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- ❖ Khelo India University Games 2023: Chandigarh University emerged as the overall champion
- ❖ RBI has cautioned Mobile Phone users about potential fraud risks from 'Juice Jacking', a cyber attack vector
- ❖ India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated the developmental projects at Agaleaga Island in Mauritius
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Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launches 'Swayam Plus' platform

- Union education minister **Dharmendra Pradhan** has launched the 'SWAYAM Plus' platform, which will offer courses developed in collaboration with the industry players such as Larsen and Toubro, Microsoft, CISCO and others.
- The **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** will operate the 'Swayam Plus' Platform.
- IIT Madras is among the founder institutions of SWAYAM-NPTEL, the massive open online course (MOOC) platform, providing educational opportunities for a vast number of learners.
- The establishment of SWAYAM Plus would enhance employability of both college students and lifelong learners.

Key Features of SWAYAM Plus

- **Multilingual content:** The platform will be multilingual, encouraging a diverse audience to choose SWAYAM Plus as a platform of choice.
- **AI-Enabled chatbot:** An AI-enabled chatbot will assist the students choose the right courses based on their needs.
- **Credit Recognition:** Credit equivalency shall be established for courses offered by industry players. It also enables students of HEIs to earn credits simultaneously for their degree requirement, thereby providing academic flexibility.





**Sangeet Natak
Akademi Announces
Akademi Ratnas &
Akademi
Puraskar for
2022-2023**

Akademi Ratnas and Akademi Puraskar for 2022-2023 have been announced by Sangeet Natak Akademi

- President Droupadi Murmu will confer the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowships and Awards in a special investiture ceremony.
- **Six new Akademi Fellows** or **Akademi Ratnas** have been unanimously elected by the General Council of the Akademi. They are: Veena maestro-R Visweswaran, Folklorist-Vinayak Khedekar, Kuchipudi artists-Raja and Radha Reddy, Kathak artiste-Sunayana Hazarilal, Theatrist-Dulal Roy and Playwright-DP Sinha.
- **92 artists** have been selected for the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards or the Akademi Puraskar for the years 2022 and 2023.
- **80 young artists** have been selected for the Sangeet Natak Akademi Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2022 and 2023.
- Ashok Saraf, Rajeev Verma, and Bombay Jayashri will get Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.
- In music under Carnatic instrumental category, veena player Jayanthi Kumaresh won Sangeet Natak Akademi Award from Karnataka for 2022.
- In the field of theatre, playwright Belur Raghunandan got the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the year 2022.
- In the field of music, veena player Sahana SV got the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the year 2022.
- Vocalist SR Vinay Sharva got the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2023.

On March 1, 2024, a four-day-long 'Tawi Festival' started in Jammu & Kashmir

- **'Tawi Festival'** will showcase the art, culture, and heritage of Jammu region from 1 to 4 March.
- This time the four-day 'Tawi festival' will completely focus on promoting the rich, diverse art forms and cultural heritage of Jammu where the youth will get a platform to vent their creativity besides sharing ideas with experts.
- The festival includes seminars, workshops and talks, folk music and street theater performances, classical and folk dance and music, and a fair.
- It focused on showcasing entrepreneurship, innovation, local cuisine, and organic products from women NGO groups in the Himalayan region.
- The first day was dedicated to rivers, while the second day focused on exploring various dimensions of heritage.
- The last day of the festival will be organized at Jammu University.



TAWI FESTIVAL

**To Showcase
Jammu's Art, Culture,
And Heritage Began**

RBI gave final approval to Amazon Pay to operate as a payment aggregator

- This will allow the FinTech arm of e-commerce major **Amazon India**, to further strengthen distribution channels and provide innovative solutions to merchants and customers across India, providing them with a secure, convenient, and rewarding digital payment experience.
- In February, RBI also gave final authorization to two FinTech startups, **Decentro** and **Juspay**, an enterprise software-as-a-service (SaaS) firm **Zoho** for payment aggregator (PA) licenses.
- Among the companies that received licenses in January were food delivery major **Zomato** and FinTech firms **Stripe** and **Tata Pay**.
- Razorpay, Cashfree Payments, and Encash received approval in 2023.
- **Payment Aggregators (PAs)** are defined by RBI as entities that facilitate e-commerce sites and merchants to accept various payment instruments from customers.
- PAs are meant to enable merchants to meet their payment obligations without needing to build a separate payment integration system of their own.
- These companies act as intermediaries between the merchant and the customer.



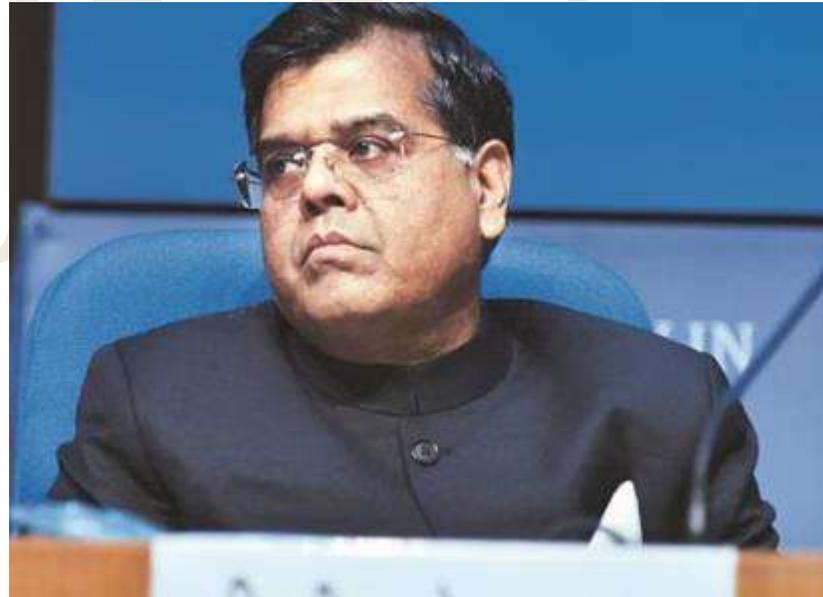
In the last four years, the Leopard number has increased by more than 1,000

- The "**Status of Leopards in India**" report has been released by Union Environment **Minister Bhupender Yadav**.
- From 2018 to 2022, the number of leopards in India has increased by more than 1,000.
- The number of leopards in the country has now reached **13874**, it was 12852 in 2018.
- The **highest population of leopards** has been recorded in **Madhya Pradesh (3907)**.
- Maharashtra's leopard count has increased from 1,690 in 2018 to 1,985 in 2022, Karnataka from 1,783 to 1,879, and Tamil Nadu from 868 to 1070.
- The Shivalik hills and the Indo-Gangetic Plains experienced a decline in leopards from 1253 in 2018 to 1109 in 2022.
- The Shivalik hills and the Gangetic plains showed a 3.4% decline per annum.
- Non-forested habitats, arid, and high Himalayas above 2000 msl (~30% area) were not sampled for leopards.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India in collaboration with State Forest Departments has released fifth cycle leopard population estimation.
- This report will play a critical role in conserving leopard populations. The leopard is one of the five extant species in the genus Panthera.



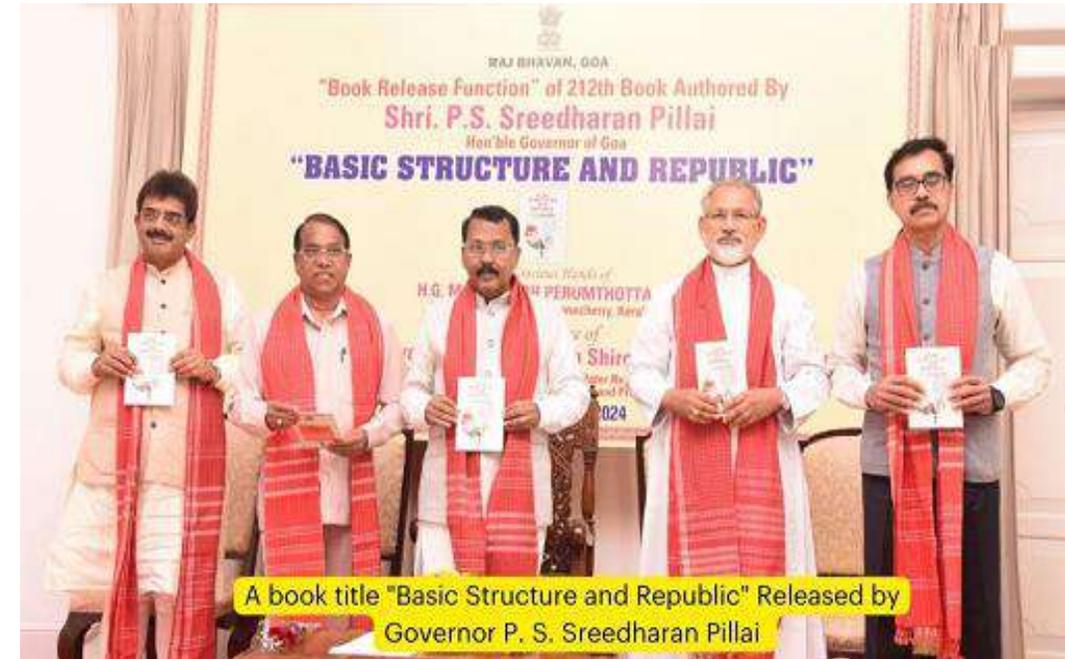
Finance Secretary TV Somanathan will lead committee on uniform Know Your Customer (KYC)

- The committee will recommend ways to enforce uniform KYC mechanism.
- Members from different ministries and regulators will be included in the committee.
- **Finance Stability and Development Council (FSDC)** had decided to prepare a strategy to digitalise and simplify the KYC process in the financial sector.
- The committee was formed after this decision of FSDC.
- In 2023-24 budget, FM Sitharaman had said that the KYC process would be simplified.
- She said it would be simplified through a **'risk-based'** approach instead of **'one size fits all'** approach.



The book 'Basic Structure and Republic' by Goa Governor PS Sreedharan Pillai released at Raj Bhavan

- Goa's Governor Shri P. S. Sreedharan Pillai revealed his latest literary contribution, "Basic Structure and Republic," during a ceremony held in Raj Bhavan's Durbar Hall (Old).
- The ceremony was graced by the presence of His Gracious H. G. Mar Joseph Perumthottam, Archbishop of Changanacherry, Kerala, and Shri. Subhash Shirodkar, Minister for Water Resource Development, Co-Operation, and Provedoria, emphasizing the significance of the occasion.
- The Minister for Water Resource Development, Co-Operation, and Provedoria Subhash Shirodkar received the first copy of the book, which Mar Joseph Perumthottam presented.
- Mr. Pillai said, the book is based on the Golden Jubilee speeches, particularly the **Kesavananda Bharati vs. Sanyasi case**, which was decided by a **13-judge bench with the longest hearing of 66 days**.



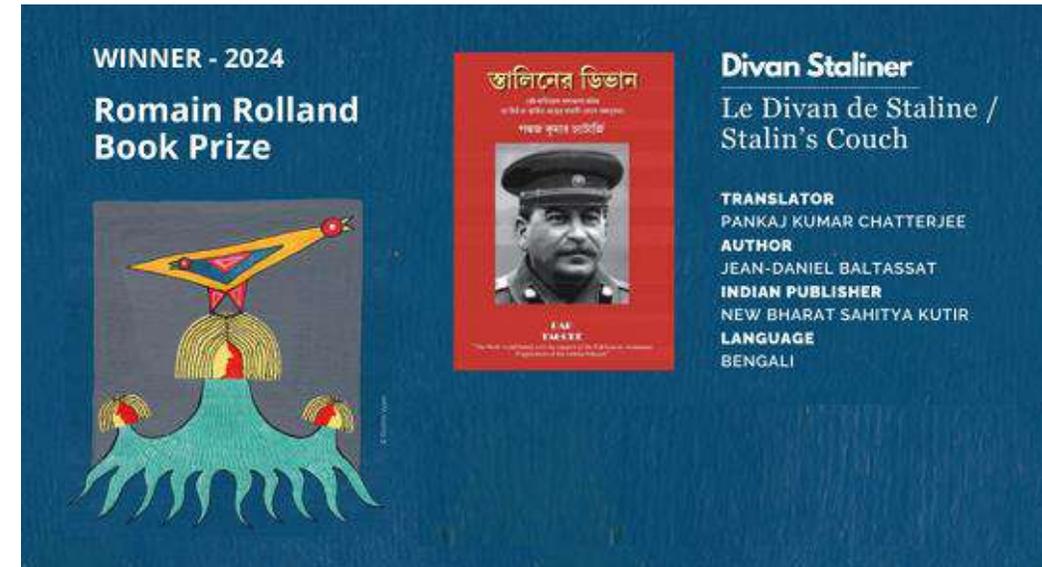
Jana Small Finance Bank forges partnership with Dvara Money

- Jana Small Finance Bank (Jana SFB) entered into partnership with Dvara Money (DM) to combine DM's innovative Spark Money platform with the technological capabilities of Jana SFB.
- A significant element of this partnership is the **Third Party Application Providers (TPAP) capabilities**.
- TPAP will enable the integration of a full-stack UPI solution into the Spark Money platform.
- This integration will allow customers to connect their savings accounts for payments, facilitating seamless digital transactions.
- The solution will also enable to offer UPI functionalities like Aadhar OTP-based onboarding and credit on UPI to Dvara's existing offerings.



Romain Rolland Book Prize 2024 awarded to Bengali Translation of 'Stalin's Couch'

- The Romain Rolland Book Prize was awarded to the Bengali translation 'Staliner Divan' by Pankaj Kumar Chatterjee.
- The thought-provoking novel explores the encounter between Josef Stalin and a young artist in the Soviet Union.
- **The Romain Rolland Book Prize** is an esteemed literary award given to appreciate and encourage outstanding works of fiction that promote understanding and empathy across cultures.
- Named after the renowned **French writer and Nobel Prize laureate Romain Rolland**, this prize aims to celebrate literature that raises borders and languages and helps create a dialogue between people of diverse backgrounds.
- **Established in 1991** by the French Embassy in India, the Romain Rolland Book Prize has become a symbol of cultural exchange and mutual respect.
- **It is awarded annually to both Indian and French authors**, highlighting the importance of literary exchange between the two nations.
- 'Staliner Divan' by Chatterjee has also become the second Bengali translation of a French book to win the Romain Rolland Book Prize.
- The **initial recipient of the award** was the translation of Kamel Daoud's 'Meursault, contre-enquête' into Bengali, titled 'Myorso Birudhyo Saksho', skillfully translated by **Trinanjan Chakraborty** and published in 2022 by Patra Bharati.



Acharya Lokesh Muni Honored as Global Jain Peace Ambassador



Acharya Lokesh Muni to be honoured as Global Jain Peace Ambassador

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is set to recognize **Acharya Lokesh Muni**, the founder of **Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti** and the **World Peace Center**, as the '**Global Jain Peace Ambassador**' at an event in Karnataka.
- The recognition is a tribute to Acharya Lokesh's efforts in promoting global peace and harmony, as well as his contributions to enhancing India and Jainism's reputation internationally.
- Over the past three decades, he has been instrumental in promoting national character building, advocating non-violence, and fostering mutual cooperation and peace. Travelling extensively across India, covering 20,000 kilometers, Acharya Lokesh Muni has been actively involved in raising awareness against social evils.
- The ceremony, scheduled to take place in Karnataka, will be organized by the Jain pilgrim center, Navagraha Tirtha Kshetra, in Hubli Varur.
- The ceremony will witness the presence of Digambar Jain and Acharya Gunadharnandi, the founder of AGM Group of Institutions. Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, former Karnataka Chief Minister Basavraj Bommai, and Vice-Chancellor S Vidyashankar are also expected to attend.
- As part of the program, the foundation stone for Padmavati Mata Shaktipeeth will be laid. Additionally, the inauguration of the new administrative block of AGM Rural College and the new block of AGM Ayurvedic College and Hospital is scheduled.
- The event underscores Digambar Acharya Gunadharanandi and Navagraha Tirtha's commitment to promoting spiritual heritage, education, and healthcare services both domestically and globally.

PayU Payments appoints five new members to board, Renu Karnad named chairperson



- PayU Payments Private Ltd (PayU), the fintech branch of Global Consumer Internet Group Prosus, has named **Renu Sud Karnad**, former director of HDFC Bank, as chairman and independent director of the firm.
- PayU has also added four new board members, bringing the total number of **board members to seven**, including Anirban Mukherjee, PayU's CEO, and Arvind Agarwal, PayU's Chief Financial Officer. All five new directors have joined the board.
- The Board, which includes famous thought leaders and prominent specialists from several fields and operating disciplines, will provide strategic guidance to PayU Payments.
- The company intends to set best-in-class standards for customer experience, corporate governance, risk management, and compliance, and it plans to play an important part in the development of India's dynamic digital financial services market.
- **Karnad**, who is currently the President of the International Union of Housing Finance (IUHF), served as Managing Director of Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (HDFC) until June 30, 2023, and remained a Non-Executive Director on the HDFC Bank Board.
- She is currently the Chairman of the Board of GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals.

RIL signs deal with Disney to merge Viacom 18 and Star India

- Reliance Industries Limited and The Walt Disney Company have signed binding definitive agreements to form a joint venture that will combine the businesses of **Viacom18 and Star India**.
- As part of the transaction, the media undertaking of Viacom18 will be merged into Star India Private Limited. RIL, led by Asia's richest man - Mukesh Ambani, will invest Rs 11,500 crore (\$1.4 billion) into the joint venture for its growth strategy.
- The transaction values the joint venture at Rs 70,352 crore (\$ 8.5 billion) on a post-money basis, excluding synergies. Post completion, the new venture will be controlled by RIL and owned 16.34 per cent by RIL, 46.82 per cent by Viacom18, and 36.84 per cent by Disney.
- **Nita Ambani** will be the **Chairperson** of the merged entity, and former top Disney executive **Uday Shankar** would serve as **Vice Chairperson**.



The world's lowest fertility rate of 0.72 was recorded in South Korea

- South Korea's fertility rate, which holds the record for being the lowest in the world, declined further in 2023 to 0.72 babies per woman in a lifetime.
- The figure stood at 0.78 in 2022, according to South Korea's national statistics office.
- The total number of births in the country stood at only 230,000, a 7.7 per cent decrease and another new low for the country, which has a population of about 50 million people.
- The fertility rate in a specific year is defined as the number of children born to each woman in her lifetime.
- The decline trend was recorded for the fourth consecutive year in 2023, making South Korea the only Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) member with a birth rate of below 1 per cent.
- South Korea's population estimated to halve by end of 21st century.





**Khelo India University Games concludes,
Panjab University tops with
69 medals**

Khelo India University Games 2023: Chandigarh University emerged as the overall champion

- The Khelo India University Games 2023, that started on February 17, were officially declared closed by Assam sports minister Shrimati Nandita Gorlosa at the Sarusajai Sports Complex.
- **Chandigarh University** clinched the overall championships of the **fourth Khelo India University Games** with its boxers securing **five gold, one silver and four bronze medals** on the final day of competitions.
- **Lovely Professional University** were a distant second with **20 gold, 14 silver and eight bronze medals** while Guru Nanak Dev University finished third with 12 gold, 20 silver and 19 bronze.
- Defending champions Punjab University came up with a late surge, winning five gold, two silver and three bronze medals from the boxing arena to finish fourth with a tally of 12 gold, 12 silver and 16 bronze.
- Chandigarh University bagged seven gold from wrestling, eight from athletics, three each from weightlifting and swimming, two from fencing and one each from kabaddi, rugby, judo and badminton.
- **Pratyasa Ray of Utkal University**, with four gold, one silver and one bronze, was the **most successful female athlete of the Games** while the honour of the **most successful male athlete** went to another swimmer, **Xavier Michael D'souza** who won four gold medals for Jain University.

RBI has cautioned Mobile Phone users about potential fraud risks from ‘Juice Jacking’, a cyber attack vector

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a cautionary message to mobile phone users advising them **against charging their devices using public ports.**
- The warning comes amidst growing concerns over the security risks posed by a cyberattack known as “**juice jacking.**”
- Juice jacking is a form of cyberattack where hackers tamper with **public USB charging ports**, infecting them with malware or making hardware changes that allow them to steal data from devices connected to them.
- This type of attack has been a growing concern, with incidents reported in various public spaces such as airports, hotels, and shopping centres.
- To protect themselves from juice jacking and other cyber threats, mobile phone users are advised to use their personal chargers and avoid connecting their devices to public USB ports.
- Additionally, using a virtual private network (VPN) and ensuring that devices have the latest security updates installed can help mitigate the risk of cyberattacks.

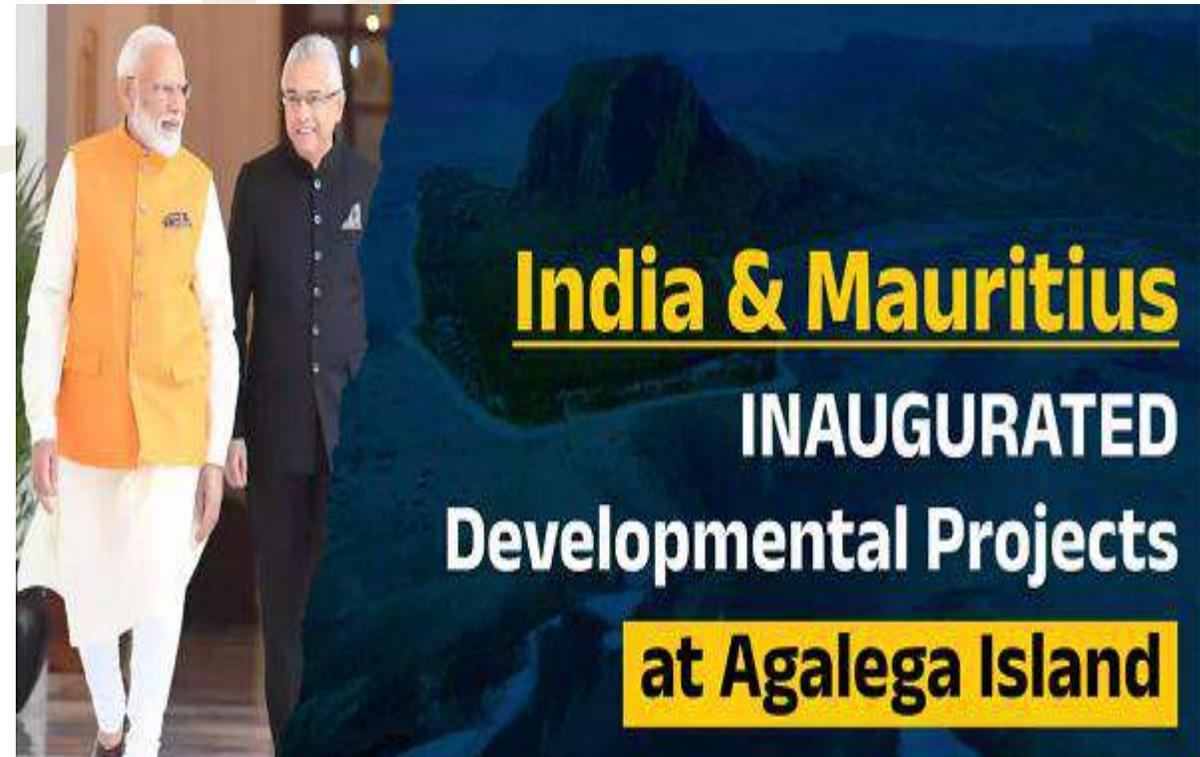


India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated the developmental projects at Agalega Island in Mauritius

- The inaugurated projects include the new Airstrip and Saint James Jetty along with six community development projects.
- These facilities will boost the socio-economic development of Agalega Island.
- India has launched a number of infrastructure projects, such as the construction of a sports complex, a metro line, social housing, a community development project, an ENT hospital, and a Civil Service College.
- PM Modi said that as members of the Global South, India and Mauritius have shared priorities.
- The announcement of the development projects was hailed as historic by Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth of Mauritius.

India–Mauritius relations:

- Diplomatic ties between Mauritius and India were established in 1948.
- Indian descent makes up more than 68% of the population of Mauritius.
- India and Mauritius have been connected since the 1730s.
- Since 2007, India has emerged as Mauritius's main import supplier.
- For more than a decade, Mauritius remained the top source of foreign direct investment into India.



Zero Discrimination Day: 01 March

- Every year on March 1, people celebrate Zero Discrimination Day.
- The purpose of Zero Discrimination Day is to raise awareness of tolerance, equality, and inclusivity worldwide.
- The first Zero Discrimination Day celebration took place on **March 1, 2014**.
- The theme for this year's Zero Discrimination Day is **“To protect everyone's health, protect everyone's rights”**.
- UNAIDS introduced the Zero Discrimination Campaign on 'World AIDS Day' in December 2013.
- UNAIDS is a collaborative initiative of the United Nations focused on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).



“Coal Logistics Plan and Policy” initiative launched by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi

- This initiative was launched during the Indian National Committee World Mining Congress under the patronage of the Ministry of Coal in New Delhi.
- Shri Pralhad Joshi underlined the imperative need for efficient logistics to meet the energy demand projected to increase from 980 MT to 1.5 BT by 2030.
- The Coal Logistics Plan proposes a strategic shift towards a railway-based system in FMC projects, aiming at a 14% reduction in rail logistics costs and annual cost savings of Rs 21,000 crore.
- This transformative approach is expected to reduce air pollution, ease traffic congestion, and reduce carbon emissions by approximately 100,000 tonnes per year.
- Additionally, a savings of 10% is expected in the average turnaround time of wagons across the country.
- In addition, 37 important railway projects have been identified to meet the future coal evacuation demand in line with PM Gati Shakti.

