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NATIONAL NEWS

Hyderabad: 21-ft statue of Maharana Pratap installed in Begum Bazar

A 21-foot statue of Rajput king Maharana Pratap was installed and unveiled at the 'Maharana Pratap Chowk' at Begum Bazaar. The statue in Hyderabad is touted to be the first and biggest of Maharana Pratap in Telangana.



- The statue was installed at Begum Bazar by the Maharana Pratap Jagruti Manch, which claims that it is also the first of its kind in all of South India. It weighs about two tonnes and was made by artist **Sunder Singh** in a period of three months, stated the organisation.
- Maharana Pratap was the ruler of Mewar, and today has become a Hindutva icon. He is most well known and praised within the Rajput community for resisting the Mughals (1526-1857) in the late 16th century. He is particularly praised for resisting Mughal king Akbar, and his stand during the historically famous battle of Haldghati, which Maharana Pratap in fact lost.

MoSPI Signs MoU with ISRO on Urban Frame Survey using Bhuvan

The NSSO (FOD) under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) under the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) to facilitate Urban Frame Survey (UFS) in a digital mode using the state-of-the-art Geo ICT tools and techniques using Bhuvan Platform.



- UFS is conducted in five-year phases to prepare and maintain a frame of compact urban geographical units, which serve as sampling frame in urban sector, mainly for

NSSO large scale Socio-Economic Surveys. The UFS in digital form was carried out for the first time during Phase 2017-22 using Bhuvan platform covering more than 5300 towns.

- In the current phase (2022 – 2027), survey works of around 8134 towns are planned with improved and robust versions of Mobile, Desktop and Web Based GIS solutions built on Bhuvan Platform.
- The MoU Covers development / improvement of mobile application for Geo-tagging of NSSO Urban Frame Survey data, Web portal for visualization, system generated scrutiny, editing, etc. of data submitted through mobile application, QGIS plug-in for accessing the polygons captured through mobile application and fine-tuning of Block, IV-unit, Ward and Town boundaries of UFS using High Resolution Satellite Imagery; and Capacity building of NSSO officials by NRSC.

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi launches "Coal Logistics Plan and Policy"

Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs **Pralhad Joshi** has launched a groundbreaking initiative, the "**Coal Logistics Plan and Policy**" organized by the Indian National Committee World Mining Congress with the patronage of the Ministry of Coal in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.



- Addressing the event, Pralhad Joshi underscored the imperative need for efficient logistics to meet the **escalating energy demand projected to surge from 980 MT to 1.5 BT by 2030**. The Coal Logistics Plan proposes a strategic shift towards a railway-based system in FMCs projects, aiming for a 14% reduction in rail logistic costs and an annual cost saving of Rs 21,000 Crore. He emphasized on augmentation of railway network capacity through First -Mile Connectivity.
- This transformative approach is expected to minimize air pollution, alleviate traffic congestion, and **reduce carbon emissions by approximately 100,000 tonnes per annum**. Moreover, a 10% saving in average turnaround time of wagons nationwide is expected.
- The launch of the Coal Logistics Plan marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards modernizing coal transportation, enhancing efficiency, and promoting sustainability. With collaborative efforts from government bodies, industry leaders, and stakeholders, India is poised to unlock the full potential of its coal industry, ensuring a resilient and sustainable energy future.

Ministry of Women and Child Development organise Poshan Utsav

The Ministry of Women and Child Development organized the **Poshan Utsav at The Oberoi**. The event aimed to promote good nutrition behavior and highlighted India's ongoing efforts to combat malnutrition by promoting good nutrition practices.

- The event featured the release of '**Poshan Utsav Book**' and announced the launch of the **Cartoon Coalition**. The 'Poshan Utsav Book', conceptualized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development has been curated by the Deendayal Research Institute (DRI).
- The book seeks to revive ancient nutrition traditions, facilitating knowledge exchange and intergenerational learning. It also serves as a comprehensive repository for appreciation of the rich culinary heritage and nutritional diversity of the country.

After Mizoram, Nagaland adopts resolution against suspension of FMR

The **Nagaland legislative assembly** unanimously adopted a **resolution against the central government's recent decision to fence the Indo-Myanmar border** and **suspend** the Free Movement Regime (**FMR**) **agreement** with the neighbouring nation, people aware of the matter said. The 60-member assembly adopted the resolution voice vote.



- With this, **Nagaland has become the second state after Mizoram** to have adopted such a resolution. The Mizoram assembly adopted a resolution opposing the scrapping of FMR.
- Earlier this month, Union home minister Amit Shah said that the central government has recommended an immediate suspension of the free movement regime between India and Myanmar that allowed people from both sides to travel 16 km into each other's territory without paperwork. Hill tribes with kin across the 1,643km boundary would freely go back and forth under the regime.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launches Project ODISERV in Odisha

Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, **Dharmendra Pradhan** launched **Project ODISERV** aimed at preparing young graduates from Odisha for **employment opportunities in the financial services sector**.

- Addressing the gathering, Pradhan emphasized that Project ODISERV will empower the nation's youth, enhancing their employability and helping them achieve their career aspirations.



- He highlighted the role of NEP 2020 in bridging the gap between education and skill development, fostering greater synergy and enabling students to acquire both job-ready skills and academic knowledge simultaneously.
- Pradhan also mentioned that the 100-hour training program will equip Odisha's youth with crucial skills required in the banking, finance and insurance industries. The training program will boost competencies, increase the employability of Yuva Shakti of Odisha and prepare a future-ready workforce.

PM Inaugurates HURL- Sindri Fertilizer Plant in Jharkhand

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Ltd (HURL) Sindri Fertiliser Plant in Sindri, Jharkhand. The plant, developed at a cost exceeding **₹8,900 crore**, is jointly owned by Maharatna Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) including Coal India Limited (CIL), NTPC Limited, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Fertiliser Corporation of India Limited (FCIL), and HFCL.



- This marks the revival of the **third fertilizer plant in the country**, following the successful revival of fertilizer plants in Gorakhpur and Ramagundam.
- Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Ltd (HURL) fertilizer plant in Barauni developed at more than **Rs 9500 crore**, the plant will provide affordable urea to farmers and lead to an increase in their productivity and financial stability. This will be the fourth fertilizer plant to be revived in the country.
- HURL Plants has various unique features like state of the art blast proof control room equipped with DCS (Distributed Control System), ESD (Emergency Shutdown System) and environment Monitoring Systems etc. It also has India's First Air Operated Bullet Proof Rubber Dam of 65 mtrs length and 2 mtrs height. There is no

offsite waste water disposal in these plants. The systems are operated by the highly motivated, dedicated, well trained Operators.

Four-day-long 'Tawi Festival' begins

The four day long 'Tawi Festival' to showcase Jammu region's art, culture and heritage will begin from March 1, 2024.



- This time the 'Tawi festival' will strictly remain focussed on the promotion of Jammu's rich, diverse art forms and cultural heritage where the youth will also get a platform to give a vent to their creativities besides sharing thoughts with experts.
- The initiative, in collaboration with the Amar Mahal Museum and Library (AMML), is designed to provide a platform for these women to exhibit their talents and achieve economic empowerment.
- The festival comprises Seminars, workshops, and talks, performances of folk music and street theatre, classical and folk dance and music, and a Mela, with an emphasis on showcasing entrepreneurship, innovation, local cuisines, and organic products sourced from women's NGO groups across the Himalayan region.

Telangana Govt announces One Time Scheme

Telangana government has issued orders for the **One Time Settlement scheme for clearance of property tax arrears** in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and other urban local bodies across the State.



- Accordingly, the government has offered a **waiver of 90% on the interest charged on accumulated arrears of the property tax**, provided the tax payer clears the principal amount along with the remaining 10% interest till the financial year 2022-23

at one go. The offer is applicable to private as well as government properties existing in the limits of GHMC and other ULBs.

- The scheme is also applicable to all the tax payers who have already paid the entire property tax dues including interest and penalties **up to March 2023**, before the scheme was announced. The waived amount in such cases will be adjusted against future tax payments, the orders clarified.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Ghana's parliament passes anti-LGBTQ bill

Ghana's parliament has voted to pass a controversial bill to severely restrict LGBTQ rights, in a move that has been condemned by rights activists.



- A coalition of religious and traditional leaders sponsored the legislation that is favoured by most lawmakers and that passed in parliament.
- The bill would punish those who take part in LGBTQ sexual acts, as well as those who promote the rights of gay, lesbian or other non-conventional sexual or gender identities with time in prison.
- The bill, one of the harshest of its kind in Africa, still has to be validated by the president before entering into law, which observers believe is unlikely before a general election in December.

Nicaragua becomes first Spanish-speaking nation to recognise Indian pharma standards

India and Nicaragua have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Pharmacopoeia on cooperation in the field of the regulation of medicines. With this MoU, Nicaragua has become the first nation in Spanish speaking world to recognise Indian Pharmacopoeia.



- This recognition by Nicaragua adds another feather to the Indian Pharmacopoeia's (IP) cap, solidifying its global standing and influence.
- Before Nicaragua five other countries - **Afghanistan, Ghana, Nepal, Mauritius, and Suriname** have already acknowledged IP's importance in ensuring the quality and safety of medicinal products.
- The move is expected to foster stronger ties between the two nations in the areas of healthcare, encouraging the exchange of expertise and resources for improved medical standards.

BANKING & FINANCE

RBI issues revised norms to streamline bill payments process

The Reserve Bank issued revised norms to streamline the process of bill payments, enable greater participation, and enhance customer protection.



- The central bank has issued the revised '**Reserve Bank of India (Bharat Bill Payment System) Directions, 2024**' as it felt there was a need to update the existing regulations in view of significant developments in the payments landscape.
- These directions seek to streamline the process of bill payments, enable greater participation, and enhance customer protection among other changes. These directions will be applicable from **April 1, 2024** to banks, NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited and other non-bank payment system participants.

Paytm Payments Bank fined ₹5.49 crore for money laundering

Paytm Payments Bank, which was slapped with a **fine of ₹5.49 crore for money laundering**, had failed to put in place an internal mechanism to **detect and report suspicious transactions** as stipulated under the anti-money laundering law, the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) said in its order.



- The FIU had said that the charges against the Paytm lender under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) were substantiated after more than four years of investigation and a showcase notice was issued against it on February 14, 2022.
- The penalty was imposed on the Paytm entity after its chairperson **Vijay Shekhar Sharma had resigned** from the post.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Google partners with Shakti to battle misinformation ahead of general elections

Google announced its **support for a consortium of news publishers** and fact checkers called **Shakti**, to help the early detection of online misinformation like deepfakes, and to create a common repository that news publishers can use to tackle misinformation.



- Shakti is a pan-India network driven by **DataLEADS**, in collaboration with the Misinformation Combat Alliance, The Quint, VishvasNews, Boom, Factly, and Newschecker, with support from the Google News Initiative.
- From today till the conclusion of the general elections, the project will connect independent fact checkers and Indian language publishers giving them a collaborative platform to share fact checks, research resources and alerts on elections-related viral misinformation and deepfakes, said Google India.

GST collection surges 12.5% to nearly Rs 1.7 lakh crore in February

The **GST collection in February grew 12.5 per cent to over ₹1.68 lakh crore**, buoyed by domestic transactions, the finance ministry said.



- The total gross GST collection for the current fiscal (April 2023-February 2024) stands at ₹18.40 lakh crore, 11.7 per cent higher than the mopup for the same period last fiscal.
- The **average monthly gross collection for the current fiscal stood at ₹1.67 lakh crore**, exceeding ₹1.5 lakh crore in the last fiscal.
- This growth was driven by a 13.9 per cent rise in GST from domestic transactions and an 8.5 per cent increase in GST from import of goods.

C-DOT and Qualcomm sign MoU towards Atmanirbhar Bharat and driving Design and Make in India vision

Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), a research institution funded by The Government of India, and **Qualcomm Technologies** have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote Atmanirbhar Bharat and bolster innovation in India's telecom sector.



- This collaboration was announced at the Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona, and it aims to support local developers, startups, academia, and industry partners.
- In this collaboration, Qualcomm Technologies will provide its expertise, state-of-the-art technology, and intellectual property training to C-DOT to accelerate the development of indigenous telecom products.

DGCA imposes ₹30 lakh fine on Air India for death of 80-year-old passenger

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has **fined Air India Rs 30 lakh** over the recent death of an 80-year old passenger who opted to walk from the aircraft to the terminal building as the airline was short on wheel chairs.



- The octogenarian Air India passenger reportedly pre-booked a wheelchair at the Mumbai airport. However, he decided to walk as he was asked to wait due to the heavy demand for wheelchairs. He collapsed at the time of the immigration process and later died.

SPORTS

Juventus midfielder Pogba banned for four years after failed anti-doping test

France and Juventus midfielder **Paul Pogba** has been **banned for four years** for a doping offence earlier this season, Italian media reported.



- Pogba was provisionally suspended by Italy's national anti-doping (NADO Italia) tribunal in September after testing positive for testosterone — a banned substance.
- The test, performed after Juve's 3-0 Serie A season-opening victory at Udinese on Aug. 20, detected **testosterone**, a hormone that increases athletes' endurance. The 30-year-old was an unused substitute in that game.
- Pogba's positive doping test was also confirmed in a counter-analysis on a second sample in October.

APPOINTMENTS

RBI appoints S. Ravindran as TMB's part-time chairman

The Reserve Bank has appointed Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd. (TMB) independent director **S. Ravindran as part-time chairman of the bank** from February 29 till August 2, 2026. The non-executive part-time chairman post in TMB fell vacant after the exit of **S. Annamalai** on February 2, 2020.



- Currently, Mr. Ravindran is an independent director on the boards of NSE, LTIDPL Invit Services, Shriram Finance and Bandhan AMC, the private sector lender said in a regulatory filing.
- Prior to assuming charge as part-time chairman of the bank, he has to step down from the directorships in Shriram Finance and Bandhan AMC, the regulator said.

IPS officer Anurag Agarwal appointed head of Parliament security

IPS officer **Anurag Agarwal** has been appointed as the **head of Parliament security**, according to an official order.



- Mr. Agarwal will take over his new assignment at a time when the security of the Parliament House complex is being overhauled after two men jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber on December 13 from the visitors' gallery and opened a can of yellow smoke.
- The post of JS (Security) had been lying vacant since October 20 after the then joint secretary **Raghubir Lal** went back to his cadre. The post of JS (Security) is traditionally held by an IPS officer.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

L&T commissions indigenously built hydrogen electrolyzer at Hazira

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has commissioned its **first indigenously-manufactured electrolyser** at the Green Hydrogen Plant at A M Naik Heavy Engineering Complex in **Hazira, Gujarat**.



- Featuring a rated power capacity of 1 MW (expandable to 2 MW), this electrolyser can produce 200 Nm³/Hr of hydrogen. It is equipped with two stacks and an

Electrolyser Processing Unit (EPU) ML-400, which is indigenously manufactured and assembled, adhering to the latest international standards, and offers exceptional flexibility and thermal stability.

- The electrolyser will now undergo rigorous testing to optimise its performance, and in turn, paving the way for full-fledged manufacturing of electrolysers.
- This pioneering accomplishment signifies L&T Electrolysers' foray into domestic electrolyser manufacturing, underscoring the company's steadfast dedication to propelling sustainable energy solutions.

Eco-Friendly wound dressing developed by Indian scientists using banana fibres

Scientists at the Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have developed an **innovative cost-effective wound dressing material** using banana fibers, a byproduct of the extensive banana farming industry in the country.



- Led by Prof. Devasish Chowdhury and Prof. (Retd) Rajlakshmi Devi, along with research scholar Mridusmita Barman, the team has repurposed banana pseudostems, typically discarded as agricultural waste, to create an eco-friendly wound dressing solution. By combining **banana fibers with biopolymers** such as chitosan and guar gum, the researchers engineered a versatile patch with superior mechanical strength and antioxidant properties.
- Additionally, the patch is loaded with an extract from the Vitex negundo L. plant, showcasing its potential as an effective drug release system and antibacterial agent in vitro. Importantly, all components used in manufacturing the dressing material are natural and readily available locally, ensuring a straightforward, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly production process.

ENVIRONMENT

ZSI names a newly discovered head-shield sea slug after President Droupadi Murmu

The **Zoological Survey of India** named a **new marine species** of head-shield sea slug with ruby red spot which was discovered from West Bengal and Odisha coast **after President of India Droupadi Murmu**.



- This species belonging to Melanochlamys genus was discovered from **Digha of West Bengal coast and Udaipur of Odisha coast**. The new species of head-shield sea slug, which is found nowhere in the world, is named as Melanochlamys droupadi.
- Species of the genus Melanochlamys are characterised morphologically by a short, blunt and cylindrical body and a smooth dorsal surface with two dorsal equal or unequal shields, named the anterior cephalic and posterior shield.

OBITUARIES

Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney dies at 84

Canada's former Prime Minister **Brian Mulroney**, who led his country into a sweeping free trade deal with the United States, has died. He was 84.



- Leader of the Progressive Conservative party from 1983 to 1993, Mulroney served almost a decade as prime minister after he was first elected in 1984 after snagging the largest majority in Canadian history with 211 of 282 seats.
- The win would mark Canada's first Conservative majority government in 26 years. His government was re-elected in 1988. Mulroney entered the job with widespread support, but he left with the lowest approval rating in Canadian history.

Veteran Congress leader and ex-UP Governor Aziz Qureshi passes away

Former Uttar Pradesh Governor and senior Congress leader **Aziz Qureshi**, 83, passed away at a private hospital in Bhopal.



- He had served as the Governor of Uttarakhand and Mizoram, and was the chairman of Madhya Pradesh Urdu Academy. Qureshi was elected as an MLA in 1972 and became a Lok Sabha member in 1984.

IMPORTANT DAYS

Fourth edition of Lineman Diwas to be celebrated on March 4, 2024

The **Central Electricity Authority (CEA)**, Ministry of Power is organizing the celebration of the fourth edition of '**Lineman Diwas**', in **New Delhi on March 4, 2024**. The day is being celebrated in order to recognize the tireless dedication and service of the linemen and ground maintenance staff who form the backbone of electricity distribution across the length and breadth of the nation.



- The theme for the fourth edition of the celebration, which is being held in collaboration with Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd (Tata Power-DDL), is '**Seva, Suraksha, Swabhiman**', which acknowledges the selfless service of linemen across the country.
- The CEA aims to establish celebration of a dedicated day as 'Lineman Diwas' as a nationwide tradition across the country for all state and private transmission and distribution companies.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri Former Assistant Secretary General, UN launches her book "Swallowing the Sun" in Mumbai

Former UN Assistant Secretary-General **Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri** unveiled her debut novel 'Swallowing the Sun' in Mumbai.

- The novel, set during the time of independence, draws inspiration from Puri's parents and her roots in Maharashtra, aiming to illuminate themes of women empowerment and cultural heritage.
- The novel explores themes of women empowerment through its protagonist, shedding light on the struggles and triumphs of women during a pivotal period in Indian history.



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Must Watch

BEGINNERS GUIDE

RRB PO & Clerk 2024

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