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International News

1.Felix Tshisekedi Named President Of The Democratic Republic Of Congo



The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is once again in the spotlight as President Felix Tshisekedi secures victory in the highly contested December 20 election. President Tshisekedi emerged victorious with approximately 73% of the vote, leaving his closest rival, Moise Katumbi, with 18%. Felix Tshisekedi, the son of veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, secured his first term in 2019.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), located in Central Africa, is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa with a diverse landscape and rich natural resources. Despite its potential wealth, the country has a history marked by political instability, conflicts, and the exploitation of resources contributing to humanitarian crises.

2.BRICS Group To Double In 2024 After Saudi, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia Join Ranks



BRICS, the group of emerging-market nations comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, is poised to undergo a significant expansion on January 1. South Africa's envoy to the bloc revealed that Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Egypt have accepted invitations to join, effectively doubling the organization's membership.

In August, the existing BRICS members extended invitations to six nations, including the aforementioned, aiming to combine leading energy producers with major consumers among developing countries. Argentina, the sole decline, reversed its membership bid under the new presidency of Javier Milei.

Representatives from the new invitees participated in a recent BRICS sherpa meeting in Durban, South Africa, indicating their acceptance of the invitation. The five countries are set to send officials to the next sherpa meeting in Moscow on January 30.

State News

3.Surat Hosts 12th Divya Kala Mela 2023



The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, organised 'Divya Kala Mela' in Surat, Gujarat.

This event aimed at showcasing the products and craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs and artisans from across the nation spans from December 29, 2023, to January 7, 2024. The primary objective of the 'Divya Kala Mela' is to contribute to the economic empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwD)/Divyangjan.

This initiative provides a unique platform for marketing and exhibiting the diverse products and skills of Divyang entrepreneurs. The event in Surat marks the 12th in the series that began in 2022, with previous editions held in various cities across India.

4. Gujarat Sets Guinness Record In Mass Surya Namaskar



Gujarat, known for its rich cultural heritage and commitment to health and wellness, achieved a remarkable feat on New Year's morning by making an indelible mark in the Guinness Book of World Records.

The state hosted the largest simultaneous Surya Namaskar performance, involving over 4,000 participants from 108 locations across 51 categories.

The chosen number of 108 holds special significance in Indian culture, and the venues for the mega event included the iconic Modhera Sun Temple. In Vedic culture, esteemed mathematicians regarded 108 as a symbol of complete existence, linking it to the Sun, Moon, and Earth.

Defence News

5.India-UAE Joint Exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' Kicks Off In Rajasthan



The collaborative military exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is scheduled to take place in Rajasthan from January 2 to January 15. This joint manoeuvre aims to enhance interoperability through the exchange of knowledge and best practices, particularly in urban operations.

The robust friendship between India and the UAE is deeply rooted in enduring cultural, religious, and economic interactions that span millennia. In recent times, the

collaboration in defence between India and the UAE has witnessed significant enhancement.

The cooperation extends to various aspects, including defence training, the supply of defence inventory, and the implementation of regular exchange programs. One notable milestone in this collaboration was the inaugural India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise held in September 2008 at the Al-Dhafra base in Abu Dhabi.

6.DRDO Celebrates Its 66th Foundation Day



India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) commemorated its 66th Foundation Day on January 1, 2024, marking a significant journey of innovation and self-reliance in the country's defence sector. The day was celebrated with great enthusiasm and a renewed commitment to bolstering India's defence capabilities.

Dr. Kamat stressed the importance of Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in defence production. He highlighted the record-breaking Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) accorded in 2023 for DRDO-developed systems worth over Rs. 1.42 lakh crore. DRDO Chairman Dr. Samir V Kamat also launched the Quantity-Distance Software developed by HEMRL Pune. This software automates the siting of explosives and related buildings, enhancing efficiency and safety in the armed forces.

Economy News

7.Strong Growth In GST Collections: December 2023 Records ₹1.65-Lakh Crore



In a significant economic development, Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections for December 2023 reached ₹1,64,882 crore, marking a notable 10.28% surge compared to the ₹1,49,507 crore collected in the same month the previous year.

This accomplishment underscores the seventh consecutive month in the fiscal year where average GST collections have exceeded ₹1.6-lakh crore. Notably, November 2023 witnessed GST collections at ₹1,67,929 crore, contributing to the overall positive trend.

During the period of April-December 2023, Gross GST collections reached ₹14.97-lakh crore, exhibiting a commendable 12% increase from the ₹13.40-lakh crore recorded in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year (April-December 2022).

Banking News

8.UPI Ends 2023 With Record Transactions Worth ₹18-Lakh Crore, Up 42% Y-O-Y



In December, UPI transactions soared by an impressive 42% year-on-year, reaching an astounding value of Rs 18 lakh crore. The transaction volume witnessed a substantial 54% rise, totaling 1,202 crore. Remarkably, the month-on-month growth in UPI transaction volume was a substantial 7%.

Fastag transactions experienced notable growth, with a volume of 34.8 crore in December, marking a 13% YoY increase. The value of these transactions also saw a substantial uptick, rising by 19% to Rs 5,861 crore compared to the same period last year. Furthermore, this figure is 10% higher than the recorded Rs 5,539 crore in November 2023.