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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

28 JAN – 3 FEB



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2. Indian Navy Declares 2024 "Year of Naval Civilians"
3. Kenya Confirms Discovery of Coltan Deposits
4. India Releases Guidelines for Green Hydrogen in Steel Sector
5. UGC's Draft De-Reservation Guidelines
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1. ZOMATO PAYMENTS GETS RBI'S NOD TO OPERATE AS AN ONLINE PAYMENT AGGREGATOR

- Zomato Payments, a wholly owned subsidiary of Zomato Limited, has received the certificate of authorisation from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as an online payment aggregator.
- In an exchange filing, the food delivery platform stated the central bank has allowed it to carry out the business as payment aggregator and issuer of pre-paid payment instruments with effect from January 24, 2024.
- Last year, Zomato had joined hands with ICICI Bank to launch its own unified payments interface (UPI) offering -- Zomato UPI.
- The feature was offered to select users and did not involve a KYC process.



2. DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA.

- Prime Minister Modi has inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Supreme Court of India in New Delhi.
- Modi will launch citizen-centric multiple technology initiatives, which include Digital Supreme Court Reports, Digital Courts 2.0 and a new website of the Supreme Court.
- The Digital Supreme Court Reports (SCR) will make Supreme Court judgments available to the citizens of the country free of cost and in electronic format.
- The key features of digital SCR are that all 519 volumes of the Supreme Court reports since 1950, covering over 36 thousand cases, will be available in a digital format and with open access.



- Digital Courts 2.0 application is a recent initiative under the e-Courts project to make court records available to the Judges of the district courts in electronic form.

3. OLA FOUNDER'S KRUTRIM BECOMES INDIA'S FIRST AI UNICORN

- Krutrim, an AI startup founded by Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal, stated it has raised a funding round that values it at \$1 billion.
- The startup, founded last year, is the fastest to become a unicorn in India, it claimed in a press statement.



Krutrim-India's 1st AI Unicorn

- **Founded** by Ola's Bhavish Aggarwal in April 2023
- **Raised \$50 MN** led by Matrix Partners and others
- **Trained** on 2 TN tokens, the Model comprehends over 22 Indian languages generates content in 10

- It's also the first Indian AI startup to become a unicorn, it stated.
- Matrix Partners India — which has also backed Aggarwal's other two startups, ride-hailing platform Ola and EV startup Ola Electric — led the \$50 million "first round" in Krutrim.
- Krutrim, which means "artificial" in Sanskrit, is building a large language model that has been trained on local Indian languages in addition to English.
- The startup plans to launch a voice-enabled conversational AI assistant that understands and speaks multiple Indian languages, the startup stated.

4. INSAT-3DS SATELLITE SENT TO LAUNCH PORT IN SRIHARIKOTA

- India is set to enhance its meteorological monitoring capabilities with the launch of INSAT-3DS, an advanced weather satellite developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Scheduled for a February liftoff aboard the GSLV-F14 rocket, this state-of-the-



art satellite will play a pivotal role in weather forecasting and disaster management.

- The satellite has been sent to the Satish Dhawan Space Centre To be integrated with the rocket for a launch from Sriharikota.
- INSAT stands for the Indian National Satellite System that provides various services, including telecommunications, broadcasting, meteorology, and search and rescue operations.

5. INDIA RELEASES GUIDELINES FOR GREEN HYDROGEN IN STEEL SECTOR.

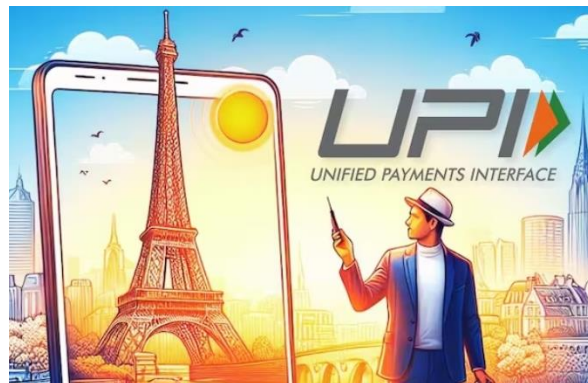
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched on 04th January 2023 with an outlay of Rs. 19,744 crores up to FY 2029-30.
- The Indian government has released guidelines for implementing green hydrogen pilot projects in the steel industry.



- The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) released the rules on February 2, 2024, and they are titled "Scheme Guidelines for implementation of Pilot projects for use of Green Hydrogen in the Steel Sector under the National Green Hydrogen Mission."
- Under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, along with other initiatives, MNRE will implement pilot projects in the Steel Sector, for replacing fossil fuels and fossil fuel-based feedstock with Green Hydrogen and its derivatives.
- These pilot projects will be implemented through the Ministry of Steel and the Implementing Agencies nominated under this Scheme. Three areas have been identified as thrust areas for the pilot projects in the steel sector.

6. INDIA LAUNCHES UPI PAYMENT SYSTEM GLOBALLY AT EIFFEL TOWER

- National Payments Corporation of India's (NPCI) Unified Payment Interface (UPI) was formally launched at the Eiffel Tower in Paris on February 2, 2024.
- This marks an important step in taking UPI global. The launch coincided with India's Republic Day celebrations in Paris.
- PM Modi welcomed the launch, calling it a significant milestone in taking UPI global and an encouraging example of promoting digital payments and stronger India-France ties.
- UPI, launched in 2016, enables multiple bank accounts on a single mobile application.
- NIPL has partnered with French e-commerce and payments company Lyra to enable UPI payments in France.



7. THE SECOND EDITION OF INDIA ENERGY WEEK SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN GOA

- The second edition of India Energy Week (IEW) is scheduled to take place in Goa from the 6th to the 9th of February.
- Addressing the curtain raiser press conference, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said that the event is expected to see the participation of Energy ministers from 17 different countries, over 35 thousand attendees, and more than 900 exhibitors.
- IEW represents a golden opportunity to showcase the developments on the energy front and provide the platform for further development and growth in the energy sector.



- Six countries namely Canada, Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA will set up their pavilions at the event.
- The government recently had an energy startup challenge organized by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

8. INDIAN NAVY DECLARES 2024 “YEAR OF NAVAL CIVILIANS”

- Indian Navy has declared 2024 as ‘Year of Naval Civilians’ to improve administration, efficiency and well-being of Naval Civilians by addressing all facets of Civilian HR Management in a time bound manner.
- Major focus areas towards maximizing administrative efficiency, digital initiatives, generic and specific training programmes and welfare activities have been identified for implementation in 2024.
- Naval Civilian Personnel constitute about a third of the Indian Navy’s total workforce and contribute significantly to its operational effectiveness across all domains.
- The ‘Year of Naval Civilians’ aims to improve administration and maximize efficiency of Naval Civilians through initiatives focused on administration, training, welfare and other facets of civilian human resource management.



9. KENYA CONFIRMS DISCOVERY OF COLTAN DEPOSITS

- Kenya has officially announced the discovery of coltan deposits within its borders for the first time. Coltan, short for columbite-tantalite, is a valuable mineral composed of niobium and tantalum that is integral to producing electronics like smartphones and electric car batteries.



Importance of Tantalum

- Tantalum is a key component derived from coltan used to make capacitors – essential parts found in almost every modern tech device. Capacitors help regulate and store energy in electronic circuits. The recent find marks a potential economic boost for Kenya.
- Experts project worldwide demand for coltan to steadily rise in tandem with production of electronics and electric vehicle batteries.

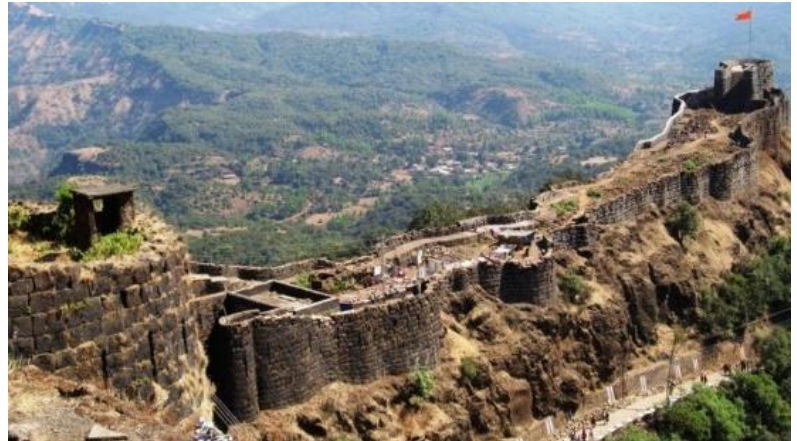
10. ODISHA CABINET APPROVES NEW SCHEME LABHA FOR TRIBALS

- Odisha Cabinet approved a new scheme for the development of the tribals of Odisha-LABHA (Laghu bana jatya drabya kraya), officials stated.
- Briefing the media, Chief secretary Pradeep Kumar Jena stated the LABHA Yojana is a 100% state-funded MSP for MFP scheme (minimum support price for minor forest produce).
- The minimum support price will be determined every year by the state government.
- Under the scheme, a primary collector (tribal) will be able to sell the minor forest produce at Minimum Support Price collected at the procurement centers by TDCCOL.
- Since 99% of primary collectors are tribals and majority of them are women, LABHA Yojana will integrate the efforts with the Mission Shakti's Women SHGs.
- Upon collection, the amount will be transferred as DBT to the beneficiary account and the SHG /any other agency will receive Commission (2%) as well.
- The procurement automation system will capture the total collection of MFP and the details of the primary collector and the procurement point.



11. INDIA NOMINATES 'MARATHA MILITARY LANDSCAPES' FOR 2024-25 UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

- The Ministry of Culture announced that India is nominating the 'Maratha Military Landscape' for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List for the 2024-25 cycle, with a total of 12 components included in this nomination.



- Suvarnadurg Fort is a part of the historic 'Maratha Military Landscape'.
- 'Maratha Military Landscapes' represents the extraordinary fortification and military system envisioned by the Maratha rulers, showcasing the vibrant history of India.
- Twelve components of this nomination are -- Salher fort, Shivneri fort, Lohagad, Khanderi fort, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala fort, Vijay durg, and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, and Gingee fort in Tamil Nadu.
- These twelve components are distributed across diverse geographical and physiographic regions and they showcase the strategic military powers of the Maratha rule in ancient India.
- 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India', which developed between the 17th and 19th centuries, "represent an extraordinary fortification and military system envisioned by the Maratha rulers.

12. NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO REHABILITATE BEGGARS AT RELIGIOUS, HISTORICAL AND TOURIST SITES.

- The central government has identified 30 cities of religious, historical, and tourism significance across India for survey and rehabilitation of adults and children engaged in begging.

- The goal is to make these spaces free of beggars by 2026. More cities may be added over the next two years.

Central Scheme to Rehabilitate Beggars

- This outreach in 30 cities is being implemented under the “Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprises” (SMILE) scheme by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- A national portal and mobile app will be launched to ensure uniform guidelines are followed for survey and rehabilitation.
- It will enable real-time tracking of progress in providing shelters, skills, education etc to those who beg.



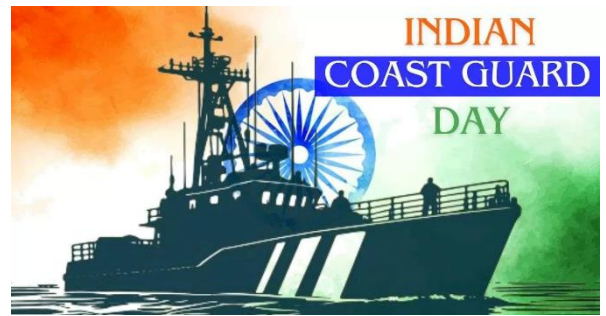
13. UGC'S DRAFT DE-RESERVATION GUIDELINES

- The Ministry of Education clarified recently on its official Twitter account that the reservation policy for core educational institutions remains unchanged.
- No reserved post is to be de-reserved following the adoption of this Act. All CEIs have received instructions from the Ministry of Education to strictly fill open positions in accordance with the 2019 ACT, the ministry tweeted.
- Following strong opposition from students about the UGC's draft rules that suggested de-reserving open seats in the reserved category, this remark was made.
- The controversial draft 'Guidelines for Implementation of the Reservation Policy' were released by the UGC in December 2023.
- While the UGC draft attracted outrage, there has been no clarity whether it would be binding on all higher education institutions.



14. INDIAN COAST GUARD DAY 2024: 01ST FEBRUARY

- The ICG Day or Indian Coast Guard Day is celebrated on 01st February every year.
- The Indian Coast Guard is a multi-mission organization, conducting round-the-year real-life operations at sea.
- Despite being relatively small, it has a wide range of task capabilities for both surface and air operations.
- The Indian Coast Guard was initially established on 1 February 1977 due to an emergency. In those days, sea-borne smuggling threatened the country's domestic economy.
- In the interim, the Indian Coast Guard was created in 1977 to prevent the smuggling of goods on the Sea.
- The Nagchaudhuri Committee was formed with the participation of the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force to analyze the problem.
- On the 18th of August, 1978 the Indian Coast Guard was established officially and was declared by the Parliament of India by the Coast Guard Act, 1978.
- To provide non-military maritime services to the nation, the Indian Coast was created based on the ideas of the Indian Navy.



15. 4TH INDIA AND PORTUGAL FOREIGN OFFICE CONSULTATIONS HELD IN NEW DELHI

- The fourth Foreign Office Consultations between India and Portugal was held in New Delhi, with a focus on political relations, deepening of trade and investment, cooperation in defense, science and technology, and energy.



- The External Affairs Ministry said both sides stressed on early implementation of the pilot project on the Recruitment of Indian Citizens to work in the Portuguese Republic, as well as the holding of the first India - Portugal Consular Dialogue.
- Discussions were also held on the joint commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2025.
- Both sides reviewed the ongoing cooperation between India and Portugal on the development of the Maritime Heritage Complex in Gujarat's Lothal.
- They also called for the early scheduling of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture and Renewable Energy.
- The two sides also exchanged views on global and regional issues including Gaza and Ukraine and agreed to continue the existing close cooperation in multilateral for a, including at the UN.

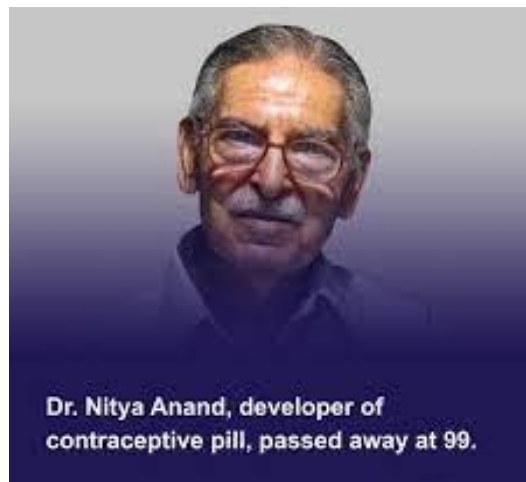
16. INDIAN NEWSPAPER DAY 2024 CELEBRATED ON 29 JANUARY

- Indian Newspaper Day is celebrated every year on 29 January in India. On 29 January 1780, the first weekly Indian newspaper "Hicky's Bengal Gazette", also known as "Calcutta General Advertiser", was published.
- But since the British knew that newspapers could harm their government, they decided to stop publishing them in 1782.
- Indian Newspaper Day recognizes the role of newspapers in shaping public discussion and promoting democracy.



17. DR NITYA ANAND, DEVELOPER OF INDIA'S FIRST CONTRACEPTIVE PILL 'SAHELI', PASSES AWAY.

- Dr. Nitya Anand, a former director of the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) and a recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri award in 2012, made significant contributions to the field of pharmaceutical research.
- Dr. Anand is credited as the mastermind behind the discovery of 'Saheli,' scientifically known as Centchroman. This groundbreaking innovation marked the world's first and only non-steroidal, non-hormonal oral contraceptive pill, offering a once-a-week dosage regimen.
- In a momentous event in 1986, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi unveiled 'Saheli' to the public, recognizing its potential to revolutionize contraceptive options for women.
- The significance of 'Saheli' transcended its initial launch, as it was later integrated into India's National Family Programme in 2016. This move underscored the pill's vital role in promoting reproductive health and family planning across the nation.



18. MICROSOFT BECOMES THE SECOND COMPANY TO REACH \$3 TRILLION MARKET VALUE.

- Software giant Microsoft has crossed a valuation of \$3 trillion. (€2.7 trillion) and becomes the second company after Apple to reach this milestone.
- Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella has led his company to a record market value amid the AI boom.



- Microsoft launched AI chatbot 'ChatGPT' November 2022, shares of Micro have increased by more than 60% since its release.

19. INTERIM BUDGET 2024-25: KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- FM Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Interim Budget 2024 in the Lok Sabha after approval from the Union Cabinet earlier.
- The finance minister confirmed the continuation of existing tax rates, covering direct, and indirect taxes, and export duties.
- This year, the total allocation under the gender budget stands at ₹three lakh crores, which is almost 6.5% of the total expenditure.
- Tax benefits to start-ups and investments made by sovereign wealth or pension funds extended by 1 year till March 31, 2025.
- Gross tax revenue target for FY25 hiked 11.46% to ₹38.31-lakh crore, from ₹34.37 lakh crore in FY24.
- The direct tax collection target is set at ₹21.99-lakh crore, while that of indirect tax is at ₹16.22-lakh crore.
- Capital expenditure hiked 11% to ₹11.11-lakh crore.
- Direct Benefit Transfer of 34 Lakh Cr from the Government using PM-Jan Dhan accounts has led to savings of 2.7 Lakh Cr for the Government.
- PM-SVANidhi has provided credit assistance to 78 Lakh Street vendors. From that total, 2.3 Lakh have received credit for the third time.
- PM-JAN MAN Yojana reaches out to the particularly vulnerable tribal groups, who have remained outside the realm of development so far.
- PM-Vishwakarma Yojana provides end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople engaged in 18 trades.
- Various schemes for maternal and child care will be brought under one comprehensive program for synergy in implementation.



- Upgradation of Anganwadi centers under “Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0” will be expedited for improved nutrition delivery, early childhood care, and development.

20. ZAKIR HUSAIN'S 'PASHTO' WINS A GRAMMY.

- Indian musicians had multiple honor rolls at the prestigious Grammy awards.
- The album This Moment by fusion band Shakti, featuring Zakir Hussain and musician Shankar Mahadevan, won the Grammy for Best Global Album.
- Zakir Hussain also won a Grammy for Best Global Music performance with flutist Rakesh Chaurasia for their track 'Pashto' which featured musicians Bela Fleck and Edgar Meyer.
- 'Pashto' bagged the Best Global Music Performance award beating several other tracks including 'Abundance in Millets', featuring a speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sung by Indian American singers Falguni Shah and Gaurav Shah.
- This Moment, the third studio album by Shakti, released in June, 2023 features Zakir Hussain as percussionist and Shankar Mahadevan as vocalist.



21. SELF STUDY POINTERS

1. Uttar Pradesh Govt. is set to launch the first water metro in Ayodhya.
2. Anil Lahoti has been appointed as the new chairman of TRAI.
3. The four members of the Sixteenth Finance Commission appointed by the Government which includes 3 full time members.
4. Jay Shah, Secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, has been elected as the President of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) for the third time.
5. Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched digital modules with Sagar Setu.

6. Railway Protection Force (RPF) will host the 67th All India Police Duty Meet (AIPDM) at Lucknow.
7. Abhinav Bindra has been chosen to be torch bearer of India for 2024 Paris olympics.
8. Justice Ritu Bahri becomes 1st woman chief justice of Uttarakhand High court

22. Q&A SECTION

1. **Where was the '84th All India Presiding Officers' Conference held?**
a) Mumbai b) Bhopal c) New Delhi d) Chennai
2. **Who has been appointed as the first woman chief secretary of Uttarakhand?**
a) Radha Raturi b) Kusum Kandwal c) Kamini Gupta d) Geeta Khanna
3. **Recently, which ministry has released the report titled "The Indian Economy: A Review"?**
a) Ministry of Agriculture b) Ministry of Commerce & Industry
c) Ministry of Finance d) Ministry of Home Affairs
4. **Recently, which player won the Women's singles title at the Australian Open, 2024?**
a) Ankita Raina b) Aryna Sabalenka
c) Zheng Qinwen d) Barbora Krejčíková
5. **Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, recently seen in the news, is located in which state?**
a) Tamil Nadu b) Kerala c) Karnataka d) Maharashtra
6. **Which ministry was allocated the highest budget in the Interim Budget 2024?**
a) Ministry of Défense b) Ministry of Education
c) Ministry of Rural Development d) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

7. Which airport has recently been given the status of International Airport by the Government of India?

- a) Dibrugarh Airport b) Birsa Munda Airport
c) Surat Airport d) Jorhat Airport

8. Who has been nominated by President Draupadi Murmu to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament?

- a) Satnam Singh Sandhu b) Mahendra Singh Dhoni
c) Uday Kotak d) Anil Ambani

9. Recently the book 'Ek Samandar, Mere Andar' was published, by whom is it written?

- a) Ajit Doval
b) Anil Chauhan
c) Amitabh Ghosh
d) Sanjeev Joshi

10. Who won the Australian Open 2024 Men's Singles title?

- a) Novak Djokovic
b) Janic Sinner
c) Daniil Medvedev
d) Rohan Bopanna

ANSWER KEY

1. (a)	2. (a)	3. (c)	4. (b)	5. (a)	6. (a)	7. (c)	8. (d)	9. (d)	10. (b)
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