

❖ **Nandini Gupta of Rajasthan crowned Femina Miss India World 2023**

- Nandini Gupta from Rajasthan has been crowned Femina Miss India World 2023 in a grand ceremony held recently, making her the winner of the 59th edition of the beauty pageant. She hails from Kota, Rajasthan, and holds a Business Management degree.
- The first runner-up was Shreya Poonja from Delhi, and the second runner-up was Thounaojam Strela Luwang from Manipur.
- Nandini will represent India at the 71st Miss World pageant, which will take place in the United Arab Emirates.
- The event featured dazzling performances by Kartik Aaryan, Ananya Panday, and was hosted by Manish Paul and Bhumi Pednaker.
- Femina Miss India 2023 was held at Indoor Stadium, Khuman Lampak, Imphal, Manipur.

❖ **The US emerges as India's biggest trading partner in FY23**

- The US has emerged as India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 on account of increasing economic ties between the two countries.
- According to the provisional data of the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has increased by 7.65 per cent to USD 128.55 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22. It was USD 80.51 billion in 2020-21.
- Exports to the US rose by 2.81 per cent to USD 78.31 billion in 2022-23 as against USD 76.18 billion in 2021-22, while imports grew by about 16 per cent to USD 50.24 billion.

➤ On the other hand, during 2022-23, India's two-way commerce with China declined by about 1.5 per cent to USD 113.83 billion as against USD 115.42 billion in 2021-22.

➤ In 2022-23, the UAE (USD 76.16 billion) was the third largest trading partner, followed by Saudi Arabia.

❖ **WPI inflation eases to a 29-month low of 1.34% in March 2023**

➤ Wholesale price index-based inflation fell to a 29-month low of 1.34 per cent in March due to moderation in prices of manufactured products, commodity prices and a favourable base effect, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

➤ Even though some food items showed an increase in inflation, this was the 10th straight month when wholesale inflation recorded a moderation. WPI inflation was recorded at 3.85 per cent in the previous month and 14.63 per cent in March 2022. For FY23, the wholesale inflation averaged 9.4 per cent, moderating from a 30-year high of 13 per cent in FY22.

➤ This moderation is expected to ease the input cost pressures on the corporates amid weakening demand. Inflation in food articles rose to 5.48 per cent in March as against 3.81 per cent in February. Among food items, although inflation for vegetables, onions and potatoes remained negative, the rate of price rise was higher than that in February.

❖ **Syria becomes world's largest 'narco-state'**

➤ Syria has become the biggest narco-state in the world, as the horribly addictive amphetamine it produces, which is known as Captagon or “poor man’s coke”, has turned out to be the country’s economic lifeline and its biggest export product, earning more than 90 per cent of the country’s foreign currency.

➤ Notably, Collins Dictionary defines a “narco-state” as a country in which the illegal trade in narcotic drugs forms a substantial part of the economy.

➤ Captagon is a synthetic stimulant composed of amphetamine and caffeine, and it is an internationally-recognized illegal drug (UNODC, 2021).

➤ Captagon is one of the most popular recreational drugs (party pills) among the youth in the Gulf States. It is also, used by armed men for the feeling of invincibility it creates and for this reason, it is sometimes called “Captain Courage” or “Jihadi magic potion”.

❖ **Russia’s Gazprombank deepens ties with Indian banks for bilateral trade**

➤ Russia’s Gazprombank has expanded its ties with banks in India to expedite trade between the two countries in national currencies, as Russia this year has become the biggest supplier of oil to India.

➤ It is the third-largest lender of Russia by assets and a key conduit of the Russian energy trade.

➤ Trade between India and Russia has surged since the West imposed sanctions against Russia for its invasion last year of Ukraine, which has altered flows of oil and other goods.

➤ India last year implemented a broader framework to facilitate overseas trade in rupees and since then many foreign banks, including Gazprombank and other Russian institutions, have opened vostro accounts with Indian banks.

❖ **Ministry of Panchayati Raj to Celebrate National Panchayat Awards Week**

➤ The Ministry of Panchayati Raj celebrates National Panchayat Awards Week from 17th to 21st April, 2023, as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) 2.0, leading up to National Panchayati Raj Day on 24th April, 2023.

➤ In order to commemorate this occasion in a meaningful manner and to align with the AKAM 2.0 guidelines of taking a “whole-of-society” and “whole-of-government” approach, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has developed a series of Thematic Conferences centered around the theme “Panchayat ke Sankalpon ki Siddhi ka Utsav” to increase the reach of AKAM 2.0 and positively impact the lives of all Indians.

➤ The National Panchayat Awards Week kick off with a five-day event featuring the “National Conference on Incentivization of Panchayats-cum-Award Ceremony”

in New Delhi. The National Conference on Incentivization of Panchayats-cum-Award Ceremony is expected to attract over 1,500 delegates from various parts of India.

❖ **Mitsubishi Electric mulls \$222-mn AC unit in Tamil Nadu**

- Mitsubishi Electric India Pvt. Ltd. will set up a \$222 million plant to manufacture air-conditioners and compressors at Origins by Mahindra, near Chennai.
- It will be Mitsubishi Electric's first AC and compressor manufacturing facility in India and is expected to begin operations by October 2025.
- Once fully operational, it will enable Mitsubishi Electric to achieve an annual production capability of 3,00,000 units of room ACs and 6,50,000 units of compressors.
- An announcement to this effect was made by Mahindra Industrial Park Chennai Ltd., a joint venture between Mahindra World City Developers Ltd. and Sumitomo Corporation of Japan.
- Rajaram Pai, Chief Business Officer, Industrial, Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd., said that they were happy to welcome the electric and electronic equipment manufacturer to set up the AC-cum-compressor unit in their campus.

❖ **PwC India to invest over Rs. 600 cr towards employees' wellbeing**

- PwC India said it is committed to invest over Rs. 600 crore over the next three years towards the holistic growth, development and wellbeing of its people through its new 'People Experience Framework'.
- The framework enables employees to gain access to personalised opportunities that allow them to live their lives how they want to, including meeting the needs of their families, finding work that aligns with their purpose and values, thereby creating an environment in which they are building the skills needed for the future.

➤ PwC India has announced a non-residential executive MBA programme for regular full-time employees up to the Director level, wherein the firm will sponsor 75 per cent of the course fees for employees (up to Rs. 10 lakh per person).

➤ In addition to this, sponsorship of self-initiated learning certifications has been increased to up to Rs. 1 lakh from Rs. 30,000 before. The firm has announced an increase in medical coverage to (Rs. 20 lakh) for every employee, their spouse and two children (up from an average of Rs. 5 lakh).

❖ Gold ETFs inflow declines 74% to ₹653 cr. in FY23

➤ Inflow in gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) dropped 74% year-on-year to ₹653 crore in 2022-23, mainly due to profit booking in this asset class and investors' preference for equities.

➤ However, the asset base of gold ETFs and investors' account or folio numbers increased in the last fiscal, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

➤ According to data available from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi), 14-gold linked ETFs have seen an inflow of ₹653 crore in the fiscal year that ended on March 31 this year. This was way below than ₹2,541 crore inflow seen in the segment in 2021-22 and ₹1,614 crore in 2019-20.

➤ Before that, gold ETFs witnessed outflows of ₹412 crore in 2018-19, ₹835 crore in 2017-18, ₹775 crore in 2016-17, ₹903 crore in 2015-16, ₹1,475 crore in 2014-15 and ₹2,293 crore in 2013-14. The segment witnessed an infusion of ₹1,414 crore in 2012-13.

❖ VRL Logistics plans Rs.697-cr. chest to buy 1,667 trucks in FY24

➤ Hubballi-based logistics major VRL Logistics Ltd., (VRL) has set aside a capex of Rs.697 crore during the current fiscal to replenish its ageing fleet which is more than 15 years old.

- As per the proposal, during FY24 VRL plans to purchase 1,560 truck chassis from Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) and 107 units from Tata Motors and would construct truck bodies inhouse/outside as feasible.
- At the same time, it will withdraw 1,220 goods transport vehicles that have been in operations for more than 15 years. As of March 2023, VRL had 5,717 vehicles, it said in a filing.
- It is estimated that VRL would lose owned fleet capacity of up to 13,290 MT owing to scrapping of old vehicles. The proposed capacity addition would be about 16,802 MT. The vehicles being added include prime movers and trailers with payload capacity of up to 32 MT.

❖ **Invesco exits ZEEL; sells entire stake for Rs. 1,004 cr.**

- Invesco divested its entire stake — 5.11 per cent — in Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd for Rs. 1,004 crore through an open market transaction.
- Segantii India Mauritius, Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore Pte and Goldman Sachs Singapore Pte ODI were among the buyers of the shares.
- US-based investment firm Invesco, through its arm OFI Global China Fund LLC, offloaded the shares in Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL).
- According to the bulk deal data available with the BSE, OFI Global China Fund sold more than 4.91 crore shares, amounting to 5.11 per cent stake in the firm.
- The shares were disposed at an average price of Rs. 204.50 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs. 1,004.34 crore.

❖ **SCR carries a record 25.25 crore passengers in FY 2022-23**

- South Central Railway (SCR) created history in financial year of 2022-23 after its revenue from passenger segment crossed ₹5,000 crore for the first time. The railway raked in ₹5140.70 crore by carrying 25.25 crore passengers during the financial year; that is double the 127 million passengers (12.7 crore) it carried the year before.

➤ The overall originating revenue of the railway for the financial year was ₹18,973.14 crore, the highest since the zone's inception. In 2021-22, it was ₹14,266.04 crore, and the previous best was ₹15,708.88 crore in 2018–19, said general manager (GM) Anil Kumar Jain.

➤ Flanked by additional general manager R. Dhananjayalu and other department heads, the GM said SCR registered best ever performances in various segments during the last financial year.

❖ **Utsa Patnaik selected for Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023**

➤ Utsa Patnaik, a renowned economist of national and international repute, has been selected for the Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023.

➤ The award is given every year by the Malcolm & Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust. The prestigious national award honours outstanding social scientists selected by a national-level jury specially constituted for this purpose, from the nominations received.

➤ This year, the jury unanimously selected Prof. Utsa Patnaik.

➤ The award will be given with a citation and a prize money of ₹2 lakh at a function to be held in Chennai. The date of this event will be announced shortly by the Trust.

❖ **India to host two-day international Buddhist conference**

➤ India will host an international summit on Buddhism which would be attended by delegates from 30 countries, a notable exception being China. Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, was also unlikely to attend the two-day conclave.

➤ The maiden conference being organised by the Union Culture Ministry and the International Buddhist Confederation will discuss contemporary global issues through a Buddhist perspective.

➤ Over 170 delegates from foreign countries, including Mexico, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Japan, and 150 from India would participate in the summit to be held on April 20-21 in the national capital.

➤ The delegates include prominent scholars, monks, diplomats and members of Buddhist organisations across the globe. The largest number of delegates are from Sri Lanka (20) and Vietnam (30), Abhijit Haldar, Director General of International Buddhist Confederation.

❖ **Q4 investments at all-time high of ₹14.6 lakh crore**

➤ India's investments narrative closed last year with a bang, as the January-to-March quarter recorded the highest-ever total fresh investments of ₹14.6 lakh crore, led by private sector outlays that also hit an all-time high of ₹10.5 lakh crore.

➤ The fourth-quarter spurt, that was also driven by a record uptick in manufacturing investments, lifted the total new investment projects announced in India during a financial year to a fresh peak of ₹37 lakh crore in 2022-23.

➤ This constituted a 92% surge over the ₹19.27 lakh crore of investments announced in 2021-22. Projects Today has been monitoring investment project announcements since the year 2000.

➤ The record numbers apart, the fourth quarter of 2022-23 also saw a significant shift in the nature of investments, with private sector manufacturing investments resuming the lead role of capital formation from public sector-driven infrastructure-focused capex that had been propping up the metric in recent times.

❖ **Nepal became a founding member of the International Big Cats Alliance**

➤ Nepal has become a founding member of the International Big Cats Alliance. The alliance was launched under India's initiative, and during the launch event, Nepal's Energy Minister Shakti Bahadur Basnet presented a letter indicating Nepal's membership as a founding member to India's Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav.

- The International Big Cats Alliance aims to conserve seven big cat species including tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, cheetahs, jaguars and pumas.
- Nepal's tiger population has seen a significant increase, increasing from 121 in 2010 to 335 in 2022. Nepal successfully achieved its target of doubling the tiger population by 2022, as done during the first Tiger Summit in 2010 in St. Petersburg.
- The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, for the conservation of **seven** big cat species including tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar, and puma. The alliance aims to reach 97 range countries covering the natural habitats of these big cats and strengthen global cooperation and efforts for their conservation. Ministers from Bhutan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Nepal, Ethiopia and Malaysia expressed their support for India's efforts in alliance and conservation.

❖ **World Heritage Day: 18 April**

- 18 April is observed as World Heritage Day, also known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, to raise awareness of the importance of protecting cultural heritage around the world.
- It aims to celebrate the diversity of World Heritage and promote recognition of the value of preserving cultural heritage for future generations.
- The theme of World Heritage Day 2023 is "**Heritage of Change**", which addresses issues related to traditional knowledge and knowledge systems in the context of climate action.
- The day emphasises the role of cultural heritage in supporting appropriate protections for vulnerable communities in climate action and responding to the United Nations Decade of Action.

❖ **Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh launches 'YUVA PORTAL'**

- Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh launched the Youth Portal in New Delhi. It aims to connect and identify potential youth start-ups.

➤ Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh also launched the One Week - One Laboratory programme. The event emphasises the need for broad-based participation from stakeholders in the industry for startups to remain sustainable.

➤ Each of the 37 CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) **laboratories** is dedicated to a different specialised area of work. The One Week - One Lab program will provide an opportunity to CSIR laboratories to showcase their work.

➤ The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, or CSIR, is an autonomous body established by the Government of India in September 1942. Its primary goal is to promote scientific and industrial research in India.