



The ACHIEVERS IAS ACADEMY

LANGUAGE - ENGLISH

CURRENT AFFAIR BOOSTER

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Thursday



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Patliputra Colony, Near Tennis Court; Patna, Contact : 8434931877, 7250667974

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DAILY

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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QUIZ



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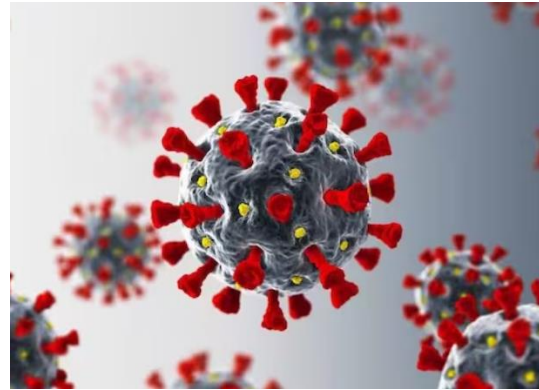
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1. Possibility of cut in global crude oil fuel price



The demand for reduction in retail prices of gasoline and diesel has intensified as international crude oil prices have recently fallen below \$80 per barrel and stabilized in the range of \$76-77. This demand is supported by the strong performance of oil marketing companies (OMCs) in H1FY23 and the maintenance of retail inflation within the comfort zone of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in November 2023. A senior government official highlighted that OMCs have experienced profitability in H1FY24 compared to the same period in FY23. This, combined with current international crude oil prices below \$80 a barrel, strengthens the case for a potential price cut in January 2024. Discussions during the budget (vote on account) consultation process included a review of fuel prices, but at the time, oil prices were volatile, hovering around \$81–82 per barrel. The current scenario of prices below \$80 is considered favorable for OMCs. It remains uncertain whether there will be a cut in excise duty, as seen in November 2021 and May 2022, or a summary of daily fuel price revision, which has been on hold since April 6, 2022. Although there is currently a strong case for price cuts given the decline in inflation, global prices stabilizing in the \$76-77 range and improving financial condition of OMCs, the market remains volatile due to uncertainties over global demand. If international prices remain around \$80 in the new year, it could further support the argument for a price cut.

2. JN.1 variant of COVID-19 virus



The World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert on Sunday, December 17, expressing concern over the evolving nature of the JN.1 COVID subvariant and the increase in respiratory diseases globally. The organization urged member countries to prioritize sequence sharing and increase surveillance efforts to better understand and respond to the changing landscape of the virus. The JN.1 variant, identified as a subvariant of Omicron BA.2.86 or Pirola, was first detected in the United States in September 2023. According to Rajiv Jayadevan, co-chairman of the National Indian Medical Association Covid Task Force, JN.1 has unique characteristics, it spreads rapidly and displays the ability to evade immunity. This dangerous combination makes it capable of infecting people with previous Covid infection and those who have been vaccinated. Symptoms include fever, runny nose, sore throat, headache, cough and mild gastrointestinal problems. It is associated with moderate symptoms, and no increase in hospitalizations has been reported. Patients usually recover within 4-5 days, with some experiencing difficulty breathing. In India, JN.1 was detected in Kerala on December 8, where a 79-year-old woman experienced mild symptoms of influenza-like illness (ILI). The country is urged to remain vigilant and implement necessary measures to prevent such spread.

3. Kotak Mahindra Bank and IITK partner to launch Kotak School of Sustainability

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Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT) and Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) have joined hands to establish Kotak School of Sustainability. In a significant step towards addressing the critical issues of global warming and promoting sustainability education, research and outreach, the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT) and Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL) have collaborated to establish the Kotak School of Sustainability. The ceremony was an important moment in the commitment to advance sustainability education in India. The Union Minister recognized Kotak Mahindra Bank for its contribution in setting up the School of Sustainability and stressed the importance of industry and government collaboration in promoting research and innovation. Kotak School of Sustainability is considered to be India's first fully integrated institute dedicated to sustainability education. Funded by Kotak Mahindra Bank through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, the school is set to play a key role in shaping the future of sustainability initiatives in the country.

4. Aster Medcity tops as India's emerging hospital



Aster Medcity, based in Kochi, Kerala, and a unit of Aster DM Healthcare, has emerged as a leader in the healthcare industry. The hospital has recently achieved the remarkable achievement of being ranked No. 1 in the 'Best Multi-Specialty Hospital Emerging' category by The Week-Hansa Research 2023, published in December 2023. This recognition underlines Aster Medcity's commitment to providing quality healthcare services, making it a preferred destination for patients in India and across the world. Founded by Dr. Azad Moopen, Aster Medcity embodies the vision of providing quality healthcare at an affordable price. The hospital has established itself as a medical destination through its centers of excellence specializing in Neurology, Cardiology, Orthopedics, Gastrology and Urology and Nephrology. Run by a dedicated team of healthcare professionals, Aster Medcity is synonymous with accessible and high-quality medical care. Earlier this year, Aster Medcity's Cardiology department was ranked 49th among the prestigious Top 100 Cardiology Hospitals in Asia Pacific, recognized by the internationally renowned Newsweek magazine. The hospital boasts of an impressive track record, having successfully completed more than 1750 robotic surgeries, 2500 joint replacement surgeries, 1000 kidney transplants and more than 10,000 deliveries. Aster Medcity stands as a leader in the healthcare landscape by introducing several unprecedented initiatives. Notable achievements include the launch of India's first AI-enabled telestroke ambulance, advanced robotic surgery capabilities and an advanced heart valve centre. These advancements coupled with the expertise of the medical fraternity have enabled Aster Medcity to undertake and successfully perform complex surgeries.

5. Egypt's Abdel Fattah el-Sisi wins third term as president with 89.6% of votes

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Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has won a third term in office in the Arab world's most populous country with 89.6 percent of the vote, the national election authority said. The outcome of the December 10-12 vote was widely expected as the former army chief, with a fondness for infrastructure mega-projects, campaigned against a small field of relative unknowns. That secures 69-year-old Abdel Fattah el-Sisi his third and, according to Egypt's constitution, final term in office, which will begin in April and last six years. His victory comes despite a painful economic crisis, a currency collapse and skyrocketing home prices, and heightened regional tensions caused by the Israel-Hamas war in neighboring Gaza. Annual inflation is running at 36.4 percent, causing prices of some food items to rise by the week and hurting household budgets in the country of about 106 million. Even before the current economic crisis, nearly two-thirds of Egypt's population was living at or below the poverty line. A decade-long crackdown on dissent had eliminated any serious competition for Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's fifth president to emerge from within the military since 1952. This was the third time in a decade that Abdel Fattah al-Sisi won a landslide victory, albeit by the narrowest of margins. In both 2014 and 2018, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won more than 96 percent of the vote. Runner-up Hazem Omar, who leads the Republican People's Party, received 4.5 percent of the vote. Next came Farid Zahran, leader of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, and Abdel-Sanad Yamama from the century-old but relatively marginal party Wafd.

6. India launches first winter mission to Arctic



India launches India's first winter mission to the Arctic, which will give a big boost to the country's research around global climate, sea levels and biodiversity. Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju flagged off the winter science expedition to the Arctic region, which aims to maintain a year-long presence at the Himadri Research Station in Svalbard, Norway. "The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) will make necessary budgetary and other allocations, provide administrative support for winter expeditions in the Arctic, which will now be carried out on a regular basis annually," the minister said. India's first research station, Himadri, on the International Arctic Research Base, is located at a distance of 1,200 km from the North Pole. This station was opened in view of the sustained interest shown by Indian scientists in pursuing scientific studies in the Arctic and it provides extensive field and laboratory support required for pursuing research activities in the Arctic. MoES officials said the Norwegian government will provide logistical and other support to the visiting Indian team as this will be the first mission of the Indian team. "The Norwegian government has shown confidence in Indian scientists and our presence during winter will add value. Scientists and young science students will have to play a major role in making India a developed nation. India is making inroads into many frontiers by building its presence on the Moon, in the deep sea and in the polar region," Rijiju said.

7. WHO SE Asia Director Poonam Khetrpal Singh awarded National Order of Merit Gold Medal of Bhutan

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Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, a 1975 batch retired Punjab cadre IAS officer and WHO South-East Asia Regional Director, has been awarded Bhutan's prestigious National Order of Merit Gold Medal for her distinguished services to the country. "Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, the first female Regional Director of the WHO South-East Asia Region, played a key role in supporting transformational healthcare leadership in Bhutan from 2014 to 2024. His tenure saw remarkable progress, with Bhutan becoming one of the first countries to achieve this goal. Eliminate measles and rubella ahead of time. He made significant contributions to helping Bhutan achieve excellence in COVID-19 vaccination," the king said. "Dr Khetrpal Singh's influential strategies span communicable diseases, reproductive health, health systems and social determinants and have had a lasting positive impact on Bhutan's public health services," he said. In a video message after the award ceremony, Dr. Khetrpal Singh thanked Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk for the award. He said, "For the past decade as WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, it has been my vision to address priority health issues through eight key programs and promote health and well-being for everyone, everywhere."

8. Anand Marriage Act implemented in Jammu and Kashmir



Jammu and Kashmir administration has taken an important step towards fulfilling the long standing demand of the Sikh community by implementing the Anand Vivah Act. The Act provides statutory recognition to Sikh marriage rituals, allowing Sikh couples to register their marriage under specific rules rather than the Hindu Marriage Act. The Jammu and Kashmir administration has framed detailed rules for registration of marriages under the Anand Marriage Act. The set of rules, titled 'Jammu and Kashmir Anand Vivah Registration Rules, 2023', outlines the procedures to register "Anand Vivah". According to a government notification issued on November 30, tehsildars within their respective jurisdictions will act as registrars for such marriages. Sikh couples are allowed to apply for registration within three months after their marriage. However, if the formalities are completed after the expiry of this deadline, they may attract late fees. This timeline and fee structure has been specified in the notification issued by the Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. The origins of the Anand Marriage Act can be traced to 1909, when the British Imperial Legislative Council enacted legislation recognizing the Sikh marriage ceremony, Anand Karaj. The primary objective of the Act was to accept and respect the customs and practices of the Sikh community. In 2012, Parliament passed the Anand Vivah (Amendment) Bill, providing legal recognition to Sikh traditional marriages.

QUIZ

1. When was Minority Rights Day celebrated recently?

- (a) 18 December
- (b) 16 December
- (c) 17 December
- (d) 19 December

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Minority Rights Day is celebrated every year on 18 December in India. On this day, attention is drawn to the challenges and issues faced by the minority communities of the country. People draw inspiration from protecting the rights of religious, cultural, linguistic and ethnic minorities. Minorities in India include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis. Many provisions of the Constitution to protect the interests of minorities are contained in Article 29 and Article 30. In the year 1992, 18 December was declared Minority Rights Day by the United Nations. According to the 2011 census, the minority community population in India is approximately 20%.

2. In which area has India recently started its first winter scientific expedition?

- (a) Arctic region
- (b) Pacific region
- (c) Antarctica region
- (d) Atlantic region

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju flagged off India's first winter scientific expedition to the Arctic region. Raman Research Institute will participate in the first winter Indian expedition to the Arctic region. Since 2008, India operates a research station called 'Himadri' in the Arctic which operates mostly during summer (April to October).

3. Who was recently awarded the prestigious National Order of Merit Gold Medal of Bhutan?

- (a) S Jaishankar
- (b) Mamta Banerjee
- (c) Jaya Bachchan
- (d) Poonam Khetrapal Singh

Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia, has been awarded Bhutan's prestigious National Order of Merit Gold Medal for distinguished services. Poonam is a retired IAS officer of Punjab cadre. Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck honored him at the 116th National Day celebrations of Bhutan.

4. When is International Human Solidarity Day celebrated every year?

- (a) 18 December
- (b) 19 December
- (c) 20th December

(d) 21 December

International Human Solidarity Day is celebrated every year on 20 December. On this day, people resolve to adopt methods to eliminate poverty, hunger and diseases. The United Nations General Assembly, by resolution 60/209 on 22 December 2005, recognized human rights as fundamental and universal rights of solidarity, which characterize relations between people in the twenty-first century, and in this regard each year 20 It was decided to celebrate International Human Unity Day on December.

5. Who is the President of Egypt who has won the presidential election for the third time?

- (a) Sherif Ismail
- (b) Abdel Fatah al-Sisi
- (c) Ibrahim Mahlab
- (d) Mohammad Morsi

In the recently concluded presidential elections in Egypt, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has won for the third time. Al-Sisi won the election with 89.6 percent of the vote. His next term will start in April and will last for six years. Is. Annual inflation is running at 36.4 percent, causing prices of some food items to rise by the week and hurting household budgets in the country of about 106 million. Even before the current economic crisis, nearly two-thirds of Egypt's population was living at or below the poverty line. A decade-long crackdown on dissent had eliminated any serious competition for Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's fifth president to emerge from within the military since 1952.

6. Which bank has recently raised Rs 7,425 crore through infrastructure bond issue?

- (a) State Bank of India
- (b) HDFC Bank
- (c) Punjab National Bank
- (c) Federal Bank

HDFC Bank has recently raised Rs 7,425 crore through infrastructure bond issue. The bank has raised these funds for financing infrastructure and affordable housing projects. 7,42,500 bonds of face value Rs 1,00,000 were issued to raise Rs 7,425 crore. The bank issued and allotted 7.71 per cent unsecured, redeemable, long-term, fully paid, non-convertible

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bonds in the nature of debentures on private placement basis, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing.

7. How many people will be honored with the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award 2023?

- (a) 2
- (b) 3
- (c) 4
- (d) 5

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has announced the National Sports Awards 2023. These awards will be presented by the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 09, 2024. This time Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award will be given to badminton players Chirag Chandrashekhkar Shetty and Rankireddy Satwik Sai Raj. This time 26 players will be honored with the Arjuna Award.

8. Who launched the National Geology Data Repository Portal?

- (a) Anurag Thakur
- (b) Smriti Irani
- (c) RK Sinha
- (d) Prahlad Joshi

Union Minister Prahlad Joshi launched the National Geology Data Repository Portal in New Delhi and also inaugurated a road show on important minerals. It is a comprehensive online platform to access, share and analyze geospatial information across India. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) was established in 1851 primarily to find coal reserves for the railways.

ONE LINER

Recently India has started its first winter scientific expedition in which area – **Arctic region**

How many players will be honored with the Arjuna Award under the National Sports Awards 2023 - **26**

Who has become the number 1 batsman in ODI International leaving behind Indian opener Shubman Gill - **Babar Azam**

Where has Prime Minister Modi recently inaugurated the world's largest meditation center Swaraveda Mahamandir - **Varanasi**

When has Minority Rights Day been celebrated recently - **18 December**

Who will be honored with Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award 2023- **Chirag Chandrashekhkar Shetty and Rankireddy Satwik Sai Raj**

Which bank has recently raised Rs 7,425 crore through infrastructure bond issue – **HDFC Bank**

Who is the President of Egypt who has won the presidential election for the third time - **Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi**

When is International Human Solidarity Day celebrated every year – **20 December**

Who was recently awarded the prestigious National Order of Merit Gold Medal of Bhutan- **Poonam Khetrapal Singh**