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Maharashtra News

Indian Coast Guard Day

- **Indian Coast Guard Day** is celebrated annually on February 1st to commemorate the formation of the Indian Coast Guard in 1977.

This vital organization plays a crucial role in safeguarding India's maritime interests, including:

1. **Maritime Security:** Guarding against piracy, terrorism, and illegal activities at sea.
1. **Search and Rescue:** Conducting rescue operations during maritime emergencies and saving lives.
2. **Environmental Protection:** Preventing marine pollution and enforcing environmental regulations.
3. **Fisheries Protection:** Combating illegal fishing and protecting marine resources.
4. **Disaster Relief:** Providing assistance during natural disasters and coastal emergencies.

New guidelines after ASER 2023 report

Context:

- The **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023** report, focusing on Nanded district as a representative for Maharashtra, revealed worrying deficiencies in **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) skills among 14-18-year-olds in government schools.**
- To address these concerns, the Maharashtra State School Education Department issued new guidelines.

Key New Guidelines:

- Surprise Inspections and Learning Assessments:
- Performance-Based Teacher Training
- Enhanced Reporting and Accountability

PM Narendra Modi to Be Honored with Shiv Sanman Award

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to be honored with the prestigious Shiv Samman Award on February 19, 2024

- It coincides with the birth anniversary of **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, the legendary Maratha warrior king.
- The award, instituted by the Satara royal family and Shiv devotees, recognizes individuals who embody the ideals of Shivaji Maharaj, including bravery, leadership

Vidarbha has huge potential to attract industries

- Union Minister Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said that Maharashtra's Vidarbha region has the potential to attract investments and asserted that Gadchiroli will become the highest tax-paying district in the State in five years

About:

- The region is bordered by the state of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and the Marathwada and Khandesh regions of Maharashtra.
- Vidarbha region comprises 11 districts in total: Amravati, Akola, Bhandara, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Nagpur, Wardha, Washim, and Yavatmal. Nagpur, the largest of them all, and Gadchiroli, home to a **fossil park.**
- Vidarbha region is known for its rich biodiversity and is home to several wildlife parks and sanctuaries - Some of them are **Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, one of the largest and oldest national parks in Maharashtra; Pench National Park, one of the premier national parks and tiger reserves in the country; Melghat Tiger Reserve; Navegaon Nagzira National Park; and Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary.**

Agricultural conversion and afforestation destroys savanna biodiversity in MH

- **Savannas are unique ecosystems** with a balance of trees and grasses, crucial for biodiversity and local communities.
- **Maharashtra hosts diverse savannas** with endemic plants and grazing grounds for pastoral communities.

Threats to Savanna Biodiversity

1. **Agricultural conversion:** Replacing savannas with intensive tillage agriculture destroys native plants and disrupts ecological balance.
2. **Afforestation:** Converting savannas to tree plantations, aiming for forest restoration or carbon sequestration, can unintentionally harm savanna-adapted species.

Impacts:

1. **Loss of native species:** Keystone perennial grasses and other flora crucial for the ecosystem are eliminated.
2. **Degradation of habitat:** Fragmented landscapes and altered soil properties hinder natural recovery.
3. **Livelihoods affected:** Dhangar communities depending on savannas for grazing lose vital resources.

World Wetlands Day 2024

- **World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually on February 2nd**
- **It aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands** for both people and the planet.
- **It also commemorates the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971**, an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- **The theme for 2024 is: "Wetlands and Human Wellbeing"**
- **It focuses on the interconnectedness between wetlands and various aspects of human wellbeing**, including physical, mental and environmental health

About:

- **Wetlands are ecosystems** where water saturates the land for extended periods, creating unique habitats for diverse plants and animals.

- **Examples include marshes, swamps, bogs, mangroves, and even rice paddies.**

Did you Know?

- **The state of Tamil Nadu (14) has the most Ramsar sites in India**, followed by the state of Uttar Pradesh with 10 sites.
- **India currently has 80 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).**

CSMIA registers 87% YOY growth of e-commerce shipments

Context:

- **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai experienced an impressive 87% year-on-year (YOY) growth in e-commerce shipments during the festive season of 2023.**
- **This surge is attributed to the growing popularity of online shopping and the increased demand for faster deliveries.**
- **Perishable items saw a significant rise, with mango exports witnessing a record-breaking 318% growth, reaching 4,700 metric tons.**
- **This growth highlights the critical role of airports in supporting the e-commerce ecosystem and the need for efficient cargo handling infrastructure.**

Maha to implement 'Vatsalya' to reduce mother & child mortality

- **In order to reduce mother and child mortality, the state government is set to implement the 'Vatsalya' programme in Maharashtra**
- **It will be done by integrating various maternal- and child- care programmes.**
- **Under this first-of-its-kind programme, pregnancy and postpartum care will be provided to the mother and child up to three years post-delivery**

Rs 798 crore for Mumbai railway infrastructure works

- The Indian government allocated Rs 798 crore in the interim budget for ongoing capacity expansion projects in Mumbai's Western and Central Railways under Mumbai Urban Transport Projects (MUTP).
- This allocation aims to improve Mumbai's suburban railway network, a crucial lifeline for millions of commuters.
- Specific projects funded might include additional platforms, new lines, and rolling stock upgrades.

Bullet train gets Rs 25000 crore in interim budget

- The budget allocated Rs 25,000 crore to India's first High-Speed Rail (HSR) corridor, the bullet train project connecting Mumbai and Ahmedabad.
- This is a significant boost for the project, facing land acquisition delays and cost escalations.
- The funds will likely be used for civil works contracts and further project development.

BMC Unveils Rs 59,954 Crore Budget for 2024-25, Marking 10.5% Increase

- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) presented its budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, outlining a significant 10.5% increase from the previous year.
- The total budget stands at Rs. 59,954 crore, showcasing ambitious plans for Mumbai's development.
- The focus lies on enhancing infrastructure, public services, and overall quality of life for residents.
- Estimated revenue income for 2024-25 is Rs. 35,749 crore, indicating a Rs. 2,459 crore rise compared to the previous year's estimates.
- A surplus budget of Rs. 58.22 crore highlights the BMC's commitment to fiscal responsibility.

BMC announces ₹3,497.82 crore budget for education

- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has presented a budget of ₹3,497.82

crore for the education sector in its upcoming fiscal year.

- This marks a significant increase from the previous year's allocation, highlighting the BMC's commitment to improving educational opportunities for students in Mumbai.

Key highlights of the budget:

- Increased allocation for infrastructure development in schools and colleges.
- Focus on improving teacher training and recruitment.
- Introduction of new scholarship schemes for underprivileged students.
- Allocation for digitization initiatives in schools.
- Emphasis on promoting extracurricular activities and holistic development.

Boosting Green Public Transport: BEST Mumbai Receives ₹928 Crore for E-Buses

- The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) Undertaking, which caters to over 30 lakh bus passengers daily, has been allocated a mere 1.5% of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) massive ₹59,954.75-crore budget for 2024-25.
- In the budget presented, the civic body allocated ₹928.65 crore to BEST, although the cash-strapped undertaking had sought ₹3,000 crore.
- The BMC's budget document considers BEST's financial position and proposes to give the undertaking ₹800 crore as a grant, and another ₹128.65 crore towards purchasing 2,000 electric buses.
- The grant will help BEST meet expenses towards infrastructure development, purchase of capital equipment, repayment of loans, payment to wet lease operators, employee expenses such as bonus and gratuity, dues of pensioners, electricity dues and so on.

Free higher education proposed for female students with family income below ₹8 lakh

- The state government has principally sanctioned the provision of free higher education to female students from families with incomes below ₹8 lakh

- Currently, **female students admitted under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Economically Weaker Section (EWS) categories receive a 50% fee waiver.**

PM Modi to inaugurate partial stretch of Mumbai's coastal road on Feb 19

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate** a partial stretch of the highly anticipated **coastal road project on February 19th.**
- This opening marks a crucial milestone in addressing chronic traffic congestion in the city.

Project Details:

- **Inaugurated Segment:** The southbound lane, extending from Bindumadhav Thackeray Chowk in Worli to Marine Drive, will be officially opened to the public.
- **Public Access:** Following the inauguration, the southbound lane will become operational for public use starting February 20th
- **Project Scope:** The entire coastal road project comprises two phases:
- **Phase 1 (Southbound):** Currently being inaugurated, this 10.58 km stretch aims to ease traffic flow between Nariman Point and Marine Drive.
- **Phase 2 (Northbound):** Scheduled to open by May 15th, this 8-lane section features twin tunnels, further enhancing connectivity.
- **Project Cost:** The total project cost stands at an estimated ₹12,721 crore (₹13,983 crore according to some sources).

World Cancer Day

- **World Cancer Day is observed annually on February 4th**
- It was initiated on **February 4, 2000**, at the **World Summit Against Cancer for the New Millennium in Paris.**
- **It aims to unite the world in the fight against cancer.**
- **Between 2022 and 2024, the focus of World Cancer Day is to help "Close the cancer gap."**

- The **theme** for this year is **"Together, we challenge those in power"**.
- This theme encompasses the global demand for leaders to prioritize and invest in cancer prevention and care and to do more to achieve a just and cancer-free world

About:

- Cancer is a complex group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled cell growth that can invade and damage surrounding tissues.
- It often arises from genetic mutations within cells, leading to abnormal proliferation and disruptions in the body's natural regulatory mechanisms.
- While cancer can affect any part of the body, various factors influence individual risk and specific types.

Panel for effective implementation of sickle cell disease programme

- The Maharashtra government has established a **committee for the first time to ensure the effective implementation of the Sickle Cell Disease Control Programme.**
- The state government has issued **directives for the formation of committees at the state, district, and taluka levels**
- It also assigns them the critical tasks of investigating, treating, and preventing sickle cell disease.
- This initiative is specifically tailored to **address the healthcare needs of rural, remote, and tribal areas.**

Open varsity signs MoUs for training of drone operators

- The **Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU)** has signed **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** with **several institutions** to offer **training programs for drone operators.**
- It will be in line with the **National Education Policy 2020** with the aim to provide all possible measures to develop skills of people that will increase their employability.

This initiative also aims to:

- Address the growing demand for skilled drone operators in various sectors.
- Provide accessible and affordable drone training to individuals across India.
- Equip trainees with the knowledge and skills to operate drones safely and effectively, complying with regulations.

BoM records highest growth in deposit mobilization among PSU banks in Q3

- **Bank of Maharashtra has recorded the highest growth rate** in terms of **deposit mobilization** among public sector lenders at a time when most lenders are facing difficulty in **achieving double-digit growth**.
- Out of 12 **public sector banks, only Bank of Maharashtra and State Bank of India (could log a double-digit growth** in deposits in the **third quarter** ended December 2023.
- The **Pune-based lender Bank of Maharashtra reported a 17.895 growth in deposits followed by SBI at 12.84%** during the quarter, according to published quarterly numbers of the public sector banks.

Olympian Dattu Bhokanal caps comeback with sprint single scull gold

- **Dattu Bhokanal has won the men's singles scull gold in the National Sprint rowing championships** at the Army Rowing Node.
- He is an Olympian and Asian Games **gold medalist in quadruple scull**, pipped Services rower Salman Khan **by three-tenth of a second**, crossing the finish line in 1 minute 29.5 seconds compared to the latter's 1:29.8, to claim the title.

International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

- The **International Day of Zero Tolerance for female genital mutilation (FGM)** is observed annually on **6 February**.
- This provides an opportunity for all stakeholders involved in **ending FGM to celebrate achievements**, advocate for abandonment of the practice and raise awareness.
- **2024 Theme: Her Voice. Her Future**

- This year marks the 13th anniversary of this international day.
- In 2024, nearly 4.4 million girls - or more than 12,000 each day - are at risk of FGM around the world.

Mascot of Pench Tiger Reserve

- **Hori, a Malabar pied hornbill**, has been chosen as the **mascot for the Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR)**.
- Known as **Dhanesh in Marathi** and Dhan Chidiya by local tribals, the bird holds cultural significance in the region.
- The PTR management has officially named the mascot "**Hori**".

Pench Tiger Reserve:

- Maharashtra, being the third largest state in India and a leader in protecting biodiversity, bears **maximum numbers (six) of tiger reserves in India along with Madhya Pradesh**.
- Pench Tiger Reserve situated in the **northern part of eastern Vidarbha** is spread in Ramtek, Parseoni and Saoner tehsil of Nagpur district.
- **It is the 25th tiger reserve of India**.
- The Pench Tiger reserve (PTR) which derives its name from its lifeline - **the River Pench is spread over 741.41 Sq.km of area**.

Government Initiatives to Combat Air Pollution

- In response to a directive from the Bombay High Court, the BMC introduced a new Android application named "**Mumbai Air**" to address complaints related to air pollution.
- The app's launch was part of the **court's order to establish a website and mobile app for this purpose**.

Establishment of State-Level Committee

- The state environment department has established a state-level committee aimed at **devising strategies to alleviate the prevalent air pollution issues within the city**.
- This move comes after the Bombay High Court, prompted by various reports and a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), mandated the enactment of legislation akin to the central **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act** to

combat the alarming Air Quality Index (AQI) and pollution levels in Mumbai.

Thane's New Landmark

- Thane, known as the City of Lakes, is unveiling a new landmark, the **Grand Central Park, spanning 20.5 acres in Kolshet.**
- Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will inaugurate this public park on February 8.
- The Grand Central Park draws inspiration from iconic parks like **New York's Grand Central Park and London's Hyde Park.**
- It's a product of the Thane Municipal Corporation's Suvidha plot development project.
- Boasting over **3,500 tree species**, the park offers diverse amenities for visitors.
- It includes themed sections such as **Mughal, Chinese, Moroccan, and Japanese gardens.**
- **The Grand Central Park stands as Thane's largest developed park among its 80-plus parks.**

BMC Budget 2024-25

- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has unveiled a budget of **₹59,954.75 crore for the financial year 2024-25, marking a notable increase of 10.5% compared to the previous fiscal year.**
- The civic administration presented the budget to municipal commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal, who was appointed as BMC administrator by the state government after the five-year term of corporators ended in March 2022.

Major Green Initiative: Maharashtra to Convert 5000 Diesel Buses to LNG

- **Maharashtra is undertaking an initiative to convert 5000 of its diesel buses to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)**
- It marks a **significant stride towards environmental sustainability and cleaner air.**
- This will **reduce diesel vehicle pollution by 10%.**
- **The conversion will be done in six phases, with a provision for LNG fuel in 90 stations across the state.**

- In order to promote green transportation, the industry department has collaborated with **Kings Gas Pvt.**
- This transformative project is anticipated to yield substantial benefits, including:
 - Reduced Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
 - Improved Air Quality
 - Enhanced Public Health
 - Economic Advantages
 - Energy Security

Maharashtra Government Releases Guidelines for Student Internships Across Diverse Sectors

- **Maharashtra govt issues guidelines for student internships, encouraging collaboration with industries, NGOs, and professionals.**
- As per the **National Education Policy, internships are mandatory for 8-12 credits.**
- Each college is required to **establish an internship cell**, offering diverse opportunities and conducting preparatory programs.
- Students can list **preferences, and colleges must select projects** aligning with local industry needs.
- Alongside industries, **NGOs, financial institutions, and banks**, students can also **pursue internships under professionals, such as chartered accountants, lawyers, or artists.**
- After internships, **students present comprehensive reports**, promoting knowledge exchange.

Mumbai region reports 26% animal bites; rabies deaths rise 3-fold in Maharashtra

- The **Mumbai region** has seen a **significant rise in animal bites, with a 26% increase reported in the past five years.**
- **WHO estimates that rabies kills 55,000 each year, including 20,000 from India.**
- In 2023, **Maharashtra registered 30 rabies deaths** as compared to 10 in 2019.
- Maharashtra witnessed a **concerning 3-fold increase** in rabies deaths within the same period.

About:

- **Rabies is a vaccine-preventable viral disease that spreads from animal bites and is 100% fatal** except in a couple of cases in the world.

Agency charge reduced to 1% from 5% for CC roads plan

- Despite concerns expressed by two members, the state cabinet has approved Rs 28,500 crore to construct 6,000km of cement concrete roads through the Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM).
- The state provides 30% of funds while 70% is raised by the concessionaire from the market.
- The concessionaire is **Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation (MSIDC)**, formed last May under the public works department.

Green growth can drive Maha to meet \$1tn economy target

- The **International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST)**, a prominent environmental think tank, has called for a just energy transition in Maharashtra to support green growth and green jobs and to achieve a \$1 trillion economy in five years.
- iFOREST recently released a report at an event 'Just Energy Transition in Maharashtra: An Opportunity for Green Growth and Green Jobs'.
- The report, which is the **first comprehensive assessment of challenges and opportunities** of a green energy transition in the state, covers all major sectors that will be highly or moderately impacted in the years to come.
- It highlights opportunities for green growth and jobs which can be catalyzed through the right govt policy levers, and required private and public investments.

Pilot vaccination drive against Japanese Encephalitis for children from March

- The state health department, by march, will initiate a pilot vaccination drive against Japanese Encephalitis (JE) for children in four regions of Maharashtra including Pune city, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Raigad and Parbhani.

- The first phase of the JE vaccination for children was carried out a couple of years ago in 16 districts of Maharashtra including **Gondia, Gadchiroli, Wardha, Solapur, Bhandara and Dharashiv** among others.

About:

- Japanese encephalitis (JE) is a potentially life-threatening mosquito-borne viral infection primarily affecting the brain.
- The causative agent is the **Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV)**, a member of the flavivirus family, closely related to dengue, yellow fever, and West Nile viruses.
- JEV is transmitted primarily through the bites of infected **Culex mosquitoes**, particularly active at dusk and dawn in rural areas.
- Pigs and wild birds serve as virus reservoirs, but direct transmission from person to person is not possible.

Tata Trusts to launch India's first small animal hospital in Mumbai

- Tata Trusts is set to launch India's first state-of-the-art Small Animal Hospital in Mahalaxmi, Mumbai.
- The hospital is a first-of-its-kind and spans over 98,000-square-foot, across 5 floors with a capacity of over 200 beds.
- Inspired by philanthropist and former Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata's vision for a super speciality hospital for pets, the facility will provide round the clock services through pet-sensitized veterinarians, nurses and technicians trained to deliver quality care with a mission to save lives.
- The hospital will be launched in March 2024.

CM announces 837cr for Maha project on cybersecurity

- MH CM at the formal inauguration of the Maharashtra State Police Games 2024 (Feb 4 to Feb 10) in Nashik said that the govt has taken up a project worth Rs 837 crore to enhance the cybersecurity mechanism
- It includes command and control centre, technology-assisted investigation, centre of excellence, cloud based data centre, security

operation centre for cybersecurity to enable the police to look into every angle and details of crimes to catch the culprits

- The state is committed to increasing the manpower in the police force for which it has recruited 17,000 policemen.
- The govt has also decided to start a loan scheme for construction of houses for police through banks as earlier.

Art of Living launches Kisan Basket, signs MoU with state to promote natural farming

- Global spiritual organization Art of Living Foundation launched Kisan Basket, a platform that will allow consumers to directly order from farmers.
- The Foundation signed an MoU with the state government to this effect in the presence of Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.
- The organization said they are already implementing natural farming over 1.3 million hectares in the state to bring about holistic rural development.
- More than 10,000 tribal farmers have been trained around Sambhaji Nagar district in natural farming and sustainable agriculture, making them self-reliant.

Did you Know?

- The project found mention in PM Modi's Mann Ki Baat show as well.

Adani's Gondkhairi coal mine secures EC, path clear for pollution board application

- The Adani Group has got the environmental clearance (EC) from the ministry of forest environment and climate change (MOEFCC) for its underground coal mine at Gondkhairi in Kalmeshwar taluka, 20 km from the city.
- This is the first mine of Adani Group in Maharashtra.
- The EC paves the way for the company to apply for consent to operate before the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB).

National Deworming Day

About:

- This coal mine project has been a source of concern due to its potential environmental impact. Coal mining can release harmful pollutants into the air and water, and can also contribute to climate change.
- The project has also been criticized for its potential displacement of local communities.
- National Deworming Day (NDD) is observed annually on February 10th in India
- It aims to make every child in the country "worm-free."
- It was launched in 2015, and the initiative targets children aged 1-19 years, both enrolled and non-enrolled in schools, through platforms like schools and Anganwadi centers.
- Theme of National Deworming Day 2024 is "Eliminate STH: Invest in a healthier future for children"
- It revolves around public health, with a specific focus on preventing and controlling parasitic worm infections, particularly in children

Significance:

Reduces worm infections:

- Soil-transmitted helminths (intestinal worms) are prevalent in India, leading to health issues like anemia, malnutrition, impaired cognitive development, and reduced school attendance. NDD tackles this by mass deworming children.

Improves overall health:

- By eliminating worms, NDD improves children's overall health, nutritional status, and quality of life, contributing to better educational outcomes and future potential.

World Pulses Day

- In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared February 10 as World Pulses Day.
- This day was established to emphasize the importance of pulses in mitigating global food challenges, improving human health, and improving soil health.
- This includes dry edible seeds like lentils, chickpeas, beans, and dry peas.
- The theme for World Pulses Day 2024 is 'Pulses: Nourishing soil and people.'

- This theme emphasizes the positive impact of pulses on both soil health and human nutrition.

Did you Know?

- Burkina Faso proposed the observance of World Pulses Day.
- The Year 2016 was declared as the International Year of Pulses.

India is the largest producer of pulses in the world.

Move to eradicate bonded labour in Katkari community

- The Maharashtra State Human Rights Commission has moved to eradicate bonded labour prevalent among members of the Katkari community, which is under the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) category.

About:

- The Katkari community is an Adivasi (indigenous) group in Maharashtra, facing a severe issue of bonded labor, also known as "vethbigari."
- This system traps families in debt-based servitude, often lasting generations.
- Despite its illegality since 1976, various factors contribute to its persistence.

Challenges:

- Deep-rooted Social Structures
- Illiteracy and Lack of Awareness
- Livelihood Insecurity
- Inadequate Law Enforcement

Govt approves new alignment of Shaktipeet Mahamarg

- MH State govt approved the alignment of the Maharashtra Shakti Peeth Mahamarg, the greenfield expressway to connect Nagpur and Goa.
- The 802-km-long expressway will pass through 12 districts.
- Once completed, it will be the longest expressway in the state.
- The Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) will execute the project.

National Productivity Day

- National Productivity Day is celebrated in India every year on February 12th.
- It marks the foundation day of the National Productivity Council (NPC), an autonomous organization established in 1958 to promote productivity consciousness and culture in the country.
- The day is recognized as part of a week-long National Productivity Week, observed from February 12th to 18th.
- This year's theme is "Artificial Intelligence (AI)- Productivity Engine for Economic Growth."
- It highlights the crucial role of AI in driving a country's economic growth and productivity.

About:

- This date marks the anniversary of the foundation of the International Labour Organization (ILO).
- The first NPD was celebrated in 1962.

People lose Rs 3 crore to cybercrime across Maharashtra daily'

- Cybercrime has become a major concern in Maharashtra, with citizens losing a staggering Rs 3 crore every day.
- This translates to approximately Rs 1.095 billion annually, highlighting the vast impact of these illegal activities.
- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data revealed that Maharashtra saw 8,249 cybercrime cases in 2022, which was 48% higher than 5,562 incidents recorded in the previous year.
- Barely Rs 134 crore or 10% of the total Rs 1,300 crore lost to cybercrime in Maharashtra since 2019 have been recovered

About:

- The types of cybercrime reported in the state include:
- Financial Frauds: Phishing scams, online investment frauds, mobile wallet thefts, etc.
- Data Breaches: Unauthorized access to personal or financial information.
- Malware Attacks: Viruses, ransomware, spyware, etc.

Marathwada agricultural university develops seven new crop varieties

- The Parbhani-based Vasantrao Naik Marathwada Agricultural University has developed seven new varieties of crops.
- The new varieties include five field crops and two vegetable crops.

Five Field Crops include:

1. American cotton non-Bt variety NH 677
2. Chickpea variety called Parbhani Chana-16
3. Soybean variety MAUS 731
4. Sorghum variety, Parbhani Shakti (PVK 1009)
5. Trombay Latur til TLT 10

Two vegetable varieties are:

1. A new variety of chili
2. Tomato (PBNT 20)

ASI to conserve 7 Maratha military forts across state

- Additional director general of ASI said that this year the focus of ASI will be on maintaining and conserving the forts located in Maharashtra
- The statement followed the nomination of seven Maratha military forts under its jurisdiction in Maharashtra for the Unesco world heritage tag for the years 2024–25.
- These were among the 12, 17th-century forts marked as the Maratha military landscapes for the nomination this year.
- From Maharashtra, Shivneri, Lohagad, Raigad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, and Sindhudurg forts are nominated.

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

- The International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS), celebrated annually on February 11th
- It aims to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology, and promote their full and equal access and participation in these fields.
- This year's theme, "Closing the Gender Gap in Science: Accelerating Action", underscores the urgent need to address the

barriers that hinder women and girls from pursuing and thriving in STEM careers

About:

- On 22 December 2015, the General Assembly decided to establish an annual International Day to recognize the critical role women and girls play in science and technology, through Resolution A/RES/70/212.

Jalyukta Shivar scheme to cover 24,000 villages in state

- State govt aims to target more than 24,000 villages in Maharashtra for recharging groundwater levels and saving water under the Jalyukta Shivar 2.0 scheme.

About:

- Govt initiated Jalyukta Shivar 2.0 in 2022 to carry out works on accumulating water so that it can make water available for drinking and agriculture purposes to local residents.
- During the first phase of the scheme, the government had taken water conservation measures across 22,000 villages in the state, which saved water equal to 1.5 TMC.

₹4,000cr approved for climate resilient project in Maharashtra

- The state irrigation department and CM-led Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (MITRA) has proposed Maharashtra Climate Resilient Development Project (MCRDP)

About:

- It aims to address the concerns related to the floods in Kolhapur and Sangli district and the plan to divert flood waters to drought-prone areas of the state.
- The World Bank has approved Rs4,000 crore for MCRDP, of which 30% of funds have to be shared by the state government.

MAFSU's proposed Wildlife One Health Centre to be first in India

- The Maharashtra Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (MAFSU), Nagpur, has submitted a proposal for Wildlife One Health Centre to the state govt.
- It will be the extension of the present Wildlife Research and Training Centre (WRTC) at Gorewada.

- This ₹30 crore project would be the only institution dedicated to Wildlife Health in the country.

National Women's Day in India

- In India, Sarojini Naidu's birth anniversary, on February 13, is marked as National Women's Day in honour of a woman who represented the spirit of female empowerment throughout her life and championed equality.
- She was a prominent freedom fighter and poet known as the "Nightingale of India".

This day serves as a national observance to:

1. Recognize the significant contributions of women in various fields
2. Highlight their crucial role in shaping the nation's progress
3. Raise awareness about persisting gender disparities and challenges faced by women in India

World Radio Day

- February 13th, 2024, marks the 12th Annual World Radio Day, established by UNESCO
- The theme for World Radio Day 2024 is 'Radio: A century informing, entertaining and educating.'
- This year's celebration reflects on the past 100 years of radio's remarkable journey, its present relevance, and its promising future.

About:

- In 2011, the member states of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declared February 13 World Radio Day
- It was then adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013 as an international event.
- Radio remains the most widely consumed media platform globally, reaching billions of people, especially in remote areas and those with limited internet access.

MTHL Connection to Mumbai-Pune Expressway Set to Commence Soon

- The construction of a crucial connector linking the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL) with the Mumbai-Pune Expressway is about to begin.
- The estimated cost of project is ₹1,000 crore

- This project promises to revolutionize travel between Mumbai and Pune, offering several benefits:

Reduced Travel Time:

- Bypassing congested areas like Sion-Panvel Highway and Vashi toll plaza, the connection aims to cut travel time between south Mumbai and Pune by about an hour.

Enhanced Connectivity:

- The project involves two six-lane elevated roads, one connecting Chirle-Gavhan Phata and the other linking Palaspe to the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.
- This creates a seamless connection between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, further boosted by future plans to connect MTHL with Worli.

Tiger Safari at Sanjay Gandhi National Park Roars Back After Renovations

- The Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), also known as Borivali National Park, in Mumbai, has witnessed a surge in visitors to its tiger safari since its reopening after renovations in early 2024.
- The park has experienced a significant increase in visitors, with approximately 5,000 people visiting the national park daily and an average of 3,000 people participating in the safari activity each day
- The park now boasts revamped enclosures, improved infrastructure, and enhanced safety measures, providing tourists with a thrilling and informative experience while ensuring the well-being of the majestic tigers.

Shil Phata flyover to reduce travel time between city, Mum & Pune

- Shil Phata Flyover, officially known as the ShilPhata Junction Flyover, aims to significantly reduce travel time between Thane, Mumbai, and Pune.
- Located on National Highway 48 (NH-48) in Kalyan, Maharashtra, this flyover addresses a notorious traffic bottleneck known for congestion and delays.

Key Features:

- Dual carriageway: Each arm has three lanes, one for Panvel-bound traffic and the other for Thane-bound traffic.

- **Length and width:** 739.5 meters long and 24 meters wide, with a 300-meter viaduct.
- **Cost:** Approximately Rs 45.68 crore.

Private sugar mills surpass cooperatives in MH's sugar industry landscape

- In MH, the landscape of the sugar industry has undergone a significant shift with private sugar mills surpassing co-operatives in terms of sugar production and operational efficiency.
- This trend has several contributing factors:

Investment and Modernization:

- Private mills have invested heavily in modern technology and infrastructure, leading to higher efficiency and capacity compared to co-operatives.

Professional Management:

- Private mills often have professional management teams with expertise in the sugar industry, leading to better decision-making and financial management.\

Focus on Efficiency:

- Private mills prioritize operational efficiency, reducing costs and maximizing profits.

Government Policies:

- Recent government policies have been more favorable towards private players, providing them with easier access to loans and other incentives.

Central team visits Nashik to address concerns of onion farmers

- A Central team from the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare recently visited Nashik, MH to address concerns raised by onion farmers.
- This proactive move aimed to prevent potential scarcity and price fluctuations ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

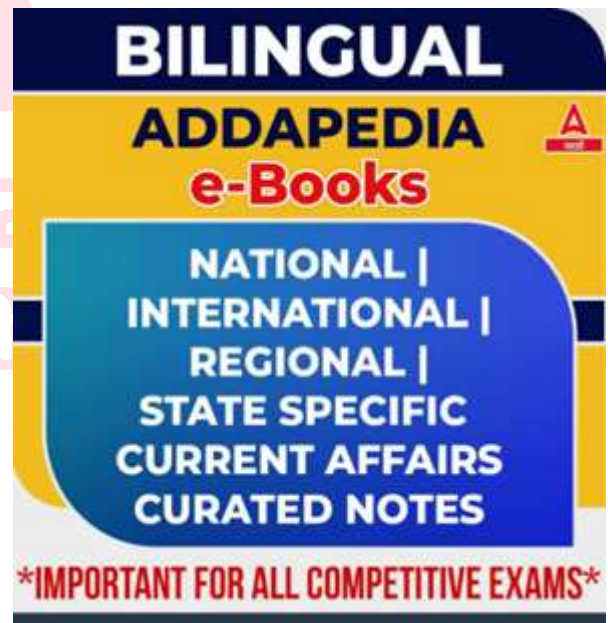
Key concerns of farmers:

1. **Dissatisfaction with government policies:** This includes export restrictions and procurement practices by organizations like NAFED and NCCF.
2. **Demand for direct compensation:** Farmers prefer direct financial aid instead of the existing procurement process.

3. **Limited awareness about procurement centers:** Many farmers reportedly lack information about available support mechanisms.

Hindavi Swarajya Mahotsav 2024

- The Hindavi Swarajya Mahotsav 2024 is a three-day festival held from February 17th to 19th in Junnar, Pune, Maharashtra.
- It commemorates the 394th birth anniversary of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the founder of the Maratha Empire.
- The festival offers a vibrant exploration of Marathi history and culture through diverse activities:
- **Plays, folk dances, music programs,** and storytelling sessions bring history to life.
- Explore exhibits showcasing Maratha history, artifacts, and small-scale industries.
- Trek historical forts, participate in water sports, and engage in stargazing.
- Attend talks and workshops about Shivaji Maharaj's life and legacy.



State to build 7,000km of roads

- A decision to build another 7,000 km of roads and bridges under CM's Gram Sadak Yojana was taken in the state cabinet meeting.
- Phase-II of CM's Gram Sadak Yojana aims to have 10,000 km of roads.
- It has been decided in which districts to build 7,000 km of new roads.

Water level in dams falls to 50%

- **Water levels in dams falling to 50%** can be a cause for concern, indicating potential water scarcity.
- The severity of the situation depends on various factors, including:
- Different regions have **varying water needs and rainfall patterns**.
- A **50% level in a drought-prone area might be more critical** than in a region with regular rainfall.
- **Dams serve various purposes, including water supply, irrigation, hydropower generation, and flood control.**
- A low level for a drinking water reservoir is more alarming than for a flood control dam.

About:

- **Maharashtra has 2,994 small, medium and major dams** with a total live storage capacity of 40,485 million cubic meters.
- The total stock in these dams in mid-February was **20,472.63 million cubic meters, or 50.57% of the capacity, 18% lower than last year's water level of 68.37%.**
- **Most dams in the state did not have adequate inflow in 2023 owing to dry spells during the monsoon.**

Hi-tech mega projects to be declared thrust sector, get incentives

- The **state cabinet in MH has declared hi-tech mega projects as a thrust sector to promote development in backward regions.**
- **Incentives include stamp duty waiver, power duty waiver, and power bill reduction.**
- The cabinet has also **approved incentives for integrated industrial areas, including a stamp duty waiver on lease rent.**

6 new nursing colleges approved by the cabinet in Maharashtra

- In a Cabinet meeting held, a **decision was taken to establish six government nursing colleges** with an admission capacity of **100 students each.**
- These **colleges will be affiliated with Government Medical Colleges in Jalgaon, Latur, Baramati, Sangli (Miraj), Nandurbar, and Gondia.**

- **CM Eknath Shinde chaired the meeting and stated that considering the prevalence of infectious diseases in the state and the country, the government is making significant changes to the paramedical curriculum.**

MTDC to give 50% off for Women's Day

- On the occasion of **International Women's Day, the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has decided to give a 50% discount to women tourists if they reserve their accommodation in MTDC hotels in online mode.**
- Additionally, the **MTDC will be providing new accommodation amenities for tourists at various Navegaon Bandh in Gondia district, Naleshwar near Kolara Gate of Tadoba Sanctuary in Chandrapur district, Sahastrakund and Tipeswar in Yavatmal.**

Nagpur to host national bridge meet after 28 yrs

- **Nagpur, the "Tiger Capital of India," is set to bridge the gap of 28 years by hosting the prestigious National Bridge Championship in 2024.**
- This event marks a **significant return for the city, which last held the tournament in 1996.**

About:

- **Anil Padhye, who won a silver medal for India at the World Bridge Championships in Italy in 2022, says the game supports development of the brain and is especially found to help children get comfortable with mathematics.**
- He will also take part in the **Dr NP Tolani Centennial Celebrations All India Tolani Open National Masters Bridge Championship**

Maharashtra amends rule, pvt schools may go out of RTE quota ambit

- **Private unaided schools in Maharashtra, mostly English mediums, have been fighting with the state government for reimbursement of their 25% RTE quota admissions fees.**
- The government has **amended the education rules, exempting schools near government or aided institutions from participating in RTE admissions, which raises concerns**

about the future of RTE admissions and the effectiveness of state schemes.

longevity of these national landmarks for centuries to come.

Summer onion plantation declines by 40% in Nashik

- The summer onion plantation in four districts of north Maharashtra, including Nashik, Dhule, Jalgaon, and Nandurbar, has decreased by 40% due to less rain.
- The production is estimated to decline to 35 lakh tonnes.
- In the 2022-23 season, the summer onion plantation in Nashik district was 2.21 lakh hectares.

Maharashtra increase stipend of medical interns by 64%

- Medical interns in Maharashtra have received a substantial 64% increase in their stipend amount.
- The stipend has been raised from Rs 11,000 to Rs 18,000.
- This development also extends to students enrolled in aided medical, dental, ayurveda, unani, and homeopathy colleges across the state
- This move aims to improve the working conditions and attract more talent to the healthcare sector in the state.

PM Modi to perform Bhoomi Pujan of Wadhwan Port in Maharashtra this month

- PM Modi is expected to perform the Bhoomi Pujan (groundbreaking ceremony) of the Wadhwan Port in Maharashtra
- The port, located in Palghar district, boasts one of the deepest drafts in the country, making it a potential game-changer for Maharashtra's maritime trade and economy.
- The project has faced delays due to environmental concerns, but has reportedly secured all necessary clearances.

Shiv Jayanti 2024

- Shiv Jayanti, also known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, marks the birth anniversary of the revered Maratha emperor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- This year, it falls on February 19th.

Timber used in Ram Mandir cultivated and selected by the FDCM

- The state Forest and Culture minister Sudhir Mungantiwar while lauding Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM)'s record profits and dividends urged the corporation to leverage its success to create more employment opportunities.
- He also announced setting up a furniture development corporation under FDCM.
- This new venture, equipped with cutting-edge technology, aims to revolutionize furniture design by crafting pieces that perfectly match the buyer's dream through AI-powered image creation

About:

- The day is celebrated with great fervor, especially in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, Shivaji's birthplace.
- Grand processions, cultural performances, lectures, and prayers are held in his honor. Many educational institutions organize essay writing competitions and debates to engage students in his history and leadership principles.
- Shivaji is remembered for his bravery, strategic brilliance, and progressive rule.
- He established the Maratha Empire, known for its guerilla warfare tactics and efficient administration.

About:

- The timber used in the iconic Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the new Parliament building in Delhi was meticulously cultivated and selected by the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM).
- This is testament to FDCM's commitment to quality and sustainability, ensuring the

MH Backward Class Commission submits Maratha survey report to Shinde

- The Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission submitted a comprehensive survey report, covering nearly 2.5 crore families, outlining the social, economic, and educational backwardness of the Maratha community.

About:

- This **data-backed report** will aid in the **formulation of a law to ensure reservations for the Maratha community.**

Maharashtra government likely to table bill for 10-12% Maratha quota on Feb 20

- The MH government is set to introduce a bill proposing a **10-12% reservation for the Maratha community in government jobs and educational institutions** during a special assembly session on February 20.
- This move comes **after the State Backward Class Commission (SBCN) submitted a report recognizing the Marathas as a Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC).**

Maharashtra reports lower than expected farm finance

- **State Level Banking Conference (SLBC)**, the apex body of bankers in the state, reported **lower than expected farm credit reaching farmers.**
- **Banks were given a target of Rs 1,68,481 crores to be disbursed as loan for agriculture for the 2023-24 fiscal.**
- **But till September 2023, only Rs 88,881 crores was disbursed, which roughly estimates to 53 per cent of the target.**
- Thus, only **53% of its targeted farm credit for 2023-24 as of September 2023**
- This represents a **decrease from 57% achieved in the previous year.**
- In contrast, loan disbursement to **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) reached 68% of the target, exceeding the previous year's 62%.**

'Without by Ashaya' Startup

- Founded by **Anish Malpani**, 'Without by Ashaya' tackles **two critical challenges - plastic waste and poverty** - through innovative recycling and social impact.

About:

- They create premium products like **sunglasses, using a unique technology to recycle "impossible-to-recycle" multi-**

layered plastic (MLP) waste, primarily from chip packets.

- It **diverts MLP waste from landfills and oceans, giving it a new life.**
- It **provides dignified work and income opportunities** to waste pickers, uplifting them from poverty.

Did you Know?

- They are **World's first recycled sunglasses that are made from chip packets.**

Country's First Swachh Bharat Academy to Come Up in Thane

- In a significant move towards **addressing the crucial need for skilled professionals in the sanitation sector**, India's first **Swachh Bharat Academy** is set to be established in Thane, Maharashtra.

About:

- This initiative is spearheaded by the **Maharashtra State Skill University and BVG - India Development Group**
- It aims to **bridge the gap in skilled manpower and empower youth** with the necessary training and employment opportunities in the sanitation field.

1946 Naval uprising

- The **Royal Indian Navy mutiny** or revolt, is also called the **February 18, 1946 Naval Uprising.**
- It was a **failed insurrection of Indian naval ratings, soldiers, police personnel and civilians against the British government in India**

About:

- The **Royal Indian Navy (RIN)** was part of the **British Raj** and comprised primarily **Indian enlisted men with British officers.**
- During **World War II**, the RIN expanded **rapidly**, leading to poor living conditions, discrimination, and broken promises of demobilization.
- The strike quickly escalated into a **full-fledged mutiny**, spreading to other ports and involving over **78 ships and 20,000 sailors.**

World Day of Social Justice

- World Day of Social Justice is an international day recognizing the need to promote social justice and is celebrated annually on 20th February
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) marks the occasion this year with a series of six events held in major cities around the globe.
- It includes efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, gender inequality, unemployment, human rights, and social protections
- The theme of World Day of Social Justice 2024 is "Bridging Gaps, Building Alliances".

Did you Know?

- In 2008, ILO declared 20 Feb as the World Day of Social Justice.

MH cabinet approves draft bill to extend 10% reservation to Marathas

- The Maharashtra Cabinet approved the draft of a bill proposing a 10% reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs, reigniting the long-standing debate on caste-based quotas in the state.

About:

- The quota will increase reservations to 62%, facing legal challenges.
- The OBC community fears dilution of its quota.
- Muslim leaders demand 5% reservation.

Supriya Sule Receives Sansad Maharatna Award From President

- Supriya Sule, the Member of Parliament (MP) representing Baramati in Maharashtra, has been conferred with the prestigious Sansad Ratna Award by President Droupadi Murmu.
- This distinguished honor recognizes her outstanding contributions to the Indian Parliament, particularly during the first year of the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-2020).
- Previously, Sule was honored with the Parliament Excellence Maharatna Award

for Best Journalism by Prime Point Foundation and E Magazine in Chennai.

Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year Awards 2024

- Lokmat Maharashtra of the Year aims to celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals who have left an indelible mark on Maharashtra and beyond.
- Over the years, Piyush Goyal, Nitin Gadkari, Sushil Kumar Shinde, and Nita Ambani have been a part of the jury panel.
- The selection process for the LMOTY awards involves editorial meetings, public voting, and evaluation by a jury.
- In addition to the main awards, LMOTY also gives special honors on individuals who have made exceptional contributions to society.

List of Awardees 2024:

SPECIAL AWARDS:

1. Isha Ambani.
2. Abhay Bhutada.
3. Jaishingh Chavan -Special Award for Overcoming Disability and Empowering Others

MAIN AWARDS:

1. Actor (Male)- Ranbir Kapoor.
 2. IPS (Promising) - Somay Munde.
 3. IAS (Promising) - Bhushan Gagrani.
 4. Influential Politician - Deepak Kesarkar.
 5. Influential Politician - Atul Salve.
 6. Lok Seva - Harishchandra Sude
 7. Politics - (Promising) - Kunal Patil
 8. Sports - (Promising) - Ojas Deotale.
 9. Medical - Dr. Abhishek Mangeshikar.
 10. Medical - Dr. Meraj Kadri.
- BKT - Innovator in Agriculture - Savita Nana Pawra.
 - Tech-Savvy Teacher - Anand Anemwad.
 - Industry and Business Category - Sudhir Mehta and Vishal Chordia.

11 state varsities to get Rs 540 crore grant under PM-USHA; Rs 100 crore for SNDT

- The GOI has allocated Rs. 540 crore to 11 state universities in Maharashtra under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) scheme.
- This initiative aims to improve the infrastructure and academic development of higher education institutions.
- Four universities, including SNDT Women's University, received a substantial grant of Rs. 100 crore each, while the remaining seven universities will receive Rs. 20 crore each.

About:

- PM-USHA, or Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan, is a centrally sponsored scheme by the Indian government aimed at transforming and uplifting the higher education system in the country.
- It was launched in 2021, building upon the previous Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) scheme, and aligns with the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

International Mother language Day

- International Mother Language Day (IMLD), annually celebrated on February 21st, serves as a crucial reminder of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity.
- It was initiated by Bangladesh and formally recognized by UNESCO in 1999, aiming to:
 1. **Promote awareness:** Highlight the value of linguistic and cultural diversity for sustainable societies.
 2. **Preserve languages:** Encourage the protection and revitalization of endangered languages.
 3. **Promote multilingualism:** Advocate for using and learning multiple languages for individual and societal benefits.

Theme for 2024:

- "Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning."
- This theme emphasizes the role of mother tongue-based education in fostering learning, literacy, and the transmission of traditional knowledge across generations.

Did you Know?

- On 21st February 2000, the first International Mother language Day was observed.

Maharashtra Water Crisis

- Maharashtra is facing a severe water crisis, with many reservoirs shrinking to critical levels in February 2024.
- This has raised concerns about water shortages for drinking, irrigation, and industrial use.

About:

- Most of the dams in the state have reached the bottom, with an average of 21.61 percent less water stock left than last year.
- The state's 12 projects are currently in minus storage, with 15 dams having barely 10 percent storage.
- The situation in Marathwada is alarming. Marathwada has only 26 percent water stock left. Last year, it was 72 percent.
- The storage in 138 major dams in the state has come down to 50.37 percent from 74.34 percent last year.

Nashik stands 3rd in Maha dist good governance index

- The Nashik district stood third in the recent District Good Governance Index (DGGI) of Maharashtra that encompasses 10 governance sectors with 161 indicators and over 300 data points.
- It is the first time that the department of administrative reforms and organization and methods carried out such an exercise.
- Maharashtra has become the fifth state in the country to implement such an exercise.

MH has attracted highest FDI at 38.78 per cent of total investment in country

- Maharashtra has emerged as the top recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country
- The state has attracted highest FDI at Rs 65,500 crore, which accounts for 38.78 percent of total investment in country
- This achievement underscores the state's robust infrastructure, favorable business environment, and strategic initiatives to attract global investors.

- Maharashtra will achieve its **target of one-trillion-dollar economy by 2027-28**

Nutrition scheme for leprosy patients in the state

- The **number of new leprosy patients is increasing** inspite of the efforts made by the health department to eradicate leprosy at various levels.
- In the past three years, the number of leprosy patients has been **continuously increasing in this research campaign** and **Health Minister Tanaji Sawant** has decided to **provide nutritional food to these leprosy patients** during treatment.
- **Rs 500 nutritional food will be given to leprosy patients.**

About:

- According to the information available from the **Department of Health (Leprosy and Tuberculosis)**, **14,520 leprosy patients were detected in 2021-22.** In **2022-23, this increased to 19,860 leprosy patients** and in the search campaign till December **2023-24, 20 thousand leprosy patients were found.**
- The proportion of newly diagnosed patients is **9.55 percent, 11.14 percent and 15.58 percent respectively.**

World Thinking Day

- **World Thinking Day, celebrated annually on February 22nd**
- It is a **day for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (including associated Scout and Guide organizations)** across the globe to connect, reflect, and take action.
- It's a **day of International friendship, Global awareness, Advocacy, Raising awareness and taking action on critical issues affecting girls and communities.**

About:

- **Established in 1926, the day coincides with the birthdays of Lord Baden-Powell, founder of Scouting, and his wife, Lady Olave Baden-Powell, World Chief Guide. S**

Theme:

- The **2024 theme is “Our World, Our Equal Future”, focusing on gender equality and climate change.**

MH witnesses decline in child and infant mortality rates

- **Maharashtra achieves significant reduction in child mortality rates.**
- **Infant mortality rate drops from 19 to 16 per 1000 live births.**
- **Neonatal mortality rate stands at 11, fulfilling SDG 2030 target.**
- **Special initiatives like SNCUs and NBSUs in district and sub-district hospitals have contributed to the progress, but improvement needed in rural and tribal areas.**

Mumbai centre of India economic ties, says Aus envoy

- **Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green said Mumbai sits at the centre of Australia’s economic engagement with India.**
- He said that **Mumbai is often the first stop for Australian firms looking to explore opportunities in India’s rapidly growing market**
- He also said the **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) between Australia and India, signed in 2022, is already helping Maharashtra’s exports of industrial goods (steel and other products) to Australia and is also benefiting state’s wine and cotton industries.**

Finolex Cables signs MoU with MH government

- **Finolex Cables, a leading Indian cable manufacturer, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Maharashtra government.**
- **The company will invest Rs 580 crore to expand its optic fiber cables (OFC) production capacity in the state.**
- **This expansion aims to meet the growing demand for OFC driven by 5G rollout and increasing fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) adoption.**

About:

- The project includes **setting up new fiber draw towers** and implementing backward integration for glass preform production.
- This **move aligns with the government's vision of providing last-mile fiber connectivity and the Make in India initiative.**
- The expansion will **create over 400 direct and indirect employment opportunities.**

Grape harvest fest in Nashik on weekend

- The **tourism department of the state govt has organized a two-day grape harvest festival beginning from Feb 24.**

About:

- The grape harvest festival is a **part of government efforts to promote the grape and wine industry of Nashik and attract tourists**
- The event will have **around 50 grape farmers showcasing different varieties of the fruit, along with 12 wineries**
- As many as **4,000 tourists are expected to attend the festival.**

Shiv Sena MP bags Sansad Ratna award

- **Dr Shrikant Eknath Shinde, Shiv Sena MP from Kalyan, received the Sansad Ratna award at Maharashtra Sadan in New Delhi for his active participation in 17th Lok Sabha proceedings.**
- He **raised 556 questions, participated in 67 discussions, and works tirelessly for the betterment of his constituency.**

About:

- The **Sansad Ratna Awards are presented annually to the top performing Parliamentarians based on their performance including raising questions on crucial issues including those related to their respective constituencies, participating in discussions, presence in the House, among others.**

23/9 floods: State clears ₹204cr special package

- The state government has announced a **special package of ₹204.72 crore to provide relief to the people affected by the recent floods that occurred on September 23.**
- The floods caused **widespread damage to property and infrastructure.**
- The relief package will be **used to provide financial assistance to the affected**

families, as well as to rebuild damaged homes and infrastructure.

Maha to be first state to start digital health course

- **Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS), which oversees 450 medical colleges and 40,000 medical students, will launch the country's first foundation course for digital health.**

About:

- The course, **developed along with not-for-profit Koita Foundation, will not only cover hospital management information systems, electronic medical records, but also the use of sensors and wearables in gathering health data.**
- Modules on the use of **artificial intelligence and machine learning in healthcare will also be covered.**
- The **digital health foundation course will be launched by governor Mahesh Bais medical education minister Hasan Mushrif.**

World Peace and Understanding Day

- **World Peace and Understanding Day is observed on February 23 every year, promoting harmony and goodwill among individuals from different religions, cultures and geography**
- The day commemorates the **first meeting of Rotary International, an NGO dedicated to humanitarian service, peace, and goodwill across the world that took place in Chicago, US.**
- Every year, this **Special Day is observed to remind people of the ways that they can bring peace, harmony and goodwill to the world and contribute positively.**

Veteran actor Ashok Saraf presented Maharashtra Bhushan Award

- **Veteran actor Ashok Saraf was presented with the prestigious Maharashtra Bhushan Award, the highest civilian honor bestowed by the Maharashtra state government.**

- This recognition celebrates his remarkable contributions to the field of entertainment over a career spanning nearly five decades.
- He was joined by other distinguished honorees including Suresh Wadkar, Aruna Irani, Mithun Chakraborty, and many more, who were recognized for their contributions to the film industry.

MH MSMEs to showcase niche products at Defence expo

- The inaugural MH MSME Defence Expo, currently underway in Pune, marks a significant moment for India's aspirations towards self-reliance in the defense sector.
- Over 200 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from the state are showcasing their niche products and capabilities, aiming to contribute to the nation's defense preparedness.

About:

- MSMEs are exhibiting innovative solutions across diverse areas like aerospace, armaments, electronics, communication, and logistics.
- These include components for combat vehicles, communication equipment, drones, and specialized textiles.
- The expo fosters collaboration between MSMEs and established defense players like L&T, Mahindra, and Tata, opening doors for joint ventures and technology transfer.
- The expo aligns with the government's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" initiative, promoting indigenous defense manufacturing and reducing reliance on foreign imports.

Subsidy announced on solar panel installations

- The Indian government has announced a new subsidy scheme to make rooftop solar panel installations more affordable.

Subsidy:

- ₹30,000 per kilowatt for systems up to 2 kW
- ₹18,000 per additional kilowatt up to 3 kW
- Capped at ₹78,000 for larger systems exceeding 3 kW

Benefits:

- Lower upfront cost of installation
- Reduced electricity bills
- Increased energy independence
- Environmentally friendly power generation

Sonu Nigam receives Raj Kapoor Vishesh Yogdaan Puraskar

- Sonu Nigam was awarded the Raj Kapoor Vishesh Yogdaan Puraskar at a ceremony in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir
- The award is given to individuals who have made significant contributions to the Indian film industry.

About:

- Nigam has been a playback singer for over 25 years and has sung songs for over 1,000 films in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Bhojpuri languages.
- He has won numerous awards for his singing, including four National Film Awards and two Filmfare Awards.

JP Dutta, Vidhu Vinod Chopra feted with prestigious Raj Kapoor Awards

- Two iconic figures of Indian cinema, JP Dutta and Vidhu Vinod Chopra, were recognized for their exceptional contributions with prestigious Raj Kapoor Awards.
- This marks a significant moment for their careers and highlights their lasting impact on the industry.

About:

- JP Dutta, known for crafting patriotic and historical epics like "Border", "LOC Kargil", and "Refugee", received the Maharashtra Bhushan Raj Kapoor Award.
- This award celebrates his dedication to showcasing themes of valor, sacrifice, and national pride through his powerful narratives.
- Dutta expressed immense gratitude, stating that the recognition from his home state held immense significance.
- Vidhu Vinod Chopra, acclaimed for films like "Lage Raho Munna Bhai", "Parinda", and

"Munnabhai MBBS", was presented with the Raj Kapoor Special Contribution Award.

- This award acknowledges his diverse filmography, spanning genres and addressing social issues while entertaining audiences.
- Chopra's commitment to storytelling and exploration of complex themes has been widely appreciated.

The Central Excise Day

- The Central Excise Day commemorates the establishment of the Central Excise and Salt Act of 1944, which laid the foundation for India's indirect tax system.
- It celebrates the contributions of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in mobilizing revenue for the nation's development.
- This act was a combination of 11 acts regarding excise duties, and it was passed to make changes in the law related to salt and central duties.

About:

- On 24 February 1944, the Central Excise and Salt Act was passed, and Central Excise Day is celebrated to commemorate this legislation.
- In 1966, the act was renamed The Central Excise Act 1944, and Schedules 1 and 2 of the act were related to the values and rates of the duties

Do you Know?

- The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBIC) is responsible for administering indirect taxes in India.

Maharashtra MSME Defence Expo 2024

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) took a major step towards strengthening India's self-reliance in defense equipment during the Maharashtra MSME Defence Expo 2024.
- They transferred crucial technology to domestic industries by signing 23 Licensing Agreements for Transfer of Technology (LATOT) with 22 companies.

About:

- These agreements span various fields crucial for defense, including electronics, lasers, armaments, life sciences, materials

science, combat vehicles, naval systems, and aeronautics.

- This initiative aims to empower Indian companies, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), to contribute to the nation's defense needs.

Key Points:

This collaboration between DRDO and the private sector is expected to:

1. **Reduce dependence on foreign imports:** By enabling domestic production of defense equipment, India can lessen its reliance on overseas suppliers.
2. **Boost domestic defense industry:** The technology transfer empowers Indian companies to participate in defense manufacturing, creating jobs and fostering innovation.
3. **Support "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" (Self-reliant India) initiative:** This initiative aligns with the government's vision of achieving self-sufficiency in critical sectors, including defense.

Maharashtra to roll out policy for boosting defense manufacturing

- Deputy CM said that a new aerospace and defense policy will be formulated to provide a boost to defense manufacturing in Maharashtra
- This policy aims to:
 1. Enhance the success of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the sector.
 2. Establish a robust supply chain for defense manufacturing.

Key points:

- This initiative builds upon Maharashtra's existing efforts in defence manufacturing, including being the first state to introduce such a policy in 2017.
- The new policy will be collaboratively developed with industry stakeholders.
- The government plans to create four dedicated clusters to strengthen the supply chain.
- This renewed focus on defence manufacturing is seen as a crucial step towards achieving self-reliance in the sector.

Four defence clusters to come up in the State

- The Maharashtra government has announced plans to establish four new defence manufacturing clusters across the state.
- These clusters are aimed at consolidating Maharashtra's position as a leading destination for defence production.
- **Locations:** Nagpur, Shirdi, Pune, and Ratnagiri will house the new clusters.

Objectives:

- Foster innovation and collaboration in the defence sector.
- Stimulate economic growth.
- Leverage the existing strength of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the state.

Significance for Pune:

- Pune, already a hub for various industries, will further strengthen its position in the defence sector with the establishment of this cluster.
- This initiative aligns with the Government of India's "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" (Self-reliant India) program.
- The creation of these clusters is expected to generate employment opportunities, attract investments, and contribute to the overall growth of the state's economy.

Pune gets state's second 30-bed AYUSH hospital

- PM Modi virtually inaugurated the state's second 30-bed AYUSH hospital in Pune.
- Developed under the National AYUSH Abhiyan, this hospital promotes traditional Indian medicine systems like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy.

AYUSH:

- AYUSH is an acronym in India standing for Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Homoeopathy.
- These represent a group of traditional and non-conventional systems of medicine practiced widely in the country.
- **Ancient Origins:** Ayurveda, the oldest system, boasts a documented history exceeding 5,000 years.
- **Holistic Approach:** AYUSH systems emphasize a holistic approach to health,

focusing on prevention, promoting well-being, and treating diseases.

- **Governmental Support:** Recognizing their significance, the Indian government established a dedicated Ministry of AYUSH in 2014 to promote research, education, and development in these fields.

PM Modi to inaugurate ₹1,800 crore rail works of South Central Railway

- PM Modi will be inaugurating railway projects worth ₹1,800 crore of the South Central Railway (SCR) on Today(February 26).
- About 06 stations are in Maharashtra
- 34 stations are in Andhra Pradesh, 15 stations in Telangana and two stations in Karnataka
- The combined cost of nearly ₹925 crore and 156 road over bridges (RoBs) and road under bridges (RuBs) at a combined cost of nearly ₹927.31 crore comprise the projects.

Mankapur sports complex gets cabinet nod for ₹747cr upgrade

- The Maharashtra cabinet approved ₹747 crore to renovate and upgrade the divisional sports complex in Mankapur on the lines of Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex at Balewadi in Pune.
- It would be revamped to provide state-of-the-art international-level facilities to sportspersons in Vidarbha.
- After upgradation, the sprawling Mankapur facility would have world-class facilities like Olympic-size swimming pool, squash court, tennis court, basketball court, archery range, hockey, and football pavilion among others.

MH, TN to get ₹83,000cr port projects ahead of polls

- In a bid to boost infrastructure and create jobs ahead of the assembly elections, the central government has sanctioned ₹83,000 crore worth of port projects in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
- These projects are expected to give a major fillip to the maritime sector in these states.

About:

- The projects include the development of a new greenfield port at Sagar in Maharashtra and the expansion of existing ports in Chennai and Kamarajar in Tamil Nadu.
- The development of these ports is expected to improve cargo handling capacity, create new jobs, and boost the overall economy of the two states.

Maharashtra, one of the successful States in implementing PMFBY

- The central government has recognized MH as one of the leading states in successfully implementing the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) scheme.
- Since the program's inception, over 8.46 crore farmer applications have been enrolled in Maharashtra, highlighting its significant participation.
- This recognition underscores Maharashtra's commitment to supporting its agricultural sector and ensuring the well-being of its farmers.

About:

- PMFBY is a crop insurance scheme launched by the Indian government in 2016.
- It aims to:
- Provide financial support to farmers who suffer crop loss due to natural calamities, pests, and diseases.
- Stabilize farmers' income and encourage them to stay in agriculture.
- Promote modern farming practices and ensure a steady flow of credit to the agriculture sector.

Maharashtra govt presents supplementary demands worth Rs 8,609.17 crore

- The Maharashtra government, on the first day of its five-day budget session, presented supplementary demands worth Rs 8,609.17 crore.
- This is a significant decrease compared to the Rs 55,520.77 crore requested in the winter session last year.
- The additional funds are meant to cover various government expenses, including:
- Rs 2,210 crore in financial assistance to farmers affected by unseasonal rains, hailstorms, and water scarcity.

- Rs 2,031 crore as subsidy for electricity supplied to agricultural pumps, handloom, and powerloom consumers.

National Science Day

- National Science Day is celebrated in India on February 28th each year.
- It commemorates the groundbreaking discovery of the Raman Effect by the renowned Indian physicist Sir C.V. Raman in 1928.
- This remarkable work earned C.V Raman the prestigious Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.
- The purpose of National Science Day is to:
 1. Promote scientific awareness and inspire interest in science, especially among youth.
 2. Recognize contributions of scientists to the field of science and technology.
 3. Encourage scientific temper and a spirit of inquiry within society.

Theme 2024:

- The theme for National Science Day 2024 is "Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat."

Did you Know?

- The first National Science Day was celebrated on February 28, 1987.
- The National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), in 1986, asked the Government of India to announce February 28 as National Science Day.

Modi to launch development projects in MH

- PM Modi will participate in a public programme in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district and will inaugurate and dedicate to the nation various development projects.
- He will also release benefits under the PM KISAN and other schemes during the programme
- He will also inaugurate the statue of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya in Yavatmal city.
- PM Modi will release the 16th installment amount of more than Rs 21,000 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) through direct benefits transfer to beneficiaries.
- With this release, an amount of more than Rs 3 lakh crore will be transferred to more than 11 crore farmers' families.

- The PM will also **disburse second and third installments** of 'Namo Shetkari MahaSanman Nidhi' of about Rs 3,800 crore and benefiting nearly 88 lakh farmers across Maharashtra.
- The scheme **provides an additional amount of Rs 6,000 per year** to the beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana in Maharashtra, the release said.
- Modi will also **disburse Rs 825 crore of Revolving Fund to 5.5 lakh women Self Help Groups (SHGs)** across Maharashtra.

Marathi Language Day

- **Marathi Language Day**, also known as **Marathi Bhasha Gaurav Din**, is celebrated annually on February 27th.
- This day commemorates the birth anniversary of the renowned Marathi poet, **Vishnu Vaman Shirwadkar**, popularly known as **Kusumagraj**.

Significance:

- Celebrates the **rich cultural heritage and vibrant language of Marathi**.
- **Honors the contributions of Marathi speakers to literature, art, music, and society**.
- Raises awareness about the importance of preserving and promoting Marathi.

Did you Know?

- **First successful celebration of Marathi Bhasha Gaurav Din was in 1999.**

About:

- **Marathi is an Indo-Aryan language** predominantly spoken by **Marathi people in Maharashtra**.
- It is the **official language of Maharashtra**, and an **additional official language in the state of Goa**.
- It is **one of the 22 scheduled languages of India**.

Maharashtra sees rise in fiscal and revenue deficits

- Maharashtra is grappling with **rising fiscal and revenue deficits**.
- The recent **interim budget for 2024-25** projected a revenue deficit of Rs 9,733 crore and a fiscal deficit of Rs 99,288 crore.

- Revised estimates show the **revenue deficit reaching Rs 19,531 crore**, exceeding the initial budget estimate of Rs 16,122 crore.
- Even more concerning, the **fiscal deficit crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the first time**, reaching Rs 1.11 lakh crore.

World NGO Day

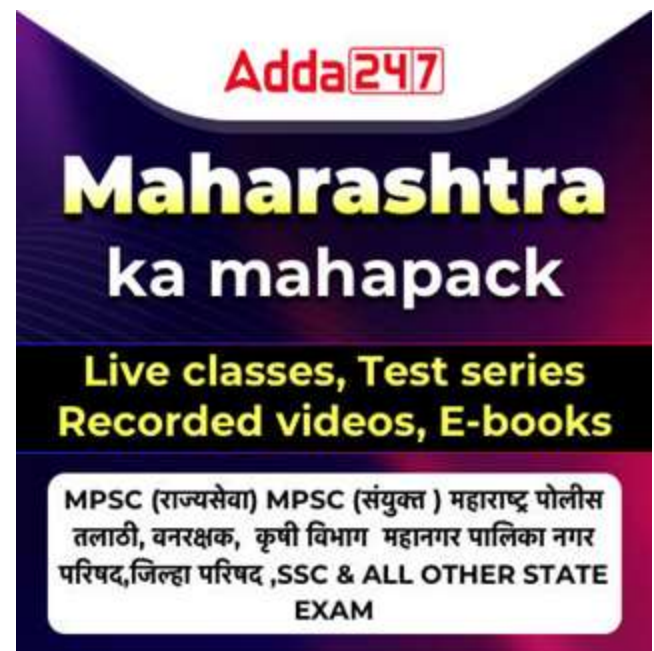
- **World NGO Day** is an annual celebration held on **February 27th to acknowledge and appreciate the vital work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)** around the world.
- The **concept originated in 2010 and gained official recognition in 2014**, with support from organizations like the **United Nations and the European Union**.

About:

- These organizations, also known as charities, non-profits, or civil society organizations, operate independently of government control and work in diverse areas like:
 1. Humanitarian aid and disaster relief
 2. Environmental protection and sustainability
 3. Education and healthcare access
 4. Social justice and human rights advocacy

Theme:

The theme for the **2024 World NGO Day** is **'Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.



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