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- ❖ A contract has been signed by the Ministry of Defence and Advanced Weapon Equipment India Ltd (AWEIL), Kanpur
- ❖ Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) became the first Indian company to achieve a market capitalization of Rs 20 lakh crore
- ❖ United World Wrestling lifts suspension on India
- ❖ World's largest single-day election concluded in Indonesia
- ❖ The newly constructed Kalughat Inland Waterway Transport Terminal in Bihar was inaugurated by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal
- ❖ The first-ever Future Skills Summit will be organized by MeitY in Guwahati
- ❖ In Kathmandu, the 16th World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 meeting started
- ❖ Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras inaugurated "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024"
- ❖ Virendra Bansal has been appointed as MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets



West Bengal Governor Presents 'Durga Bharat Samman' Awards

- Hindustani classical vocalist and composer **Pandit Ajoy Chakrabarty** has been conferred with the prestigious 'Durga Bharat Samman' by the Governor of West Bengal, C V Ananda Bose.
- The award, a testament to his remarkable contributions to the world of music, is a recognition of his invaluable role in preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Indian classical music.

- Bose also conferred the award, in its first edition, on the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for its recent successful 'Chandrayaan' mission, besides the Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE).
- The '**Durga Bharat Samman**' awards reflect a celebration of excellence across diverse domains, from the enchanting world of classical music to the heights of educational institutions, space exploration, and maritime engineering. These laurels not only acknowledge the exceptional contributions of the recipients but also serve as an inspiration for future generations to strive for excellence in their respective fields.
- **Visva-Bharati, a renowned central university**, was also honored with the 'Durga Bharat Samman.' The accolade acknowledges the institution's unwavering commitment to providing quality education, research, and its role in nurturing future leaders and thinkers.
- The **Indian Space Research Organisation** (ISRO) added another feather to its cap by being acknowledged for its triumphant 'Chandrayaan' mission. The 'Durga Bharat Samman' recognizes ISRO's remarkable achievements in space exploration and its commitment to advancing India's capabilities in the field.
- The **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers** (GRSE) also received the 'Durga Bharat Samman' in this inaugural edition. This recognition celebrates their notable contributions to shipbuilding, engineering, and the defense sector, which have played a vital role in bolstering India's maritime capabilities.
- All four recipients of the 'Durga Bharat Samman' were not only honored with this prestigious award but were also presented with a **cash prize of Rs 1 lakh each, a plaque, and a citation.**

Reserve Bank of India and Nepal Rastra Bank signed a pact for UPI-NPI linkage

- For seamless cross-border remittances transfer, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank signed an agreement to integrate the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and the National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal.
- The integration of Indian and Nepalese fast payment systems will enable users of both systems to make instant and low-cost fund transfers.
- The formal commencement of operations would take place at a later date.
- This pact will strengthen financial connectivity between both countries through the UPI-NPI linkage.
- Recently, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and France have enabled the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India for payments.



‘Best Technology Bank of the Year award’ has been conferred to South Indian Bank

- At the 19th IBA Annual Banking Technology Conference, South Indian Bank received the ‘Best Technology Bank of the Year award’.
- South Indian Bank won a total of six prestigious awards for outstanding performance.
- South Indian Bank emerged as the winner in three categories: Best Technology Bank of the Year, Best Tech Talent and Organization and Best Tech Talent and Organization.
- It secured the runner-up position in one and received special mentions in two others.
- The awards were received by **PR Seshadri, MD & CEO of South Indian Bank**.
- The IBA Annual Banking Technology Conference, Expo & Citations is an annual event that has been organized since 2005.
- It recognizes organizations that have brought transformational changes in their businesses by adopting modern digital solutions.
- **South Indian Bank headquarters: Thrissur, Kerala**



South Indian Bank bags

Six IBA Awards

Including Best

Technology Bank of the Year





ELECTORAL BONDS

Electoral bond scheme for political funding declared “unconstitutional” by the Supreme Court

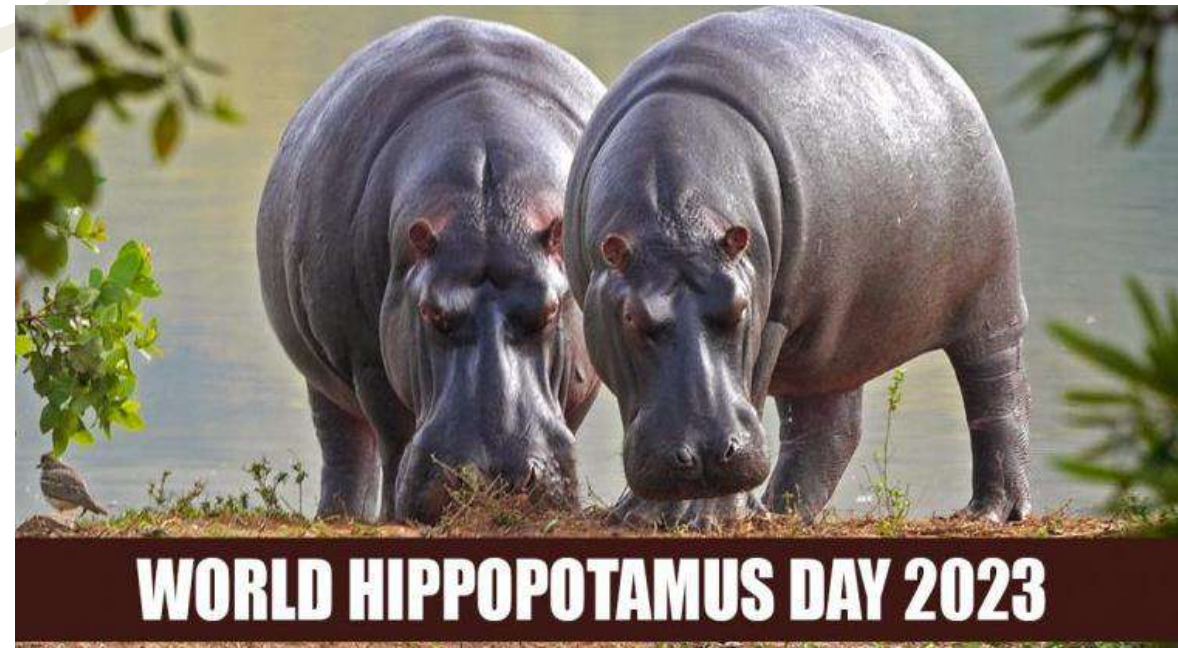
- In a landmark judgment on February 15, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud the electoral bond scheme was arbitrary and violated citizens' right to information.
- A five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court struck down the electoral bond scheme, which allowed **anonymous donations to political parties**.

- On January 2, 2018, the electoral bond scheme launched by the government was seen as a solution to replace cash donations and increase transparency in political funding.
- The Supreme Court said that **this scheme violates the right to information of the citizens**, thereby affecting the **freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a)** of the Constitution.
- Chief Justice Chandrachud, while striking down the scheme introduced through the Finance Act, 2017, said information about the funding of political parties is essential for the effective exercise of voting choice.
- The electoral bonds Issuer bank, the State Bank of India (SBI), has been ordered to submit details of the political parties that have received electoral bonds since 2019 to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by March 6, 2024.
- ECI has also been asked to publish such details on its official website.
- The Supreme Court also struck down the amendments made to the Income Tax Act and the Representation of the People Act, which had made donations anonymous.
- The judgment also said that the amendment to the Companies Act allowing blanket corporate political funding was "unconstitutional".

World Hippo Day 2024: 15 February

- Every year on 15 February, World Hippo Day is celebrated.
- It is celebrated to raise awareness about the conservation, protection, and appreciation of one of Africa's most iconic and beloved animals- the hippopotamus.
- The day was officially established to commemorate the anniversary of the inauguration of the **Turgwe Hippo Trust in Zimbabwe**.
- It is a pioneer conservation project dedicated to the protection and study of hippos in their natural habitat.
- With declines attributed to poaching, loss of access to fresh water, mechanized farming, and urbanization, currently, the hippo population is estimated to be between 115,000 and 130,000.
- Weighing up to 2,000 kilograms, hippos are semi-aquatic mammals, native to sub-Saharan Africa.
- The **hippos are the third-largest land mammal after elephants and rhinos**.
- Hippos play an important role in maintaining the balance of aquatic ecosystems.

They graze on aquatic plants and vegetation, helping to control vegetation growth and maintain water quality in rivers, lakes, and wetlands.





NITI Aayog

GROW Report and Portal

**Launched by
NITI Aayog**



GROW Report and Portal Launched by NITI Aayog

- Recently, the GROW report and portal was launched by a Member of NITI Aayog.
- The "**Greening and Restoration of Wasteland with Agroforestry (GROW)-Suitability Mapping**" portal allows universal access to state and district-level data.
- It is hosted on the Bhuvan website.
- The GROW initiative aligns with national commitments, **aiming to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.**
- The initiative, led by NITI Aayog, involved a collaborative effort from multiple institutions and employed advanced technologies such as remote sensing and GIS to assess agroforestry suitability across all districts in India.
- Utilising thematic datasets, the project resulted in the creation of an **Agroforestry Suitability Index (ASI)**.
- This index enables national-level prioritisation for greening and restoration projects.
- This project on prioritisation of wasteland areas suitable for greening is based on the analysis of five remote sensing derived thematic layers land use, wasteland, slope, water proximity and soil organic content.
- These parameters were selected as a result of expert consultations and considered to be the most critical layers in identifying areas that are amenable to interventions with agroforestry. Highest weightage was given to wastelands.
- The developed system provides information on areas suitable for agroforestry across India.
- The areas available in the system are classified as highly suitable, moderately suitable, and less suitable for agroforestry.

Japan fell into recession and lost its position as the world's third-largest economy

- After declining in the last quarter of 2023, Japan's economy is now the world's fourth largest and fell behind Germany.
- According to Cabinet Office data on real GDP released on 15 February, the government reported that the economy shrank by an annual rate of 0.4% from October to December, although it grew by 1.9% for the whole of 2023.
- It declined by 2.9% in July-September. Contraction in two consecutive quarters is considered an indicator that an economy is in a technical recession.
- Until 2010, Japan's economy was the second largest when it was overtaken by China.
- In 2023, Japan's nominal GDP totaled \$4.2 trillion, while Germany's was \$4.4 trillion or \$4.5 trillion, depending on currency conversion.
- The weak Japanese yen was a major factor in the decline to fourth place, as nominal GDP is compared in dollar terms.
- The US remains the world's largest economy with a GDP of \$27.94 trillion in 2023.
- India's wealth is about \$3.7 trillion but it is growing at a fast rate of about 7%.



National Conference on APAAR Inaugurated: One Nation One Student ID

- Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of Education, Skill Development, and Entrepreneurship, inaugurated the National Conference on APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card in New Delhi.
- This conference aimed to emphasize the importance of the APAAR ID as a universally recognized document for students across the nation.
- The APAAR ID aims to streamline student identification processes and enhance accessibility to educational services.
- Pradhan highlighted the proliferation of Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs) globally, with 53 such infrastructures across 16 countries.
- India has established 19 DPIs, reflecting the country's commitment to leveraging digital technologies in education.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 was lauded for its facilitation of seamless integration and migration provisions within the education system.
- NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of competency attainment through skill development alongside traditional knowledge acquisition.



Prime Minister launched Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, a project aimed at providing free electricity to its beneficiaries.
- **The scheme will offer up to 300 units of free electricity per month to its beneficiaries, with an investment of over Rs. 75,000 crores** and a target of lighting up 1 crore households.
- The Central Government will ensure that there is no cost burden on the people, by providing substantive subsidies, which will be given directly to people's bank accounts, and heavily concessional bank loans.
- All stakeholders will be integrated into a National Online Portal for further convenience.
- The scheme will also incentivize Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats to promote rooftop solar systems in their jurisdictions, leading to more income, lesser power bills, and employment generation for people.
- The **National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE)** has assessed that India has a solar potential of about 748 GW assuming that 3% of the wasteland area could be covered by Solar PV modules.



Prime Minister **Announced**
**Surya Ghar Muft
Bijli Yojana**

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Joseph, Hunter win ICC Player of the Month awards for January 2024

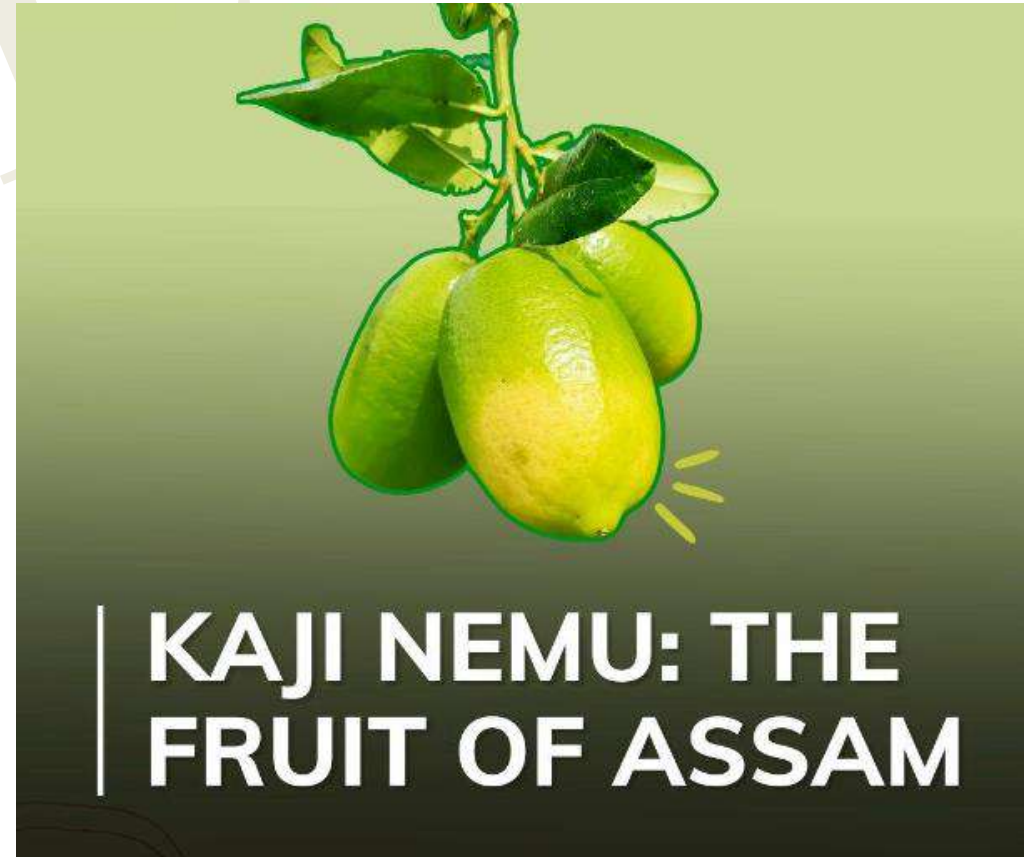
- The International Cricket Council (ICC) has revealed the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month award winners for January 2024
- West Indies pacer **Shamar Joseph** collects maiden **Men's Player of the Month** award for Test heroics in Australia.
- Ireland's explosive young batter **Amy Hunter** claims **Women's Player of the Month** after dominant scores in short format series against Zimbabwe.
- ICC Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- **ICC Founded:** 15 June 1909
- **ICC CEO:** Geoff Allardice
- **ICC Chairman:** Greg Barclay



ICC Players of the Month for January 2024

'Kaji Nemu' lemon has been designated as the state fruit of Assam

- The fruit known as "**Kaji Nemu**" (**citrus limon**) is indigenous fruit of Assam.
- It has an oval shape. Its smooth, thin skin is typically a pale green color.
- A GI tag has already been issued to Kaji Nemu.
- Because of its culinary and therapeutic qualities, Kaji Nemu is a highly valued fruit. Its flavour is particularly acidic and strong.
- Its anti-inflammatory and digestive qualities are also well-known.
- A common component of traditional Assamese cooking is Kaji Nemu.
- This fruit has been exported to several nations, particularly the Middle East, during the past two years.
- A product that has a specific geographical origin and is known for certain attributes or qualities is given the geographical indicator (GI) tag.





Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple was inaugurated by PM Modi on 14 February

- The temple has been constructed by Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS).
- At a cost of approximately **₹700 crore**, the BAPS temple has been built on a 27-acre site in Abu Mreikhah, near Al Rahba on the Dubai-Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway.

- The grand temple has been constructed according to the ancient style of construction and creation described in the Crafts and Architecture Shastras, Hindu texts that describe the art of temple design and construction.
- More than 300 high-tech sensors have been installed at every level of the temple to measure temperature, pressure, and motion (seismic activity).
- In the construction of the temple, no metal has been used and fly ash has been used to fill the foundation, replacing 55% of cement in the concrete mix, reducing the carbon footprint of the temple.
- Heat-resistant nano tiles and heavy glass panels have been used, both of which combine traditional aesthetic stone structures with modern functionality.
- Considering the extreme temperatures in the UAE, the tiles will be comfortable for visitors to walk on even in hot weather.
- **Just like the Ayodhya Ram Temple, Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple is built in the Nagara style of architecture.**
- It has been built with 18 lakh bricks, seven lakh man hours, and 1.8 lakh cubic meters of sandstone, which were sourced directly from Rajasthan.

A contract has been signed by the Ministry of Defence and Advanced Weapon Equipment India Ltd (AWEIL), Kanpur

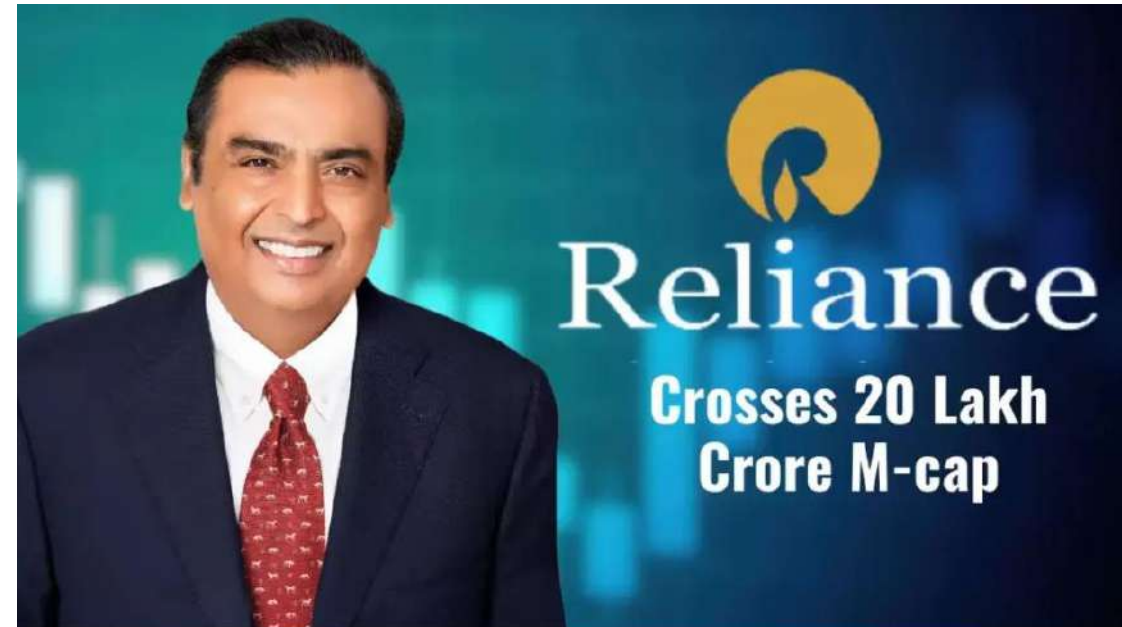
- The Indian Coast Guard and Navy will receive four hundred sixty-three 12.7 mm stabilized remote control guns (SRCG) produced and supplied locally under the terms of the contract.
- With more than 85% Indigenous Content (IC), this agreement is valued at Rs 1,752.13 crore.
- The Indian Navy and Coast Guard will be able to precisely engage small targets that pose a threat to ships thanks to these SRCGs.
- This will greatly enhance their capabilities regardless of lighting conditions.
- Over 125 Indian vendors and Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) will profit from this procurement over five years.
- The Navy was given Rs 51,052.2 crore for the Financial Year 2023–24 (FY24).
- This constituted a sizeable chunk of the revised estimates for the defence budget, which came to Rs 5.85 trillion.
- Off the coast of Somalia, INS Sumitra earlier successfully rescued vessels that had been hijacked.
- The Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of INS Chennai also saved a Liberia-flagged vessel.



**MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE**

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) became the first Indian company to achieve a market capitalization of Rs 20 lakh crore

- Mukesh Ambani promoted group's shares also touched their 52-week high during intra-day trade amid firm sentiment in the broader market.
- During the intra-day session, the market valuation of the company increased to Rs 20,01,279.72 crore, and at the close, the market capitalization stood at Rs 19,81,635.72 crore.
- Reliance Industries shares jumped 1.88% to hit a record high of Rs 2,957.80 before closing 0.90% higher at Rs 2,928.95 per share on the BSE.
- On the NSE, Reliance Industries's shares rose nearly 1.89% to hit a record high of Rs 2,958 and its 52-week high.
- The market value of the oil-to-telecom group's shares has increased by nearly Rs 1 lakh crore in the last two weeks.
- Reliance Industries continued to rank top in the charts in the ranking of top 10 most valuable companies, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Life Insurance Corporation of India, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.



United World Wrestling lifts suspension on India

- United World Wrestling lifted the suspension on the Wrestling Federation of India.
- The United World Wrestling (UWW) reviewed the suspension of WFI and decided to lift the ban.
- United World Wrestling (UWW) also directed that no discriminatory action against Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik for protest.
- On 23rd August 2023, United World Wrestling imposed a ban on the Wrestling Federation of India.
- WFI has assured UWW that all wrestlers will be allowed to participate in all WFI competitions without any discrimination.



UNITED WORLD
WRESTLING

World's largest single-day election concluded in Indonesia

- Polling has been concluded for the world's largest single-day election in Indonesia.
- The General elections were held in Indonesia on 14 February 2024 to elect the President, Vice President, and People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).
- The voting took place across three time zones.
- Indonesia is the world's third-largest democracy with around 205 million voters.
- Prabowo Subianto secured victory in the presidential election. He received more than 55 per of the vote.
- The newly elected members of the MPR will be sworn in on 1 October 2024.



INLAND WATERWAYS Development Council

1st Meeting Held in **Kolkata**



The newly constructed Kalughat Inland Waterway Transport Terminal in Bihar was inaugurated by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal

- Inaugurating the terminal on National Waterways -1 (NW-1) on February 15, he said that the inland waterways system has great potential to become the growth engine of the country.
- Addressing a function at Kalughat near Parmanandpur in the Saran district in Bihar, he said this would boost trade and commerce in the country.
- Inland waterways can also promote tourism, which was successfully demonstrated during the voyage of the MV-Ganga Vilas river cruise in 2023.
- The cargo transportation from water is cheaper and more economical as compared to rail and road transportation.
- 10 years ago there were only 5 national waterways in the country and now their number has increased to 111.
- This terminal has been constructed at a cost of Rs 82 crore 48 lakh.
- Kalughat Inland Waterway Transport Terminal will provide seamless connectivity to ships from Haldia and Kolkata ports.
- Also inaugurated 14 community ghats on National Waterway No. 1. It has cost Rs 17 crore 50 lakh.
- Its objective is to provide better connectivity to local producers of dairy and agricultural products.
- Shri Sonowal also laid the foundation stone of two community ghats on National Waterway No. 37 at Mangalpur on rivers Gandak and Bettiah.

The first-ever Future Skills Summit will be organized by MeitY in Guwahati

- On 15 February, in collaboration with the National Institute of Electronics and IT (NIELIT), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) hosted the Future Skills Summit in Guwahati.
- Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar inaugurated the event.
- The aim of the summit was to bring together young Indians, thought leaders, industry experts, policymakers, educators, and technology enthusiasts to discuss strategies to catalyze future-ready talent for India and the world.
- The focus of the summit was on the impact of rapid digitalization globally, with emphasis on new opportunities for young Indians in cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Semiconductor, Robotics, and Cyber Security.
- These developments offer significant opportunities for the country's youth.
- The main objective is to create a roadmap that can leverage emerging technologies and establish partnerships with industry and academic institutions across the country.
- More than 20 strategic collaborations are expected between NIELIT and leading institutions like Intel, HCL, Microsoft, Kindryl, IIM Raipur, IITM Gwalior, Wipro, and others.



16th **Conference of**
World Social Forum
Started in Kathmandu



In Kathmandu, the 16th World Social Forum (WSF) 2024 meeting started

- The "Another World is Possible" is theme of the five-day WSF 2024.
- This theme seeks to foster horizontal communication between social movements, trade unions, civil society organizations, and individuals who are against neoliberal globalization.
- The event began with a solidarity march that started from the main venue at Bhrikutimandap and passed through Bhadrakali, New Road Gate, Ratna Park and back to Bhrikutimandap.
- Approximately forty thousand participants from ninety-two countries are anticipated for the WSF.
- Numerous urgent themes will be covered in this edition of the WSF, such as caste discrimination, economic inequality, labor, migration, climate justice, gender equality, peace, and sustainable development, among many others.
- The Kathmandu Forum is an important turning point that demonstrates the diversity and tenacity of international solidarity movements.
- It is anticipated that about 1252 organizations from 92 countries would participate.
- The Forum will conclude on 19th February 2024.
- Ever since its establishment in 2001, the WSF has served as a guiding light for activists, unions, and social movements to collaborate, exchange insights, and develop transformative tactics.

Union Minister Pashupati Kumar Paras inaugurated "SUFALAM: Start-Up Forum for Aspiring Leaders and Mentors Startup Conclave 2024"

- "SUFALAM" is a start-up conclave for food processing entrepreneurs.
- More than 250 industry stakeholders, including startups, MSMEs, financial institutions, venture capitalists, and academia, took part in this conclave.
- During this two-day event, four knowledge sessions, two pitching sessions, and an exhibition were organized.
- The knowledge sessions were held in collaboration with FSSAI, EIC, APEDA, Start-up India, and FICCI.
- Pitching sessions were conducted in partnership with industry giants such as Nestle India, HDFC Bank, Buhler India, Marico, Indian Angel Network, ITC Foods, LT Foods, and TCPL.
- 5 exhibitors from across India took part in this conclave.
- The display of talent and ideas of startups during this seminar has provided a ray of hope.
- India's food-processing sector is one of the largest in the world.



Virendra Bansal has been appointed as MD & CEO of SBI Capital Markets

- Virendra Bansal became the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets (SBICAPS).
- He has taken the place of Rajay Kumar Sinha, who has been appointed as the Whole Time Member (Finance and Investment) of the IRDAI.
- Before this appointment, Virendra Bansal was the Country Head for SBI's US Operations.
- He has also worked as the Chief Executive Officer, SBI New York branch and Vice-Chairman of SBI (California).
- SBI Capital Markets is a wholly-owned subsidiary and investment banking arm of the State Bank of India (SBI).SBI Capital Markets is a wholly-owned subsidiary and investment

Virendra Bansal

Managing Director & CEO

 SBICAPS

