a hard-fought final that ebbed and flowed, India went 2-0 up before Thailand made it 2-2 and forced a decider. However, teenager Anmol shone in the deciding match, once again as she sealed the deal and the historic title for India.

Must Watch

BANK EXAMS 2024

+ English
Subtitles

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APPOINTMENTS

KVS Manian appointed as new JMD of Kotak Mahindra Bank

Private sector lender **Kotak Mahindra Bank** announced significant leadership changes, including re-designating whole-time director **KVS Manian** as the **joint managing director** effective **1 March**.



- Manian, an alumnus of the Indian Institutes of Technology (BHU) – Varanasi, with a degree in electrical engineering and a postgraduate in financial management from Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai, alongside being a Cost and Works Accountant, brings nearly three decades of experience within Kotak to his new role.
- In addition, **Shanti Ekambaram** has been named **deputy managing director**, also effective March. Ekambaram, who has over 30 years of service at Kotak, holds a commerce degree, is a chartered accountant, and a Cost and Works Accountant.

ICICI Bank appoints Pradeep Kumar Sinha as an Additional (Independent) Director



Former Cabinet Secretary **Pradeep Kumar Sinha** will take over as **Non-Executive Part-time Chairman of ICICI Bank** after G. C. Chaturvedi's term ends on June 30, 2024.

- The Bank, in a regulatory filing, said G. C. Chaturvedi would retire as Non-Executive Part-time Chairman on close of business hours of June 30, 2024.
- Sinha joined the Indian Administrative Service (Uttar Pradesh in 1977). He served as the Cabinet Secretary (from June 2015) for more than four years before moving to the Prime Minister's Office. He retired from there in March 2021.

Shubman Gill named Punjab 'state icon' for Lok Sabha polls, to engage in awareness campaigns

Indian cricketer **Shubman Gill** has been named as Punjab's 'state icon' for the upcoming **Lok Sabha Elections**. The star cricketer will be bestowed the responsibility of engaging in awareness campaigns to increase the voter percentage in the state.



- Punjab witnessed a 65.96 vote percentage in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections for the 13 seats and the poll panel has set the target of "Is Vaar 70 Paar" for the upcoming polls. The Punjab Chief Electoral Officer's office designated the title to Gill.

AWARDS

REC receives 'Innovative Technology Development Award' at IIT Madras CSR Summit for its 2 MW Rooftop Solar Plant at IIT

REC Limited, a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has been honoured with the 'Innovative Technology Development Award' at the 'Building India 2047: Technology for Better Tomorrow', an IIT Madras Corporate Social Responsibility Summit.

- The award has been conferred in recognition of REC's CSR initiative of installation of 2 MW rooftop solar plant at IIT Madras. The solar plant generates around 3.15

million units of clean energy every year, thus helping IIT Madras reduce its carbon footprint.

- REC Limited, through its CSR arm, REC Foundation, maintains a strong commitment to CSR and prioritizes projects that have a profound impact on society, with an impetus on sustainable development goals and national priorities.
- REC Limited has been recognized for its CSR activities with several prestigious awards, including the Global CSR Leadership Awards in 2023 and the PSE Excellence Award for CSR in 2023.

BAFTA Awards 2024

Actor Deepika Padukone attended the **77th BAFTA Film Awards 2024**. She presented the **award for the Best Film Not in the English Language** to actor Jonathan Glazer for *The Zone Of Interest*. Apart from Jonathan Glazer, other nominees in the category were *20 Days in Mariupol*, *Anatomy of a Fall*, *Past Lives* and *Society of the Snow*.



BAFTA Awards 2024 Winners :

1. Best Film: *Oppenheimer*
2. Outstanding British Film: *The Zone of Interest*
3. Outstanding Debut by a British Writer, Director or Producer: *Earth Mama* – Savanah Leaf (Writer, Director, Producer), Shirley O’connor (Producer), Medb Riordan (Producer)
4. Film Not in the English Language: *The Zone of Interest*
5. Documentary: *20 Days in Mariupol*
6. Animated Film: *The Boy And The Heron*
7. Director: Christopher Nolan, *Oppenheimer*
8. Original Screenplay: *Anatomy of a Fall*
9. Adapted Screenplay: *American Fiction*
10. Leading Actress: Emma Stone, *Poor Things*
11. Leading Actor: Cillian Murphy, *Oppenheimer*
12. Supporting Actress: Da’Vine Joy Randolph, *The Holdovers*
13. Supporting Actor: Robert Downey Jr., *Oppenheimer*
14. Original Score: *Oppenheimer*
15. Cinematography: *Oppenheimer*
16. Editing: *Oppenheimer*

17. Casting: The Holdovers
18. Production Design: Poor Things
19. Costumer Design: Poor Things
20. Makeup & Hair: Poor Things
21. Sound: The Zone of Interest
22. Special Visual Effects: Poor Things
23. British Short Animation: Crab Day
24. EE Rising Star Award: Mia McKenna-Bruce
25. British Short Film: Jellyfish and Lobster

President of India Confers RPSF Constable with ‘Jeevan Raksha Padak’

Droupadi Murmu, the President of India has conferred the prestigious ‘Jeevan Raksha Padak’ to Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) constable **Sh. Shashikant Kumar** for the year 2023, on the occasion of Republic Day 2024.



- His remarkable courage, quick thinking, and prompt action in saving the life of a female railway passenger has earned him this esteemed recognition.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA, Japan to launch world's 1st wooden satellite soon

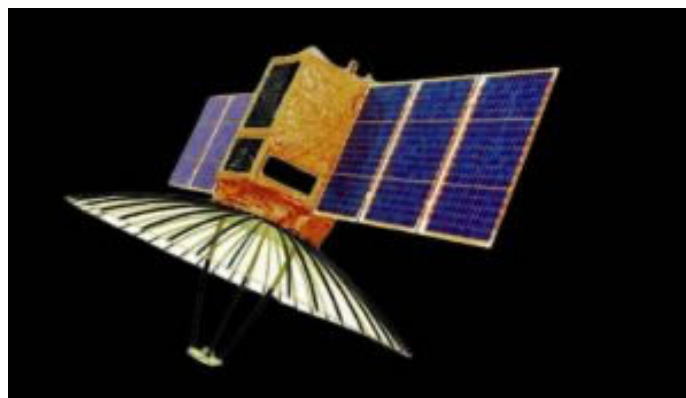
NASA and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) are considering launching the **LignoSat** probe – the world's first wooden satellite into space, in an attempt to make spaceflight operations sustainable.



- The tiny satellite has been built by the scientists at **Kyoto University** in collaboration with **Sumitomo Forestry**, a logging company. Scientists believe that the satellite's biodegradable nature may help preserve the Earth's environment.
- This unusual spacecraft is made up of **magnolia wood** which, during the experiments, was found to be particularly stable and resistant to cracking. The wooden satellite was created by Japanese scientists and now the US has become a part of their mission as they finalized the satellite to be launched on a US rocket.

India's first spy satellite made by domestic private player set for launch

The **first spy satellite in India** to be made by a local private player is set to be launched in a **SpaceX rocket by April** and will be used by the armed forces to get discreet information. The satellite that has been built by **Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL)** is being sent to Florida for its launch.



- Earlier, the armed forces had to acquire the required exact coordinates and timings from foreign vendors. But now, this satellite will allow them to be monitored by India and also provide it with full ground control.

- The **ground control centre**, which will be set up in **Bengaluru**, is also being worked on and is expected to be operational soon. This will be used for guidance and processing the imagery sent by the satellite. The centre is being built in partnership with Satellogic, a Latin-American company.

Developed by Indian Air Force, SAMAR Air Defence Missile System fired for first time in Vayushakti Exercise at Jaisalmer

The **SAMAR (Surface-to-Air Missile for Assured Retaliation)** air defence missile system was **fired** at the **Vayushakti Exercise** for the first time in **Rajasthan's Jaisalmer**.



- SAMAR is developed in-house by the units of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Maintenance Command. It was conceived using outdated Russian-origin air-to-air missile systems.
- Operating at **speeds ranging from 2 to 2.5 Mach**, the system features a twin-turret launch platform capable of launching two missiles in single and salvo modes, depending on the threat scenario.
- Its test firings were conducted successfully in December last year. It was then subjected to firing trials during the Astrashakti-2023 exercise at Air Force Station Suryalanka.

OBITUARIES

‘Dangal’ child star **Suhani Bhatnagar** passes away

Suhani Bhatnagar, who played young Babita Phogat in Aamir Khan-starrer wrestling drama “Dangal”, has died at the age of 19.



- The family revealed that she had been suffering from Dermatomyositis, a rare inflammatory disease causing skin rashes and muscle weakness.
- The Faridabad-born actor became a prominent face after appearing in the 2016 biographical drama about a wrestler who mentors his two daughters to success.

‘Anupamaa’ actor **Rituraj Singh** passes away

Noted actor **Rituraj Singh**, who appeared on the television show Anupamaa as well as several films, including Badrinath Ki Dulhania, passed away at his home following a cardiac arrest. He was 59.



- Rituraj Singh was a familiar face in TV serials, films as well as OTT shows. His television projects include Banegi Apni Baat, Hitler Didi, Shapath, Adaalat and Diya Aur Baati Hum. Besides, he appeared in supporting roles in Hindi films and in OTT shows such as Bandish Bandits, Made in Heaven, and Indian Police Force.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Unveiling professor S D Muni s Book, Dabbling In Diplomacy

Professor S.D. Muni's compelling work, "Dabbling in Diplomacy- Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat," provides an unprecedented glimpse into the intricate web of South Asian geopolitics through the lens of an academic deeply immersed in the region's affairs.



- The book follows Professor. Muni's extensive career at prestigious institutions such as Jawaharlal Nehru University and the National University of Singapore.
- With a background in International Relations and South Asian Studies, his narrative is enriched by firsthand encounters and interactions with key political figures in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Laos.

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