

03- Feb 2024

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**ALFA
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NATIONAL NEWS

DoT Secretary Dr Neeraj Mittal Launches Bharat 5G Portal and Venture Capitalists/Investors meeting at Bharat Telecom 2024

Dr Neeraj Mittal, Chairman, Digital Communications Commission and Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Ministry of Communications (MoC), launched the “**Bharat 5G Portal- an integrated portal**” on the sidelines of ‘**Bharat Telecom 2024 – An Exclusive International Business Expo**’ being organized by Telecom Equipment and Services Export Promotion Council (TEPC) in collaboration with DoT, in **New Delhi**.



- As part of its initiatives, the DoT announced a call for 6G R&D proposals on the integrated portal, inviting proposals for accelerated research on 6G ecosystem development.
- The Bharat 5G portal is an integrated portal serving the interests of startups, industry and academia in quantum, 6G, IPR and 5G domains. It features the Future Tech-Experts registration portal in collaboration with PANIIT USA, aimed to help and advise the Indian Telecom ecosystem to advance the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Latest All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE)

The report of the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2021–22, made public, found that **4.33 crore students are currently enrolled in a higher educational institute** — up from 4.14 crore in 2020-21, and 3.42 crore in 2014-15.

- The survey captures total student enrolment in eight different levels: undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, MPhil, diploma, PG diploma, certificate, and integrated programmes. In all, 10,576 standalone institutions, 42,825 colleges, and 1,162 universities/university level institutions responded to the survey.

Female enrolment greater than male :

- From 1.5 crore women enrolled in 2014-15, there has been a jump of 32% to 2.07 crores enrolled in 2021-22. In the last five years, the number of women enrolled increased by 18.7%, from 1.74 crore in 2017–18.
- The most astounding rise was seen at the PhD level. In 2021-22, the total PhD enrolment in the country is 2.12 lakh of which 98,636 are women. Eight years ago, only 47,717 women were enrolled in PhD programmes.

Primacy of government institutions

- Interestingly, 73.7% of all students attend government universities, which make up only 58.6% of all universities.
- In the government sector, state public universities have the largest share of enrolment, accounting for around 31% of the total enrolment for universities. In actual numbers, government-owned universities have an enrolment of 71.06 lakh, whereas enrolment in privately managed universities is 25.32 lakh.

Demographics of students graduating

During the 2021–22 academic year, 1.07 crore students were estimated to have graduated from undergraduate, graduate, doctorate, master's, and other diploma/certificate programmes. Among these 1.07 crore students, 54.6 lakh or roughly 50.8% are women.

Home Minister Amit Shah launches 'ORF Foreign Policy Survey' in New Delhi

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation **Shri Amit Shah** delivered a lecture on "Security Beyond Tomorrow: Forging India's Resilient Future" and launched 'ORF Foreign Policy Survey' in New Delhi.



- Amit Shah said government has **adopted zero tolerance against terrorism**. In this survey, about 86 percent people have appreciated the foreign policy of India. He said that for the first time after independence, a successful effort has been made in these 10 years to ensure internal security on the basis of policy change.

Highlights of 'ORF Foreign Policy Survey' :

- India's urban youth rated the country's overall foreign policy positively: 35 percent graded it very good and 48 percent, good. The overall support (83 percent) is 6 percentage points more than in last year's survey, and 11 percentage points higher than in 2021.
- Eighty-eight percent of the respondents considered India's bid to secure permanent membership to the United Nations Security.

GER and Gender Parity

- The estimated GER for the age group 18-23 years in India is 28.4, the AISHE 2021-22 report said (based on population data from the 2011 census).
- In terms of state-wise data, Chandigarh, at 64.8%, boasts of the highest GER, followed by Puducherry at 61.5%, Delhi at 49%, and Tamil Nadu at 47%.

Arts over the sciences in graduation, PG

- The survey showed that the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme has the highest enrolment, with 1.13 crore students — 34.2% of total undergraduate enrolment across India. In all, 3.41 crore students are enrolled in UG programmes.

- Among disciplines at undergraduate level, in 2021-22, the enrollment is highest in Arts (34.2%), followed by science (14.8%), commerce (13.3%) and engineering and technology (11.8%). BA(Hons) accounts for 20.4 lakh (6.2%), the survey shows.
- The latest survey shows that the Master of Arts (MA) programme has the highest enrolment, with 20.9 lakh students, which is 40.7% of total postgraduate enrolment.

Sarbananda Sonowal launches Maritime Single Window and MMD Modules in SagarSetu

Union Minister for the Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH , **Shri Sarbananda Sonowal**, launched **two digital modules within the SagarSetu (NLP-Marine) platform**. These pioneering modules, namely the **Maritime Single Window (MSW) and the Mercantile Maritime Department (MMD)**.

- With the launch of the Maritime Single Window (MSW) module of SagarSetu (NLP-Marine), MoPSW aligns with global standards set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The implementation of the MSW system through SagarSetu (NLP-M) adheres to the processes mandated by the FAL Convention of International Maritime Organization (IMO), promoting harmonization and standardization of processes set by the IMO.
- The Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) Module within SagarSetu's NLP(M) encompasses two core functionalities in the Maritime Mobile Domain process. Firstly, the Vessel Detention function allows MMD officials to efficiently monitor the status of ships at ports, facilitating the planning of vessel inspections.

Dras Winter Carnival-2024

In Ladakh, the '**Dras Winter Carnival 2024**', known as '**Janshne Fateh**', came to a spectacular close at Vishwanathan Stadium (Old Polo Ground). The **Dras Winter Carnival-2024**, themed "**Celebrating Life in the Second Coldest Inhabited Place in the World**," commenced with unparalleled fanfare in a dazzling opening ceremony. Organized collaboratively by the Indian Army and local communities, this year's carnival promises a distinctive fusion of sports and culture, showcasing the indomitable spirit of the region.

- The Dras Winter Carnival aims to nurture local sporting talent, promote cultural awareness, and offer a one-of-a-kind experience for participants and spectators alike.
- The inclusive nature of the event extends beyond geographical boundaries, allowing a global audience to actively participate in the festivities remotely.

Odisha CM inaugurates 4th National Chilika Birds Festival

Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the **fourth National Chilika Birds Festival** at an event coordinated by the department of tourism, department of forest, and Chilika Development Authority.



- The festival commenced with the inauguration of a Photo Exhibition featuring the work of renowned photographers such as Shri Shakti Nanda, Shri Umakanta Biswal, Dhritiman Mukherjee, and others. The exhibition showcased the rich biodiversity of Chilika Lake through mesmerising photographs, offering a visual treat to attendees.
- This year's festival drew the participation of 52 birders from across India, highlighting the growing interest in birding and wildlife conservation. Tourism Minister Shri Aswini Kumar Patra emphasised Odisha's unique position as a birding hub, citing the results of the latest bird census, which recorded a total count of 11.37 lakh birds across over 187 species in the Chilika region.

NRLPS signs MoU with BRAC International for economic inclusion, social protection of poor women

National Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (NRLPS), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) signed an **MOU with BRAC International**, a Global South-led organisation with a mission to **empower people and communities**.

- The MoU has been signed for inclusion of the poorest of the poor under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), a flagship programme under MoRD.
- With 100 million rural poor households mobilised already, focus now shifts to uplifting 'lakhpati didis' through Samaveshi Aajeevika, an inclusive livelihood programme, while also ensuring the inclusion of the most marginalised in the SHG movement.
- Samaveshi Aajeevika aims to build self-confidence, social inclusion, and prosperity via inclusive livelihoods at the last mile.
- Founded in Bangladesh in 1972, BRAC now works in 17 countries and has partnered with over 100 million people, delivering cost-effective, evidence-backed interventions.

Nagaland: 3rd edition of annual Orange festival 2023 underway in Kohima

In **Nagaland**, the third edition of the annual **Orange festival 2023** got underway at Rusoma village, under Kohima district. The two day festival is being organised in collaboration with the department of Horticulture, Agriculture, Rural Development, Land Resources and Kohima Smart City.



- The Orange festival in Rusoma Village of Kohima district is conceptualised to recognise and celebrate the hard work of the orange growers while facilitating them the market linkages to sell their produce at one hub.
- The two day orange festival also featured several stalls like sale of handicraft, organic vegetables and fruits, food items, sale of orange saplings, workshop on orange and coffee plantation and signature campaign on "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao".

BANKING & FINANCE

Indian Overseas Bank becomes 5th PSU bank to cross Rs 1 lakh crore market cap

State-owned Indian Overseas Bank's (IOB) market capitalization crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the first time following a 100% rally in the stock over the last six months.



- Indian Overseas Bank has become the fifth public sector lender to surpass Rs 1 lakh crore in market capitalisation with its shares soaring over 22 percent. IOB joined the list of peers like India's largest lender State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Punjab National Bank and Union Bank of India.
- The stock hit a fresh 14-year high of Rs 55.6 a share and, gained as much as 5 percent intraday, taking its market valuation to Rs 1.03 lakh crore on February 2. This was the fourth straight session for the stock to trade in green.
- State Bank of India (SBI) leads the league with a market value of around Rs 5.8 lakh crore, followed by Bank of Baroda and Punjab National Bank at Rs 1.33 lakh crore for both, while for Union Bank of India, it is Rs 1.1 lakh crore.

Govt to receive Rs 1.02 lakh cr as dividend from RBI, PSBs in FY25

The government projected a dividend income of Rs 1.02 lakh crore from the RBI and public sector financial institutions in the next financial year.

- The government is set to earn a higher dividend of Rs 1.04 lakh crore in the current fiscal against the Budget Estimate of Rs 48,000 crore.
- The current financial year estimate exceeded the Budget Estimate as RBI paid a dividend of Rs 87,416 crore in May last year.
- Meanwhile, the government estimated Rs 43,000 crore as dividend payments from Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). Other investments also rose to Rs 50,000 crore during the current fiscal.

RBI imposes monetary penalty on Bajaj Housing Finance Limited for non-compliance with provisions

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a monetary penalty of Rs 5 lakh on Bajaj Housing Finance Limited, Pune for non-compliance with certain provisions.



- RBI stated in an order that Bajaj Housing Finance Limited didn't comply with the 'Non-Banking Financial Company – Housing Finance Company (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2021' issued by the central bank.
- This penalty has been imposed in the exercise of powers vested in RBI under the provisions of clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 52A, read with clause (aa) of sub-section (3) of section 49 of the National Housing Bank Act, 1987.

World Bank to offer countries access to emergency funds from existing loans

The **World Bank** said it **approved** new initiatives to **allow member countries hit by natural disasters** and other shocks to quickly access emergency funds from their existing loan programs to help them respond to an increasingly crisis-prone world.

- The enhancements to the bank's Crisis Preparedness and Response Toolkit would allow countries to immediately receive up to 10% of undisbursed funds from an existing project loan or other facility for emergency response.
- World Bank Managing Director for Operations Anna Bjerde told that a country with \$3 billion undisbursed from a \$5 billion loan portfolio could instantly access \$300 million in the event of a hurricane, earthquake or pandemic, a liquidity burst that could save a lot of hardship.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

NTPC and Oil India Limited's Numaligarh Refinery Limited to build strategic partnership in Green Chemicals and Green Projects

NTPC Limited, India's largest integrated power utility, has **signed a non-binding MoU with Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)**, for partnership opportunities in the proposed bamboo-based Bio-Refinery at NTPC Bongaigaon and other green projects. NRL is a subsidiary of Oil India Limited, which is engaged in the business of refining and marketing of petroleum products.



- Through this MoU, the two Central Public Sector Enterprises intend to enhance their footprint in green chemicals and foray into sustainable solutions to advance the efforts towards achieving the nation's Net-Zero targets and be partners in the development of North Eastern Region.

GRSE & Rolls-Royce ink pact for production of marine engines to power ships

As a part of the 'Make in India' initiative, Kolkata-based **PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)** and UK's **Rolls-Royce** have signed a '**frame and individual licence' agreement** for production of the MTU IMO Tier II compliant Series 4000 marine engines to power government ships.

- The move will help the state-owned shipyard in making fast patrol vessels, interceptor boats and fast attack craft projects of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard, the GRSE said.
- Under this agreement inked, the IMO Tier II engines, which conform to stipulated emission standards set by United Nations' International Maritime Organization (IMO), will be manufactured at the diesel engine plant of the GRSE in Ranchi which, the company said, has fully equipped with test bench facility as well as trained service personnel.

Karnataka govt and Wistron sign MoU to set up laptop manufacturing unit

The **Karnataka** government said Taiwan-based **Wistron** (ICT Service Management Solutions) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to set up a **laptop manufacturing plant** near Bengaluru.



- MB Patil, Karnataka minister of large and medium industries, said under the MoU, the electronics manufacturing company will **invest ₹1,500 crore** to set up the plant and the unit is likely to create around 3,000 employment opportunities.
- The minister said the company plans to commence work related to setting up the plant in July and aims to start manufacturing laptops by **January 2026**.

SPORTS

Khelo India 2023: Maharashtra tops final points table

The fifth edition of the Khelo India Youth Games concluded on February 11, and Maharashtra finished at the top of the points table, with a total of 161 medals, which includes 56 gold, 55 silver and 50 bronze medals. Haryana came in 2nd with a tally of 128 medals, while Madhya Pradesh was the far third with 96 medals against their name.



- It is worth noting that this year, the competition saw fencing and water sports being added to the 25-sport list. The event was hosted in eight different cities in New Delhi and Madhya Pradesh and was spread across 11 venues.

Chess: Leon Mendonca wins Tata Steel Challengers title; Gukesh finishes second in Masters section

India's **Leon Luke Mendonca** clinched the **2024 Tata Steel Challengers title** with a final round win over compatriot Divya Deshmukh at Wijk aan Zee, Netherlands.



- The 17-year-old Mendonca finished the tournament with 9.5 points in 13 rounds and was half a point clear of the second placed Grandmaster Daniel Dardha of Belgium and GM Marc Andria Maurizzi.
- Mendonca, who became the **67th Indian to earn the Grandmaster title** back in January 2021, did not have the best of starts to the tournament.

APPOINTMENTS

Banking tycoon Bao Fan steps down as head of China Renaissance

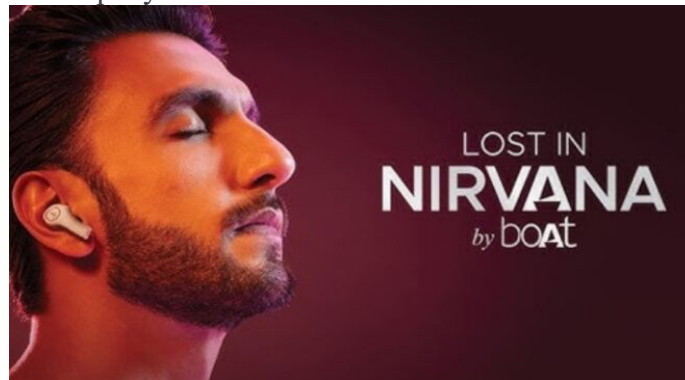


Billionaire financier **Bao Fan** has **stepped down as head of investment bank China Renaissance**, the company said, almost a year after he was revealed to be cooperating in an investigation by authorities.

- Bao rose to fame as a key player in the emergence of some of the country's biggest tech giants, supervising blockbuster IPOs and the landmark 2015 merger between ride-hailing giant Didi and its top competitor at the time, Kuaidi Dache.

Ranveer Singh becomes the brand ambassador and investor of boAt

Leading audio wearable brand **boAt** has roped in actor **Ranveer Singh** as the **brand ambassador**, and he has also invested an undisclosed amount in the company, becoming a key stakeholder in the company.



- This partnership marks a strategic move for boAt, as they welcome Singh into their illustrious list of brand ambassadors, which already features notable celebrities and sports personalities.
- The company co-founded by Aman Gupta has also announced an upcoming campaign featuring Singh for Boat's sub-brand 'Nirvana series'.

AWARDS

MHA merges four medals into one

The Centre has merged, with immediate effect, four existing Home Minister's medals to institute one new medal named "**Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak**".

- The new medal is named after merging the **Union Home Minister's Special Operation Medal, the Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Investigation, Asadharan Aasuchana Kushalata Padak and the Union Home Minister's Awards for Meritorious Service in Forensic Science.**
- The "**Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak**" to be conferred on members of the Police Forces, Security Organizations and Intelligence Wing/Branch/Special Branch of States/Union Territories/Central Police Organizations(CPOs)/Central Armed Police Forces(CAPFs)/National Security Guard/Assam Rifles; and Forensic Science (Central/State/Union Territories) throughout the Indian Union in consideration for excellence in Operations (in the areas such as Counter Terrorism, Border Action, Arms Control, Left Wing extremism, Prevention of Narcotics Smuggling and Rescue Operation.

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt gives away best marching contingents & tableaux awards for Republic Day Parade 2024

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt gave away the best marching contingents and tableaux awards for the Republic Day Parade on January 30, 2024. He announced separate results – one by a panel of judges and other through an online public vote conducted by MyGov and congratulated all the winners.



List of winners:

On the basis of the assessment of the panels

- Best Marching Contingent among the three services – Sikh Regiment Contingent
- Best Marching Contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces – Delhi Police Women Marching Contingent

Best three Tableaux (States/UTs)

1. First – Odisha (Woman Empowerment in Viksit Bharat)
 2. Second – Gujrat (Dhordo : A Global Icon Of Gujarat's Border Tourism)
 3. Third – Tamil Nadu (Kudavolai System in ancient Tamil Nadu – Mother of Democracy)
- Best Tableau (Ministries/Departments) – Ministry of Culture – (Bharat : Mother of Democracy)

- Special Prize – Central Public Works Department (Central Vista -Viksit Bharat Ka Pratibimb)
- Special memento to 'Vande Bharatam' – Dance Group

The online poll for the popular choice was conducted between January 25-27, 2024 on MyGov web page. The results are:

- Best Marching Contingent among the three services – Rajputana Rifles Regimental Marching Contingent
- Best Marching Contingent among CAPF/other auxiliary forces – CRPF Woman Marching Contingent

Best three Tableaux (States/UTs):

1. First – Gujrat (Dhordo : A Global Icon Of Gujarat's Border Tourism)
 2. Second – Uttar Pradesh (Viksit Bharat Samradh Virasat)
 3. Third – Andhra Pradesh (Transforming School Education in Andhra Pradesh – Making Students Globally Competitive)
- Best Tableau (Central Ministries/Departments) – Vibrant Villages (Ministry of Home Affairs)

Three new Karnataka wetlands added to the Ramsar sites

On World Wetlands Day 2024 (February 2), three more wetlands from Karnataka have been added to the list of Ramsar sites. The three newly added sites include Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve in Gadag, Aghanashini River in central Uttara Kannada, and Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve (ABCR) in Vijayanagara.

- These new additions have taken the state's tally of Ramsar sites to four. Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary became the first site in Karnataka to be included on the list in 2022.
- Apart from three sites in Karnataka, two sites from Tamil Nadu (Karaivetti Bird Sanctuary and Longwood Shola Reserve Forest) were also added to the list, taking the total number of wetland sites in India to 80.

ENVIRONMENT

T.N. gets its 18th wildlife sanctuary as Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary

The Tamil Nadu government has declared 80,114.80 hectares of reserve forests in Bargur Hills in Erode district, as the Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary. This stretch of protected forests, links the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve with Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary, and has been notified as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the State.



- The 18th wildlife sanctuary of the state is part of the corridor that connects the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) to the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Tiger Reserve and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. This stretch plays a crucial role in maintaining a viable tiger population and is one of the tiger corridors identified by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Scientists discover new kangaroo lizard species from Western Ghats

The biodiverse forests of Western Ghats have thrown up yet another marvel of evolution – a new species of tiny lizards, which researchers have described as a “diminutive dragon.”



- Agasthyagama edge or the northern kangaroo lizard, which belongs to the Agamidae family, is known to have a maximum snout-vent length of 4.3 cm.
- This species marks the **second in the Agasthyagama genus**, following the previously reported *A. beddomii* found in the **Sivagiri hills of Tamil Nadu**. The recent discovery was made by a collaborative team of scientists from various institutions in India and abroad, conducting research in the southern Western Ghats at Kulamavu in Idukki.

OBITUARIES

Scott Momaday, pioneering Native American writer, dies

Scott Momaday, the first Native American novelist to win a Pulitzer Prize for his 1968 debut novel, “House Made of Dawn,” has died at 89, publisher HarperCollins announced.



- Momaday published more than a dozen books of poetry and novels across his career and is credited for sparking the modern Indigenous literary movement.
- In 2007, then president George W Bush presented Momaday with a National Medal of Arts “for his writings and his work that celebrate and preserve Native American art and oral tradition”. Besides his Pulitzer, his honors included an Academy of American Poets prize and, in 2019, the Dayton literary peace prize.

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