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24th FEB 2024 DESCRIPTIVE

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- ❖ India's first Gati Shakti Research Chair has been established at IIM Shillong
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- ❖ PhonePe Launches Indus Appstore to Challenge Google and Apple
- ❖ Khajuraho Dance Festival sets world record

Trilateral Coast Guard Exercise 'Dosti 16' started in Maldives

- Amid Security Concerns, **Indian and Sri Lankan** ships reached the Maldives to take part in the trilateral coast guard exercise 'Dosti 16'.
- The two ships of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) – ICGS Samarth and ICGS Abhinav are taking part in this exercise.
- Sri Lanka sent SLNS Samudra to participate in the biennial trilateral exercise.
- The main aim of the exercise is to fortify the friendship, enhance mutual operational capability, and exercise interoperability.
- It will enhance cooperation between the Coast Guards of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.
- Exercise 'Dosti 16' will be conducted from February 22 to 25.
- Exercise Dosti was first conducted in 1991 between the Indian and Maldives Coast Guards. Sri Lanka joined the exercise for the first time in 2012.
- After pro-China Mohamed Muizzu assumed office as President, ties between India and the Maldives have been on the downswing.



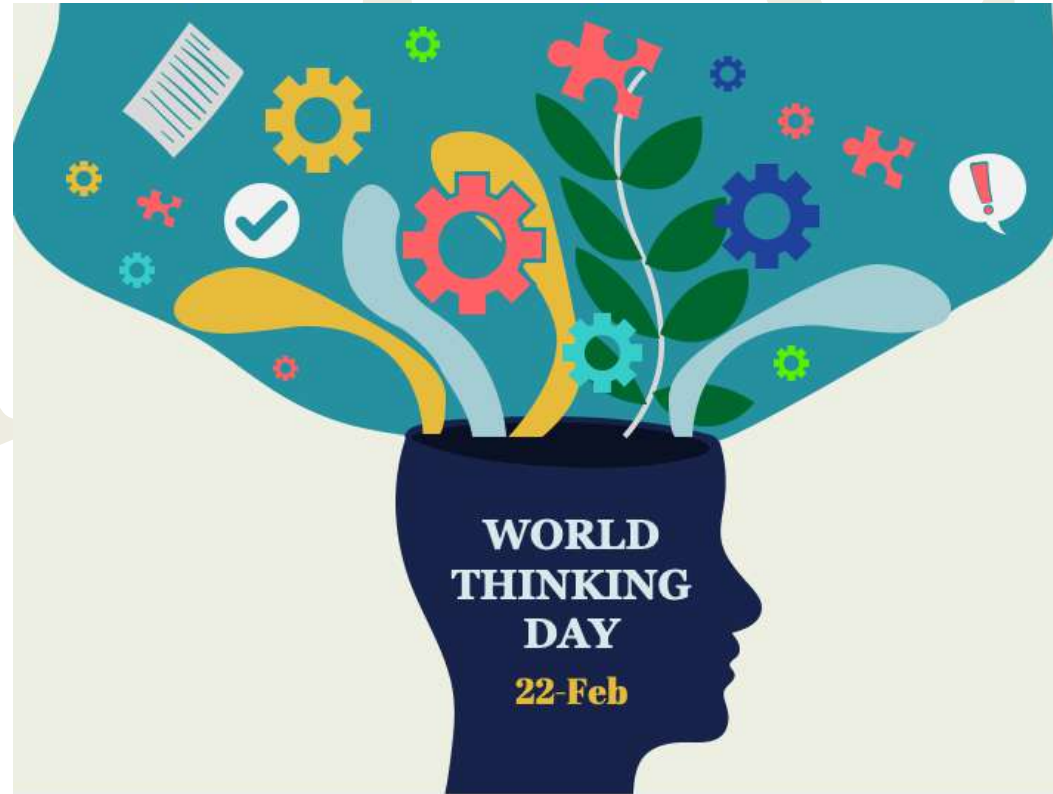
In Colombo, the three-day International Gita Mahotsav will begin from March 1

- This was announced by **Vidur Wickramanayake**, Minister of Buddhist Administration, Religious and Cultural Affairs of Sri Lanka.
- The three-day International Geeta Mahotsav will be organized at Nelum Pokuna Theater Complex with the financial support of the Kurukshetra Development Board, Haryana.
- Thousands of delegates from across the world are expected to attend the festival.
- There will be Geeta Yagya, Geeta chanting, Shobha Yatra, seminar on many topics of contemporary interest and many competitions.
- A copy of Srimad Bhagavad Gita will be presented in the Parliament of Sri Lanka on March 4.



World Thinking Day: 22 February

- It is celebrated annually on February 22 to celebrate friendship, sisterhood, and empowerment of women.
- It provides a platform for raising funds for the development of 10 million Young Girl Guides and Young Lady Scouts globally.
- The theme of World Thinking Day 2024 is '**Our World, Our Thriving Future**'.
- The theme is focused on creating a sustainable and inclusive world where girls have the potential to flourish.
- It is a day to honour the courage, strength, and determination of girls and women worldwide.



Uttar Pradesh to establish its first 'turtle conservation reserve' in Sarju river

- Uttar Pradesh's forest department is set to establish a turtle conservation reserve in the Sarju River.
- Sarju River, a tributary of Ghaghra, in the Gonda district is known for "**rich turtle diversity**".
- A 2 km stretch of river Sarju has been proposed for the reserve. It is also rich in species of plants, birds, fish, and water snakes.
- Sarju is the only river in India where nine turtle species are found. Eight of these are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act.
- A management plan for an initial period of 10 years will be implemented for not only conserving turtles but also 30 species of fish and 50 species of birds.
- The management plan will also lay special emphasis on protecting the river stream from pollution.
- The population of the endangered crowned river turtle has decreased drastically in the past two decades.



M R Kumar has been appointed as part time non official Director and non-executive Chairman of Bank of India (BOI)

- He has been appointed for the post in Bank of India for a term of three years. He is former LIC Chairman.
- Srinivasan Sridhar has been appointed as part time non official Director and non-executive Chairman on the Board of Indian Overseas Bank (IOB).
- Sridhar has been appointed for a term of three years. His appointment is subject to the condition that he resigns from the Board of Bank of Baroda.
- **Aravamudan Krishna Kumar** has been appointed as part time non official Director and non-executive **Chairman on the Board of UCO Bank.**
- He has been appointed for a period of three years. His appointment is subject to his resignation from the Board of Suraksha Asset Reconstruction Limited.



India's largest drone pilot training organisation has been launched by IIT Guwahati

- IIT Guwahati, in collaboration with EduRade, launched India's largest Remote Pilot Training Organisation (RPTO).
- EduRade is a brand owned by RC HobbyTech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. and is incubated at IIT Guwahati Research Park.
- It is spread over 18 acres and boasts the capability to fly nine medium-class drones simultaneously.
- The main objective of this pilot training organisation is to promote drone technology in India.
- A DGCA-Certified Medium Class Drone Pilot Training Course will be introduced by the RPTO.
- It will help in enhancing the skills of youth in the North East and other regions of India.
- This Pilot Training Organization will also provide training to women from self-help groups (SHGs) engaged in agriculture and identified under the Namu Drone Didi Yojna.
- After completion of the course from this training organisation, students will get a Remote Pilot Certificate (RPC) sanctioned by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).



**IIT Guwahati
Launches India's
Largest Remote Pilot
Training Hub**



President has appointed A S Rajeev as Vigilance Commissioner

- Former Bank of Maharashtra Chief Executive A S Rajeev has been appointed as Vigilance Commissioner.
- Under the CVC Act, the Central Vigilance Commission is a three-member body with a Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners.
- **Praveen Kumar Srivastava** has been serving as Central Vigilance Commissioner since May 2023.
- **Central Vigilance Commission:**
 - It is an **apex anti-corruption government body in India.**
 - It was established in 1964 on the recommendation of the K. Santhanam Committee.
 - It was granted statutory status in 2003 under the Central Vigilance Commission Act 2003.
 - The CVC Act does not lay down specific "eligibility criteria" for the appointment of commissioners.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Maritime Technical Exposition, MTEX-24

- MTEX-24 is a unique feature of MILAN 2024, which is being held in Visakhapatnam.
- The most recent developments in naval technology are on display at MTEX-24.
- It is a three-day defence exposition as part of MILAN 2024.
- It draws attention to India's efforts to become self-sufficient in the defense sector.
- It displays the most recent developments in naval technology, including shipbuilding, cybersecurity, communication systems, and Indian industry-developed sustainable energy solutions.
- **MTEX-24 is being attended by Indian Naval Organizations, Defense PSUs, and Defense Start-ups.**
- This exposition encourages cooperation and knowledge sharing among researchers, defense experts, and industry executives.



Government decided to hike the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane

- The Union Cabinet has decided to increase the **Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)** of sugarcane from Rs 315 per quintal to Rs 340 per quintal for season 2024-25 (October-September).
- The FRP for sugarcane is about 8% higher than the FRP of sugarcane for the season 2023-24.
- This announcement is significant, especially for Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra farmers.
- This decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.
- The **FRP of Rs 340 per quintal** will be paid at the sugar recovery rate of 10.25 per cent. With each increase of recovery by 0.1 per cent, farmers will get an additional price of Rs 3.32.
- This decision will benefit more than 5 crore sugarcane farmers and lakhs of persons involved in the sugar sector.
- 99.5% cane dues of the previous sugar season 2022-23 and 99.9% of all other sugar seasons have been already paid to farmers.



Ameen Sayani, an iconic radio presenter, died at the age of 91

- Iconic radio host Ameen Sayani, **voice of 'Geetmala'**, passed away at the age of 91.
- He passed away in the hospital due to heart failure.
- He began his career as an English-language broadcaster and later transitioned to Hindi.
- He gained popularity through his radio program 'Geetmala', which played a pivotal role in popularising radio listening in India.
- During his six-decade career, he produced and presented over 54,000 radio programs and 19,000 voice-overs for advertisements and jingles.



PM Narendra Modi inaugurated the 9th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi

- **Kyriakos Mitsotakis**, the Prime Minister of Greece, attended the inaugural session as the Chief Guest. Kyriakos Mitsotakis gave the keynote speech.
- More than a hundred countries will send representatives to the three-day Raisina Dialogue.
- Ministers, past heads of state and heads of government, military chiefs, business executives, technology executives, academics, journalists, and scholars specializing in strategic affairs are among the attendees.
- **"Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create"** is the topic for this edition.
- Global thought leaders and decision-makers will interact with one another through conversations in a variety of forms centered on six themes.
- These include War and Peace: Armouries and Asymmetries, Peace with the Planet: Invest and Innovate, and Tech Frontiers: Regulations and Realities.
- The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier conference on geopolitics and geo-economics.
- It is dedicated to taking on the most difficult problems that the world community is currently experiencing.
- It is being held annually since 2016. It is organised by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation.



Maharashtra Legislative Assembly passed the Maratha Reservation Bill

- The Maratha Reservation Bill has been passed, which will provide a 10 per cent reservation to Marathas above the 50 per cent limit.
- The state government convened a one-day special session of the state legislature to pass this bill.
- This is the third time in a decade that the state has introduced legislation for the Maratha quota.
- The decision to convene a special session was prompted by Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange Patil.
- The reservation has been increased based on a report submitted to the state government by the Maharashtra Backward Class Commission (MBCC). It was headed by chairman Justice (Retired) Sunil Shukre.
- The Maharashtra state already has a 10 per cent quota for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS).
- The Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) was constituted in 2017, and was headed by Justice (retired) MG Gaikwad.



World Health Organization launched the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)

- It is a digital health platform for sharing knowledge and digital products among countries.
- It was one of the three priority areas that were agreed during India's G20 presidency in 2023.
- On the occasion of launching the Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH), Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and India's representative to the UN Arindam Bagchi were present also.
- **Global Initiative on Digital Health** will be a network of networks. It will have four components- country needs tracker, country resource portal, transformation toolbox, and knowledge exchange.
- This initiative will help in democratising digital health technologies, especially for countries of the Global South.
- GIDH will support countries in three ways, which are given below.
- By listening to their needs
- By aligning resources to avoid fragmentation and overlap
- By providing quality-assured products



Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the 4th Khelo India University Games on 19 February

- The 4th Khelo India University Games has started in **Guwahati**.
- A total of twenty sports disciplines are included in the Khelo India University Games 2023 in Guwahati and the remaining four disciplines are from sports of other North-Eastern states.
- This eleven-day event will be held in eighteen places in seven cities and four and a half thousand players will participate in it.
- More than 200 universities are participating in this inter-university sports event.
- On 19 February, men's and women's Kabaddi, basketball, women's football, swimming, and hockey matches were held in various stadiums in Guwahati.
- On 29 February 2024, Khelo India University Games 2023 Ashta Lakshmi will conclude.
- The government has allocated Rs 3500 crore for Khelo India University Games 2023 in the budget.
- Launched in 2016, the Khelo India University Games is a part of the Indian government's Khelo India initiative.



**PM to declare
open the fourth
edition of
Khelo India
University Games**

India steps down to 85th place in the world's most powerful passports ranking

- **France** secured the top spot in The Henley Passport Index for 2024.
- Whereas India's passport ranking has slipped one place compared to last year, from 84th to 85th.
- The Henley Passport Index ranked countries based on the strength of their passports.
- France is leading the list in 2024, with its passport offering visa-free access to 194 countries.
- Along with France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain are also among the top-ranked countries.
- Pakistan remains at 106th position like 2023, while Bangladesh has slipped from 101st to 102nd.

Henley Passport Index:

- It was launched in 2006. The index covers 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.
- It is based on the data collected from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
- The Index's scoring system was developed to give users a nuanced, practical, and reliable overview of the power of their passport.
- Each passport is scored on the total number of destinations the holder can access visa-free.



The first private industry Commercial American spacecraft landed on the Moon

- A Houston-based company has landed America's first spacecraft on the Moon in more than 50 years. **Odysseus spacecraft** is built by **Houston-based Intuitive Machines**.
- It is part of a new fleet of unmanned commercial robots, funded by NASA.
- Its purpose is to pave the way for astronaut missions later this decade.
- The aim of the mission is to explore the Moon's south pole, study environmental conditions, harvest ice for drinking water and rocket fuel, and contribute to the development of a broader lunar economy.
- Although flight controllers confirmed they had received a light signal, it is not clear whether the lander Odysseus is fully functional.
- The hexagon-shaped craft approached the moon's south pole at a slow speed of 4,000 miles (6,500 kilometers) per hour at 2323 GMT.
- Images from the external "EagleCam", which were to have been shot during the final seconds of the spacecraft's descent, may have been released.
- Odysseus was launched on February 15 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. It has a new type of supercooled liquid oxygen, liquid methane propulsion system.



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah Launched Asha Kiran Eye Care Scheme

- Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will launch 'Asha Kirana Eye Care at Your Doorstep' under the aegis of National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment in Haveri.
- An initiative by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, comprehensive eye check-ups will be done for individuals across all age groups under the 'Asha Kirana' scheme.
- Free spectacles will be provided to the visually impaired and cataract surgeries will be done free of cost.
- With the objective of reducing prevalence of avoidable blindness, 'Asha Kirana' has already been implemented successfully in eight districts across two phases. The first phase covered Chikkaballapur, Kalaburagi, Haveri, and Chamarajanagar, while the second phase included Chitradurga, Mandya, Raichur, and Uttara Kannada district.
- Karnataka has over 6.5 crore population and is one of the well performing states with respect to eye care. These mega eye camps will amplify the coverage of beneficiaries, prevent early complications and thereby improve the quality of life.



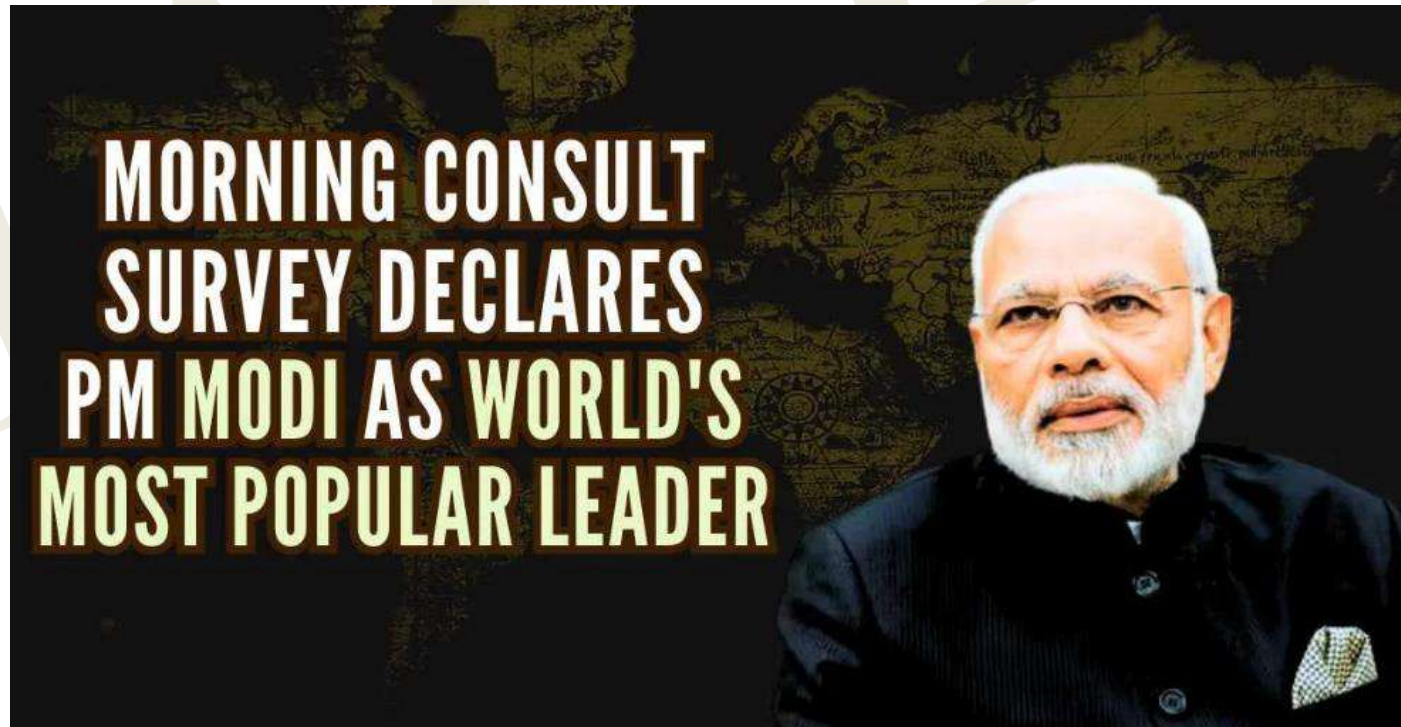
India's first Gati Shakti Research Chair has been established at IIM Shillong

- To set up India's first 'Gati Shakti Research Chair', the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) signed a MoU with IIM Shillong.
- This chair will contribute to high-quality academic research on multimodal logistics with a focus on the Northeast.
- It will focus on building knowledge on multimodal logistics development strategies and practice, and innovation for logistical capacity building in the North-Eastern region.
- The main aim of the chair is to improve collaboration with global experts in creating and developing knowledge and expertise.
- The chair will support the PM Gati Shakti Masterplan for improving the East and North-East Region's logistical capacity.
- A Strategic Round Table was also organised to discuss the multimodal logistics development strategy for connecting the North Eastern Region (NER) to the national and international regions.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the most popular global leader with 78% approval rating

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has again emerged as the most popular global leader with 78 percent approval rating.
- This was unveiled in a survey conducted by a US-based global decision intelligence agency **Morning Consult**.
- In the survey, **President of Mexico Andrés Manuel López Obrador has secured the second place** with 65 percent approval rating followed by **Argentina President Javier Milei at the third** with an approval rating of 63 per cent.
- US President Joe Biden is on the 11th position among the world leaders while Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on 17th and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on 20th position.
- As per the agency's website, the latest approval ratings are based on the data that was collected from January 30 to February 5.



PhonePe Launches Indus Appstore to Challenge Google and Apple

- PhonePe has launched the Indus Appstore, a made-in-India Android app marketplace, aiming to rival Google Play Store and Apple App Store.
- The platform hosts over 2 Lakh apps across 45 categories, offering a diverse range of applications to users.

Key Features and Offerings

- Indus Appstore boasts a wide array of apps from Indian brands such as Zomato, Myntra, Domino's, Flipkart, Dream11, Swiggy, and more.
- The marketplace is accessible in English and 12 Indian languages, ensuring inclusivity and catering to a broader user base.
- Until March 2025, developers are exempt from app listing fees, fostering an environment conducive to app development and innovation.
- The platform imposes no commissions on developers for using external payment gateways, offering a more cost-effective solution compared to mainstream app marketplaces.



Khajuraho Dance Festival sets world record

- Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav inaugurated the golden jubilee (50th edition) event of the Khajuraho Dance Festival.
- The occasion witnessed a remarkable feat as 1,484 artists came together to set a **new Guinness World Record for the biggest Kathak dance performance ever**, showcasing the talent and cultural richness of the region.
- The Kathak Kumbh performance, held at the renowned world heritage site, marks the third consecutive world record achievement for Madhya Pradesh, following the successful events in Ujjain and Gwalior.
- In Ujjain, 1,171,078 diyas were lit to establish a world record, while Gwalior witnessed 1,600 tabla artists playing in unison during the Taal Darbar at the Tansen Samaroh in Gwalior Fort, securing another accolade.
- Dedicated to Lord Natraj Mahadev, often revered as the 'God of Dance', the KDF embodies the sacredness of dance as a medium of direct connection with the divine. The event underscores the spiritual significance of dance, celebrating its profound cultural heritage.

