

Weekly One Liners 03rd to 09th of January 2022

Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism awards announced

The Indian Express Group has announced the **Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards (RNG Awards)** for journalists across the country, for their work done in 2019. RNG awards are one the most prestigious awards in India in the field of journalism, held annually since **2006**. The photo stories of our winners appeared in our print and digital editions between **December 24, 2021, and January 4, 2022**.

List of winners:

- Hindi (Print): Anand Choudhary, Dainik Bhaskar
- Hindi (Broadcast): Sushil Kumar Mohapatra, NDTV India
- Regional Languages (Print): Aniket Vasant Sathe, Loksatta
- Regional Languages (Broadcast): Sunil Baby, Media One TV
- Environment, Science And Technology Reporting (Print): Team Pari (People's Archive Of Rural India)
- Environment, Science And Technology Reporting (Broadcast): Team Scroll
- Uncovering India Invisible (Print): Shiv Sahay Singh, The Hindu
- Uncovering India Invisible (Broadcast): Tridip K Mandal, The Quint
- Business And Economic Journalism (Print): Sumant Banerji, Business Today
- Business And Economic Journalism (Broadcast): Ayushi Jindal, India Today TV
- Reporting On Politics And Government (Digital): Dheeraj Mishra, The Wire
- Reporting On Politics And Government (Broadcast): Seemi Pasha, Thewire.in
- Sports journalism (Print): Nihal Koshie, The Indian Express
- Sports journalism (Broadcast): Team NewsX
- Investigative Reporting (Print): Kaunain Sheriff M, The Indian Express
- Investigative Reporting (Broadcast): S Mahesh Kumar, Manorama News
- Reporting On Arts, Culture And Entertainment: Uday Bhatia, Mint
- Prakash Kardaley Memorial Award for Civic Journalism: Chaitanya Marpakwar, Mumbai Mirror
- Photojournalism: Zishaan A Latif, The Caravan
- Books (Non-Fiction): Arun Mohan Sukumar

About the Awards:

The award is given to honour journalists across the country from print, broadcast and digital media who have maintained the highest standards of their profession and, despite immense challenges, produced work that sustains public trust in the media and impacts the lives of people. The award is named after Ramnath Goenka, the founder of **"The Indian Express"** and Indian Express Group in **1932**.

3rd National Water Awards for 2020

Union Minister of Jal Shakti, **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** has declared the winners of the third **National Water Awards for the year 2020**. **Uttar Pradesh** has been adjudged as the Best State in water conservation efforts in the National Water Awards 2020. It is followed by **Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu** respectively. The award comes with a citation, trophy and cash prize. **Muzaffarnagar** in Uttar Pradesh received the best district award in the northern zone followed by Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar in Punjab.

3rd National Water Awards 2020 list is given below:

Category	Winners
"Best State"	Uttar Pradesh
"Best District" - North Zone	Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh
"Best District" - South Zone	Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
"Best District" - East Zone	East Champaran, Bihar and Godda, Jharkhand
"Best District" - West Zone	Indore, Madhya Pradesh
"Best District" - North-East Zone	Goalpara, Assam
"Best Village Panchayat" - North Zone	Dhaspad, Almora, Uttarakhand
"Best Village Panchayat" - South Zone	Yelerampura Panchayat, Tumakuru District, Karnataka
"Best Village Panchayat" - East Zone	Telari Panchayat, Gaya District, Bihar
"Best Village Panchayat" - West Zone	Takhatgad, Sabarkantha, Gujarat

Category	Winners
“Best Village Panchayat”- North-East Zone	Sialsir, Sirchip, Mizoram
“Best Urban Local Body”	Vapi Urban Local Body, Gujarat
“Best Media (Print & Electronic)”	Mission Paani (Network 18)
“Best School”	Govt. Girls Hr. Secondary School, Kaveripattinam, Tamil Nadu
“Best Industry”	Welspun India Textile Ltd., Gujarat
“Best Water User Association”	Panchgachiya MDTW WUA, Hooghly, West Beng
“Best Industry for CSR activities”	ITC Limited, Kolkata, West Bengal

About the Award:

- The National Water Award was launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in 2018 to recognise and motivate individuals and organizations doing exemplary work in the field of water resources management.
- Overall 57 awards have been announced in 11 categories. These include: Best State, Best District, Best Village Panchayat, Best Urban Local Body, Best Media (Print & Electronic), Best School, Best Institution/RWA/Religious organization for Campus usage, Best Industry, Best NGO, Best Water User Association, and Best Industry for CSR Activity.

Election Commission hikes expenditure limit for candidates in polls

The Election Commission of India has increased the existing election expenditure limit for candidates in **Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies**, due to the rise in inflation. The new limits will be applicable in all upcoming elections in the country. The previous major revision in the election expenditure limit was done in 2014. It was further increased by 10% in 2020. EC had formed a Committee to study the cost factors and other related issues, and make suitable recommendations.

Parliamentary constituencies poll expenditure ceiling:

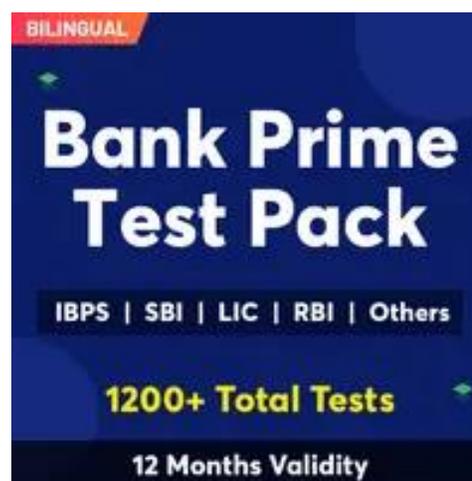
- The ceiling on parliamentary poll expenditure has been raised from **70 lakh to 95 lakh** rupees in bigger states and **54 lakh to 75 lakhs** in smaller states.
- The bigger states include Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka.
- The smaller states include Goa, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and UTs.
- The ceiling on poll expenditure in UT of Jammu and Kashmir has been raised to **95 lakhs**.

Assembly constituencies poll expenditure limits:

- For Assembly constituencies, expenditure limits have been enhanced from **28 lakh rupees to 40 lakh rupees** in bigger states and from **20 lakhs to 28 lakhs** in smaller states.

National Affairs

- The government has approved the issuance of the **19th tranche of electoral bonds**, which will be open for sale from **January 1 to 10, 2022**, ahead of assembly elections in five states **Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Goa**. In the 19th tranche of sale, the **State Bank of India (SBI)**, has been authorised to issue and encash electoral bonds through its 29 specialised branches. There is no limit on the number of bonds an individual or company can purchase. An electoral bond will be valid for 15 days.
- Union Education Minister **Dharmendra Pradhan** has launched a 100-day reading campaign ‘**Padhe Bharat**’. The launch of the 100 Days Reading Campaign is in alignment with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** which lays emphasis on the promotion of joyful reading culture for children by ensuring the availability of age-appropriate reading books for children in local/mother tongue/regional/tribal language.
- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** will lay the foundation stone of **Major Dhyani Chand Sports University in Meerut**. The University will be established at Salawa and Kaili villages of Sardhana town in Meerut at an estimated cost of about **700 Crore rupees**. The University will have the capacity of training 1080 sportspersons including 540 female and 540 male sportspersons.



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- Information Technology Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** has launched the **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** to attract large investments for setting up semiconductor wafer fabrication facilities in India.
- Union Minister of Education, **Dharmendra Pradhan** has launched **National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT 3.0)**, and regional language textbooks prescribed by the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**. NEAT 3.0 aims to provide the best-developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students on a single platform. It will be beneficial especially among the economically disadvantaged students.
- Union Ayush Minister, **Sarbananda Sonowal** has laid the foundation stone of the **Heartfulness International Yoga Academy** in **Hyderabad, Telangana**. He also launched 75 crores suryanamaskar initiative as part of the **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**". The academy tries to reach all levels of society through training programmes and these will be overseen by an international team.
- Power and new and renewable energy minister, **Raj Kumar Singh** has dedicated **Automatic Generation Control (AGC)** to the nation. The AGC sends signals to power plants every four seconds to maintain the frequency and thereby reliability of India's power system. It will help in achieving the government's target of 500 GW non-fossil fuel-based generation capacity by 2030.
- **Puducherry** has been handpicked by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** to host the **25th National Youth Festival**. The 25th National Youth Festival is going to be held in Puducherry from 12th to 16th January 2022. The festival has been organised as part of the **Azadi ki Amrit Mahotsav** marking the 75th year of Independence, said Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports and Information and Broadcasting **Anurag Thakur**.
- India's Permanent Representative to the UN, **T S Tirumurti** has been appointed as the Chair of the **UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee for 2022**. India has assumed the chairmanship of the United Nations Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (UNSC-CTC) for one year, beginning from **January 01, 2022**.

States in the News

- **Odisha** Chief Minister **Naveen Patnaik** has launched an online service for the verification of identity and submission of life certificates for pensioners of the state government. The chief minister virtually launched the new initiative while attending the orientation programme for newly recruited 153 officers of Odisha Civil Services.
- **Telangana** stood first in the country in the list of the highest number of **open defecation free (ODF Plus) villages** under the **Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase-II programme** till December 31, 2021. As many as 13,737 out of 14,200 villages in the State are on the ODF Plus list, which is 96.74%. This was followed by **Tamil Nadu** with 4,432 villages (35.39%) and **Karnataka** with 1,511 villages (5.59%). **Gujarat** took the 17th position with only 83 villages (0.45%).
- **Odisha's Ganjam** has declared itself a **child marriage free district**, the first in the State. The district administration has been able to stop as many as 450 child marriages and video-record 48,383 marriages in two years — 2020 and 2021.
- **Himachal Pradesh** became the first **LPG enables, also, smoke-free state**. This milestone was achieved due to the **Ujjwala Scheme and Grahini Suvidha Yojana** by Centre. The Ujjwala scheme was introduced by the government to get rid of the smoke. The Grahini Suvidha Scheme was introduced to assist the women of rural areas.
- The **Kerala High Court** is all set to become **India's first paperless court**. Supreme Court judge Justice **DY Chandrachud** inaugurated the smart courtrooms on **1 January 2022**. In the 1st phase six courtrooms, including the Chief Justice's room, will be converted into smart courts. Also, case files will be made available to the lawyers on the computer screen.
- Gujarat Chief Minister, **Bhupendra Patel** has been launched "**Student Start-ups and Innovation Policy 2.0 (SSIP-2.0)**" for the next five years. The policy contains provisions for the establishment of active innovation and incubation centres in all universities in the state.

International Affairs

- **Shanghai** has opened two new metro lines, upholding its rank as the city with the **largest Metro network in the world**. With the new lines, the total length of Shanghai's metro network has extended to 831 km, continuing to be the longest in the world. **China's Shanghai** opened two new metro lines – Line 14 and Phase One of Line 18.
- **France** has assumed the rotating presidency of the **Council of the European Union** with effect from **January 01, 2022**. The country will continue to hold the EU presidency for the next six months till June 30, 2022. This is the 13th time that France has taken over the rotating presidency. The motto of France as EU President is **“recovery, strength, belonging.”**
- **Russia** successfully test-fired around **10 new Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missiles** from a frigate and other two missiles from a submarine. The Zircon missile would be capable of flying at nine times the speed of sound and have a range of **1,000 kilometres (620 miles)**. The Tsirkon Cruise Missile will join Avangard glide vehicles and the air-launched Kinzhal (Dagger) missiles in Russia's hypersonic arsenal.
- Former British Prime Minister **Tony Blair, the Duchess of Cornwall, and Baroness Amos** are to be appointed as members of the Order of the Garter, England's oldest and most senior order of chivalry. The former prime minister now will be known as **‘Sir Tony’**. The appointments are the personal choice of the Queen, who has up to 24 **“knight and lady companions”**.
- The stock market value of **Apple Inc.** hit **\$3 trillion** and became the world's first company to do so. The market cap of Apple hit **\$182.86 per share**, which made it the world's first company to touch the \$3 trillion mark. However shortly after hitting the mark, the share value dipped below it and did not rise again until the market closed. The iPhone maker passed **\$2 trillion** in 2020 and over **\$1 trillion** in 2018.
- Prime Minister of Sudan, **Abdalla Hamdok** has announced his resignation on January 02, 2022. The decision follows a military coup that caused political deadlock and widespread pro-democracy protests in the country. The 66-year-old Hamdok served as the **15th Prime Minister of Sudan** from 2019 to 2022.

- The Caribbean nation of **Antigua and Barbuda** joined the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** as the **102nd member** by signing the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement, the India-led global green energy initiative. The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne signed the framework agreement in the presence of Indian High Commissioner **Dr K. J. Srinivasa** to catalyze global energy transition through a solar-led approach.
- China's senior diplomat **Zhang Ming** has taken charge as the new **Secretary-General** of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** in which India is a member. He has taken charge from Vladimir Norov, former Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan for a three-year term. He was until recently China's ambassador to the European Union.
- **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** has appointed Kuwaiti oil executive **Haitham Al Ghais** as its new secretary-general, as demand for oil continues to improve amid a mild recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Pakistan** has moved closer to appointing the **first woman judge of the Supreme Court**, after a high-power panel approved the elevation of Lahore High Court judge **Ayesha Malik** to the apex court. The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), headed by Chief Justice **Gulzar Ahmed**, approved Malik's elevation by a majority of five votes against four.

Agreements/MoUs Signed

- United Nations' **World Food Programme (WFP)** in India, has partnered with **The Akshaya Patra Foundation (TAPF)**, a not-for-profit organization, to enhance the effectiveness of the **Pradhan Mantri - Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) scheme** (earlier known as National Programme for Mid-Day Meal in Schools). The partnership aims to enhance food safety and hygiene projects, capacity building of cooks-cum-helpers and nutritional quality of school meals.



- **AIC STPINEXT Initiatives (STPINEXT)**, a special purpose vehicle of Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), has signed two memorandums of understanding (MoUs), one with **HDFC Bank** and another with Excel point Systems India Pvt Ltd, a niche technology player, for fostering entrepreneurship and nurturing tech startups in the country.

Books and Authors

- HarperCollins Publishers India is set to publish a new book titled **"Mamata: Beyond 2021"**, authored by political journalist Jayanta Ghosal and translated by **Arunava Sinha**. The announcement about the release of the book was made on 5th January 2022, the birthday of **Mamata Banerjee**, the Chief Minister (CM) of West Bengal and the leader of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) party. The book explores and examines why the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost the 2021 West Bengal Election.
- **Dhirendra K. Jha**, a Delhi-based journalist, has authored a new book titled **"Gandhi's Assassin: The Making of Nathuram Godse and His Idea of India"**. The book explores Godse's relationship with the organizations that influenced his view and gave him a sense of purpose and draws out the gradual hardening of Godse's resolve that led to **Mahatma Gandhi's assassination**.

Banking/Economy/Business News

- **SBI Cards and Payment Services** has tied up with **Paytm** for card tokenisation to protect the data of the cardholders. SBI Card has collaborated with Paytm to enable cardholders to tokenise their cards on devices and make payments through Paytm. Tokenisation refers to masking the original card number by replacing it with a set of unique characters, termed as token, which secures the customer's card details when a transaction is under process.
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced that it has extended the deadline for periodic KYC updates by **3 months till March 31, 2022**. Extension in view of prevalent uncertainty due to a new variant of **COVID-19 - Omicron**. Earlier the deadline for periodic KYC updates was December 31.
- **Reserve Bank of India** has retained **State Bank of India, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank** as **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)**. These three banks have continued to be on the D-SIBs list published by RBI, since Sep 04, 2017. Domestic Systemically Important Banks are those banks which if fail would have a significant impact on the economy.

- **Reserve Bank of India** has approved **Fino Payments Bank** for commencing international (Cross Border) remittance business under the **Money Transfer Service Scheme (MTSS)**. The approval will enable the customers of Fino Payments Bank to receive money sent from foreign countries. The Bank plans to implement the service in its mobile applications as well and it also plans to partner with more leading **money transfer operators (MTOs)** to improve its cross-border remittance.
- **Airtel Payments Bank** has been categorised as a scheduled bank by the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in the second schedule of the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**. With this, Airtel Payments Bank can now pitch for the government. Airtel Payments Bank is among the fastest-growing digital banks in the country, with a base of **115 million users**. It offers a suite of digital solutions through the Airtel Thanks app and a retail network of over 500,000 neighbourhood banking points. The bank turned profitable in the quarter ended September 2021.
- **Reserve Bank of India** has issued a framework for facilitating small-value digital payments in offline mode using cards, wallets, mobile devices, etc, to push digital transactions in rural and semi-urban areas. The upper limit of an offline payment transaction was fixed at **Rs 200, with a total limit of Rs 2,000** at any point in time. The framework will enable the **Authorised Payment System Operators (PSOs)** and **Payment System Participants (PSPs)**, Acquirers and Issuers (banks and non-banks) to conduct small value offline digital payments.
- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has cancelled the Certificate of Authorisation (CoA) of two Payment System Operators (PSOs): **Muthoot Vehicle and Asset Finance Limited and Eko India Financial Services Private Limited**, citing non-compliance with regulatory requirements under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007. Both Muthoot Vehicle and Asset Finance Limited and Eko India Financial Services Private Limited had the certificate of authorisation issued by the RBI for issuance and operation of prepaid payment instruments.
- The rating agency **India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)** has downgraded the GDP of India for the current fiscal **FY 2021-2022**. Ind-Ra expects the GDP to clock a growth rate of **9.3%** y-o-y in FY22. Earlier this estimate was **9.4%**. Meanwhile, Brickworks Ratings has also revised India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal (FY22) to **8.5-9%**. Earlier this was estimated at **10%**. The rapid spread of the Omicron variant is the main driver to downgrade GDP growth projections.

- **State Bank of India General Insurance Company Ltd** has launched a campaign titled **'#BahaneChhodoTaxBachao'** to increase awareness around the need to buy health insurance to save tax. It will also highlight the other benefits of opting for health insurance. The campaign aims to increase the awareness of how buying health insurance can help people save tax which is crucial and seasonal in the last quarter of the financial year for all Indians. The campaign will also underline the other benefits of opting for health insurance.
- Insurance regulator, **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai)** has stated that **LIC, GIC Re and New India** continue to be identified as **Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)** for 2021-22. D-SIIs refer to insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global interconnectedness, whose distress or failure would cause significant dislocation in the domestic financial system.
- **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India** has inaugurated **"Digi Zone"**, at **Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai**, as part of its effort to enhance its digital footprint. LIC's Digi Zone can be used by the customers to purchase policies online, pay the premium and avail of other services. As a part of its efforts to become a tech-driven life insurer, LIC will offer information related to its products and services through kiosks installed on the Digi Zone premises.
- **Tech Mahindra** has approved a proposal for the acquisition of a **100 per cent stake** in **Allyis India and Green Investments**, for a total consideration of up to **USD 125 million**. The acquisition will bolster Tech Mahindra's capabilities in Digital Experience Solutions, Learning & Development, Marketing, Instructional Design; Engineering: Cloud & Automation, BI & Analytics, Technical support services.
- State-owned power generation company **NTPC Ltd.** is set to acquire a 5 per cent equity stake in **Power Exchange of India Ltd (PXIL)**. It must be noted that the government is planning to expand the share of the spot power market in the total electricity supply in India to **25 per cent** by 2023-24. At present, the size of short-term power trading is about **5 per cent**.
- **Nippon Life India Asset Management Limited**, asset manager of **Nippon India Mutual Fund (NIMF)**, has announced the launch of **India's First Auto sector ETF - Nippon India Nifty Auto ETF**.
- Alphabet Inc-owned, **Google** has acquired Israeli cybersecurity startup **Siemplify**, in a deal worth **\$500 million**. This acquisition will expand the U.S. tech giant's security offerings in the country amid rising cyber-attacks. Siemplify will be integrated into Google Cloud's Chronicle operation. As a part of Google Cloud's security team, Siemplify will help companies better manage their threat response.
- **NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd. (NBBL)**, the wholly-owned subsidiary of **National Payments Corporation of India** has introduced a functionality called **'Unified Presentment Management System' (UPMS)**.
- **Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Retail** has invested **\$200 million** or around **Rs 1,488 crore** in Bengaluru-based quick commerce player **Dunzo** for a **25.8 per cent stake** on a fully diluted basis. The move will help Reliance get a foothold in the country's growing quick delivery market. Dunzo raised a total of \$240 million in this latest round led by the Reliance Industries Ltd arm. The other existing investors were **Lightbox, Lighthrock, 3L Capital and Alteria Capital**, who participated in the round.
- Total assets managed under NPS and APY, the two flagship pension schemes of the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**, have crossed ₹6.99 lakh crore. Total assets under management (AUM) as on January 1, 2022, stood at **Rs 6,99,172 crore**. Total AUM under the National Pension System and Atal Pension Yojana was at **Rs 5,78,025 crore as of March 31, 2021**.



Appointments/Resignations

- **Baldev Prakash** has been appointed as the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of **Jammu & Kashmir Bank** for three years. His appointment will be effective from the date of taking charge or April 10, 2022, whichever is earlier. Apart from him, **R K Chhibber** has been appointed as an additional director on the board of the bank.
- 1983 Batch of Indian Railway Service, **Vinay Kumar Tripathi** has been appointed as new **Chairman and Chief Executive Officer** of Railway Board. He is presently working as General Manager, Northeastern Railway to the post of Chairman of Railway Board.

- **V.S. Pathania** took over as the **24th Director General (DG) of the Indian Coast Guard** from **Krishnaswamy Natarajan** who retired from service. He is an alumnus of Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and National Defence College, New Delhi.
- **Vinod Kannan** took over as the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Vistara Airlines**. He replaced **Leslie Thng** who was the CEO from July 16, 2017, to December 31, 2021. It added that **Deepak Rajawat** has been elevated to take up the role of Vistara's Chief Commercial Officer. Vistara, is a 51:49 joint venture between Tata Sons Private Limited and Singapore Airlines.
- Tesla founder and CEO **Elon Musk**, who has been using social media to recruit people, has disclosed that Indian-origin **Ashok Elluswamy** was the first employee to be hired for his electric vehicle company's Autopilot team. Before joining Tesla, **Mr Elluswamy** was associated with Volkswagen Electronic Research Lab and WABCO Vehicle Control System.
- Director HR in ONGC, **Alka Mittal** has been given the additional charge as the new interim chairman and managing director (CMD) of **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)**, the largest oil and gas producer in India. She is the first woman to head the top post at the Maharatna company. She replaces **Subhash Kumar** who superannuated on December 31. He was also serving as an interim head.
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has appointed **Deepak Kumar and Ajay Kumar Choudhary** as new **executive directors (ED)** with effect from 03 January. Prior to being promoted as ED, Deepak Kumar was heading the department of information technology of RBI, while Ajay Choudhary was Chief General Manager-in-Charge, Department of Supervision.
- Indian-origin American diplomat **Atul Keshap** has been appointed as the President of the **U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC)** by the US Chambers of Commerce. His term is effective from January 05, 2022. The US Chambers of Commerce is the parent body of USIBC. Atul Keshap replaces **Nisha Desai Biswal**.
- Additional Secretary under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, **G Asok Kumar** was appointed as the new **Director-General of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** under the Ministry of Jal Shakti. He succeeded Director-General, **Rajiv Ranjan Mishra**. Kumar is popularly known as 'the Rain Man of India' for his excellent work in rainwater harvesting under the "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain" campaign.
- State-owned **Bank of Baroda** has signed cricketer **Shafali Verma** as its brand endorser. The Bank continuously supports the youth of the country through its various banking and non-banking initiatives and this announcement reflects the bank's ethos of adding value to its customer experience by choosing youth-icons like Shafali to inspire them."
- The Centre has re-appointed **Vijay Paul Sharma** as the chairman of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)** after he relinquished the post in May last year following completion of the five-year tenure.

Defence News

- **India** has invited a total of 46 friendly foreign countries to participate in the multinational naval **exercise Milan** in **Visakhapatnam**, scheduled from February 25, 2022. The theme of this 11th edition of exercise Milan is **camaraderie, cohesion and collaboration**. This exercise was initiated in 1995 and held biennially and conducted with friendly navies.
- **India** and its partners in the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or Quad** along with **Canada and South Korea** are participating in the multinational exercise **Sea Dragon 2022** at **Guam in the Western Pacific**. The six nations that are participating in the exercise are the **United States, Australia, Canada, India, Japan and South Korea**.

Awards and Recognitions

- Photojournalist **Danish Siddiqui**, who died during an assignment in Afghanistan, has been posthumously awarded as the '**Journalist of the Year**' for 2020 by the **Mumbai Press Club**. **CJI N V Ramana** presented the annual '**RedInk Awards for Excellence in Journalism**'. Senior journalist **Prem Shankar Jha**, 83, was bestowed with the **lifetime achievement award** "for his long and distinguished career of incisive and analytical writing".
- **Zishaan A Latif** won **Ramnath Goenka Award** in the **Photo Journalism category**. He won the award for his photo essay, The arduous struggle for inclusion in the NRC, which was published in The Caravan in October 2019. He documented the plight of people who were dropped from the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** and put a face to an untold human story.

- India's one of the top numerologists, **JC Chaudhry** has achieved the first-ever **Guinness World Record in Numerology** and the **first world record of 2022** by educating about ancient science to around 6000 participants, enthusiasts of numerology joined from the **United States, the United Kingdom, Middle East, and India**. The Guinness World Record London office has opened a new category, "**Numerology**" for this achievement.
- **South Indian Bank (SIB)** won the **UiPath Automation Excellence Awards 2021** for Best Automation under '**Crisis for Business Continuity**'. The 2021 edition of the award recognises the contribution of the individuals and organizations across India and South Asia (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal) for bringing change through transformative automation projects.

Summit and Conference

- The **GST Council's 46th meeting** was held in **New Delhi** under the chairmanship of Union Finance & Corporate Affairs Minister **Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman**. The GST Council has recommended deferring the decision to change the rates in textiles recommended in the 45th GST Council meeting. Consequently, the existing **GST rates of 5 % instead of 12%** in textile sector would continue.
- Union Minister of Science and Technology, **Dr Jitendra Singh** has inaugurated the **24th National Conference on e-Governance** in **Hyderabad, Telangana**. The theme of the two-day Conference is '**India's Techade: Digital Governance in a Post Pandemic World**'.



Schemes and Committees News

- Capital markets regulator, **Securities and Exchange Board of India** has restructured its primary **market advisory committee on data**. The committee aims to measure pertaining to areas such as securities market data access and privacy. Sebi has appointed Professor at National Law University, Delhi and former chairperson, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India **S Sahoo** as Panel Head. Earlier this panel was headed by Madhabi Puri Buch, an ex-whole time member of Sebi.
- The parliamentary standing committee constituted to examine "**The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021**" comprise of a total of 31 members, including only one women representative. Out of the total 31 members, TMC MP **Sushmita Dev** is the sole woman representative in the committee. The Bill seeks to raise the legal age of marriage for women in India from 18 to 21 to bring it at par with men.
- The flagship **UJALA** programme of the **Ministry of Power** has successfully completed seven years of distributing and selling LED lights on **January 05, 2022**. Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) scheme was launched by Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi on **January 05, 2015**.

Science and Technology News

- Scientists and experts in **France** have reportedly identified a new variant of **COVID-19** termed '**IHU**'. The new variant is said to be a more mutated strain than **Omicron**. The **B.1.640.2** or IHU variant was first identified by the academics at institute **IHU Mediterranee Infection** and contains 46 mutations, which is more than Omicron. Nearly 12 cases of this new variant have been reported near **Marseilles** and has been linked to the African country **Cameroon**. But, the Omicron strain is still dominating in most parts of the world.
- **Crypto Wire**, a global crypto super app that is a special business unit of **TickerPlant**, announced the launch of **India's first index of Cryptocurrencies - IC15**, which is a rule-based broad market index by market capitalisation. The IC15 tracks and measures the performance of the top 15 widely traded liquid cryptocurrencies listed on leading crypto exchanges of the world, the company stated.

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** has approved a testing kit for detecting the Omicron variant of the **SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus**. The covid kit developed by Tata is called '**OmiSure**' and will be an enhancement for the detection of the Omicron variant. The kit is manufactured by Tata Medical and Diagnostics. The tests have been performed as per the manufacturer's instructions. Responsibility for batch-to-batch consistency lies with the manufacturer.

Sports News

- **India** has lifted the **under-19 Asia cricket Cup** by defeating **Sri Lanka** by nine wickets in a rain-interrupted One-Day International final in **Dubai** through the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method. In the match, Sri Lanka opted to bat first and scored 106 for nine in the stipulated 38 overs. India, who have won a record seven Asia Cup titles, looked a far superior team.
- Pakistani all-rounder, **Mohammad Hafeez** has announced his retirement from international cricket on January 03, 2022, to end his career spanning more than 18 years. The 41-year-old Hafeez retired from **Test cricket** in December 2018. He has played 55 Tests, 218 ODIs and 119 T20Is for Pakistan, scoring 12,780 runs across formats. He is nicknamed "**The Professor**".
- Olympic champion **Neeraj Chopra** will continue to train with his German coach **Klaus Bartonietz**, whose contract has been extended till the 2024 Paris Games, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) confirmed. Bartonietz took charge as Chopra's coach from compatriot and former world record holder javelin thrower Uwe Hohn.
- Sports Ministry's **Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)** of India has approved the inclusion of Alpine Skiing athlete **Md Arif Khan** in the **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** Core group, until the Winter Olympics, scheduled this February in Beijing, China. The feat earned Khan the unique distinction of becoming the first Indian to win direct quota spots in two different Winter Olympics events, besides being the first athlete from the country to seal a berth at the Winter Olympic games 2022.

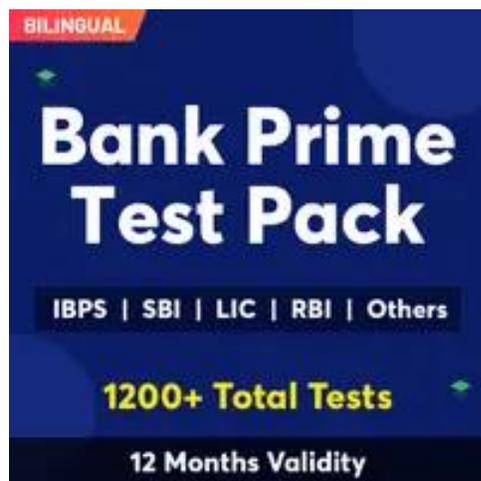
Important Days

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** has observed the **64th** Foundation Day of its establishment on **January 01, 2022**. DRDO was established in 1958 with just 10 laboratories to enhance the research work in the Defence sector. At that time, it was tasked with designing and developing cutting edge defence technologies for the Indian Armed Forces.
- **World Braille Day** is observed globally on **4th January** since **2019**. The day aims to recognize the right of access to braille by blind people and raise awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication in the full realization of the human rights for blind and partially sighted people. The day is marked remembering the birth anniversary of **Louis Braille**, the inventor of Braille – for people with visual disabilities. Louis Braille was born on **4th January 1809** in the town of Coupvray in northern France.
- **World Day of War Orphans** is marked on **6 January** to create awareness about the plight of children who have lost their parents due to conflict. In any conflict, children are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups present. Children who have been injured in a gunfight or separated from their families require particular care in order to heal the mental wounds of war, begin school, and restart normal life.
- The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** and the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** have decided to organise a week-long virtual innovation celebration called '**Startup India Innovation Week**' to showcase the spread and depth of entrepreneurship across India. The virtual event will be organised from **January 10 to January 16, 2022**. The event also aims to commemorate the **75th** year of India's independence 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Obituaries

- Bollywood film producer **Vijay Galani** has passed away. He was suffering from blood cancer and was in London for seeking treatment.
- World-renowned Kenyan politician, conservationist and fossil hunter **Richard Leakey** has passed away. The legendary paleoanthropologist is credited for the discovery of '**Turkana Boy**' in 1984 which led to groundbreaking discoveries proving that humankind evolved in Africa.

- The Indian Navy's 1971 Indo-Pak war veteran **Vice Admiral S.H. Sarma** has passed away, at the age of 100. He was the Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet during the 1971 war. India had defeated Pakistan in the 1971 war leading to the creation of Bangladesh. Vice Admiral Sarma had celebrated his **100th birthday** on December 1 last year. He also took part in the **Azadi ka Amrut Mahotsav** celebration in Delhi recently.
- Social worker **Sindhutai Sapkal**, who was called as '**Mother of Orphans**' passed away at the age of 73 years. She was also referred to just as 'Sindhutai' or 'Mai'. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 2021 in the Social Work category.
- The Olympic triple jump 3-time gold medalist and former world record holder, **Viktor Danilovich Saneyev** passed away in Australia. He was a triple long player who represented the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR)** in the Olympic games. Later he worked as a coach in Australia. He secured gold medals in European Games organized in 1969 Athens and 1974 Rome.
- Founder of **Shillong Chamber Choir (SCC)** and renowned Indian concert pianist **Neil Nongkynrih** passed away. In 2010, SCC performed for former US President Barack Obama & Michelle Obama during their visit to India. SCC's version of '**Vande Maataram**' was played during the live telecast program Indian space rocket Chandrayaan - 2's landing on the moon. In 2015, he was awarded the **Padma Shri - India's fourth-highest civilian honour**.
- Bahamian-American actor **Sidney Poitier**, who won an Academy Award for Best Actor in 1964, has died at the age of 94. In 1963, Poitier had made a film in Arizona, Lilies of the Field. The performance led to a huge milestone making him the first black winner of a lead-acting Oscar. He was awarded the US Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009 by President Obama for his work.



Miscellaneous News

- In **Kerala**, the first battery-powered electric boat built for the **Kochi Water Metro Project** was handed over to the **Kochi Metro Rail Limited**. The fully air-conditioned boat is among the 23 boats being built by the Cochin Shipyard for the 747-crore rupee Kochi Water Metro project. Kochi Water Metro system will have 78 ferries, linking 38 terminals spread over 76 route kilometres.
- **The Losar Festival in Ladakh** is celebrated at the onset of the New Year in the traditional schedule of **Tibetan Buddhism**. It is celebrated by the Buddhist Community in the Ladakh region. The Losar is a 15 days festival, from the start of the Tibetan Lunar calendar, marking the 1st day of the 11 months in the Tibetan Calendar. Losar is a Tibetan word that means 'New Year'.
- **Captain Harpreet Chandi**, Indian-origin British Sikh Army officer and physiotherapist, also known as **Polar Preet**, has created history by becoming the first woman of colour to complete a solo unsupported trek to the **South Pole**. Capt. Chandi announced her history-making feat at the end of Day 40 after travelling 700 miles (1,127 kilometres) while pulling a pulk or sledge with all of her kit and battling temperatures of minus 50 degrees Celsius and wind speeds of around 60mph.
- Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, **Dr Jitendra Singh** has inaugurated India's first **Open Rock Museum in Hyderabad, Telangana**. Museum displays around 35 different types of rocks from different parts of India with ages ranging from 3.3 billion years to around 55 million years of the Earth's history.
- Government-promoted CSC SPV, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, will undertake the first-ever cultural survey of India's villages through a mobile application. The survey, titled '**Mera Gaon, Meri Dharohar**', will document the cultural identity at the village level by involving citizens to share what makes their village, block or district unique.
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Chairman, **Vinai Kumar Saxena** has launched the country's **first Mobile Honey Processing Van** at **Village Sirora in Ghaziabad**. The Mobile Van has been designed in-house by KVIC at its Multi-disciplinary Training Centre, Panjokehra, at a cost of Rs 15 lakh. This mobile honey processing unit can process up to 300 KG of honey in 8 hours. The van is also equipped with a testing laboratory, that would instantly examine the quality of honey.

Static Takeaways

- Odisha Capital: Bhubaneswar;
- Odisha Governor: Ganeshi Lal;
- Odisha Chief Minister: Naveen Patnaik.
- Himachal Pradesh Capital: Shimla (Summer), Dharamshala (Winter);
- Himachal Pradesh Governor: Rajendra Arlekar;
- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister: Jai Ram Thakur.
- Gujarat Capital: Gandhinagar;
- Gujarat Governor: Acharya Devvrat;
- Gujarat Chief minister: Bhupendrabhai Patel.
- France Capital: Paris;
- France Currency: Euro;
- France Prime Minister: Jean Castex;
- President of France: Emmanuel Macron.
- Russia Capital: Moscow;
- Russia Currency: Rouble;
- Russia President: Vladimir Putin.
- Apple Inc. CEO: Tim Cook;
- Apple Inc. Founded: 1 April 1976, California, United States;
- Apple Inc. Headquarters: Cupertino, California, United States;
- Apple Inc. Founders: Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, Ronald Wayne.
- Sudan Capital: Khartoum; Currency: Sudanese pound.
- Antigua and Barbuda Capital: Saint John's;
- Antigua and Barbuda Currency: East Caribbean Dollar;
- Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister: Gaston Browne.
- World Food Programme Founded: 1961;
- World Food Programme Headquarters: Rome, Italy;
- World Food Programme Executive Director: David Beasley.
- SBI Card Headquarters: Gurugram, Haryana;
- SBI Card Managing Director & CEO: Rama Mohan Rao Amara.
- Reserve Bank of India Founded: April 1, 1935;
- Reserve Bank of India Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra;
- Reserve Bank of India Governor: Shaktikanta Das.
- Chairman of Fino Payments Bank: Prof Mahendra Kumar Chouhan.
- Fino Payments Bank established: 13 July 2006.
- MD & CEO of Fino Payments Bank: Rishi Gupta.
- Headquarters of Fino Payments Bank: Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- Airtel Payments Bank's MD and CEO: Nubrata Biswas.
- Airtel Payments Bank Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Airtel Payments Bank Founded: January 2017.
- Jammu & Kashmir Bank Headquarters: Srinagar;
- Jammu & Kashmir Bank Founded: 1 October 1938.
- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Headquarters: Vasant Kunj, New Delhi;
- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Founded: 14 August 1956.
- Chairman DRDO: Dr G Satheesh Reddy.
- DRDO Headquarters: New Delhi.
- DRDO Established: 1958.
- IRDAI Founded: 1999;
- IRDAI Headquarters: Hyderabad;
- IRDAI Chairperson: Subhash Chandra Khuntia.
- LIC Chairperson: M R Kumar;
- LIC Headquarters: Mumbai;
- LIC Founded: 1 September 1956.
- Tech Mahindra CEO: C. P. Gurnani;
- Tech Mahindra Headquarters: Pune;
- Tech Mahindra Founder: Anand Mahindra;
- Tech Mahindra Founded: 1986.
- Google CEO: Sundar Pichai;
- Google Founded: 4 September 1998, California, United States;
- Google Founders: Larry Page, Sergey Brin.
- NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd Founded: 2021;
- NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra;
- NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd CEO: Noopur Chaturvedi.
- Dunzo Founder(s): Kabeer Biswas, Ankur Agarwal, Dalvir Suri, Mukund Jha;
- Dunzo Founded: July 2014;
- Dunzo Headquarters location: Bengaluru.

