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International News

CHINA'S POPULATION CHALLENGE: MEASURES TO COUNTER DECLINING BIRTH RATES



China faces a demographic crisis as its population dropped for the second year in a row in 2023. This decline is attributed to a falling birth rate and an increase in deaths, especially after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

China's total population stood at 1.4 billion, with the country falling behind India as the world's most populous nation. Deaths rose by 690,000 to 11.1 million, more than double the previous year's increase, partly due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

The number of births fell for the seventh consecutive year, with only about 9 million babies born in 2023, half the total in 2016. High childcare and education costs, uncertainty in the job market, and gender discrimination are some factors discouraging couples from having more children.

THE HOUTHIS' ESCALATION IN THE RED SEA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES



Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have intensified

their attacks on ships in the Red Sea, citing revenge against Israel for its actions in Gaza.

This has prompted the US and UK to launch strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, leading to concerns about a broader regional conflict.

The war has resulted in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with millions in need of aid, widespread displacement, and significant casualties. A 2022 ceasefire lapsed after six months, and efforts to bring a permanent end to the conflict have proven challenging.

JAPAN'S LUNAR AMBITION: SMART LANDER MISSION SET FOR SUCCESS ON JANUARY 20



Japan is poised to join an exclusive group of nations that have successfully landed on the Moon. The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), developed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), is scheduled to touch the lunar surface on January 20, 2024.

This mission marks a significant milestone in Japan's space exploration endeavours and offers a unique opportunity to advance lunar science. Launched on September 6, 2023, aboard a H-IIA rocket, SLIM represents a significant leap in lunar exploration technology.

The mission aims to demonstrate highly accurate landings, a capability that will enhance the science value of future lunar missions. The lander's target is the rim of Shioli crater, where it aims to land within 100 meters of its target point, a level of precision

unprecedented in lunar exploration.

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK: A SYMBOL OF HUMANITY'S PERIL



The Doomsday Clock, created by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, symbolizes humanity's proximity to global catastrophes from technology and environmental issues.

Recently, the Doomsday Clock, has drawn significant attention due to its alarming setting close to midnight.

The Doomsday Clock was created in 1947, two years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Initially, the clock was a symbol of nuclear threat. It has since evolved to encompass a broader range of dangers, including climate change, emerging technologies, and biological hazards.

INDIA AIDS AFGHANISTAN WITH 40,000 LITERS OF MALATHION AGAINST LOCUST THREAT



In a remarkable display of goodwill and humanitarian assistance, the Indian government has stepped forward to aid the Afghan people in confronting the locust menace.

The generous support comes in the form of 40,000 litres of Malathion, an environmentally friendly pesticide known for its efficacy in arid regions and minimal water usage.

Malathion has proven to be a crucial tool in locust control, making it an ideal choice for combating the infestation in Afghanistan. Its effectiveness in arid regions aligns with the country's climate, and its minimal water usage addresses environmental concerns.

National News

PM MODI UNVEILS RAM MANDIR STAMPS: A HISTORIC MOMENT IN INDIAN CULTURE



Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched a series of commemorative postage stamps dedicated to Ayodhya's Ram Temple, marking a significant cultural event in India.

The collection comprises six distinct stamps, each featuring key figures and symbols associated with Lord Ram's narrative, including the Ram Temple, Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman, Jatayu, Kevatraj, and Ma Shabri.

The designs incorporate essential elements related to Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Mandir, showcasing the temple, the revered Choupai 'Mangal Bhavan Amangal Hari,' the sun, the Saryu River, and the sculptures in and around the temple. Each stamp is adorned with gold leaf detailing for the sun rays and the Choupai, adding a majestic touch.

NHAI'S 'ONE VEHICLE, ONE FASTAG' INITIATIVE TO STREAMLINE TOLL COLLECTION



The National Highways Authority of India has introduced the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative, to

curb the prevalent practice of using a single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a specific vehicle.

This initiative seeks to promote a one-to-one correspondence between vehicles and FASTags, ensuring transparency and accountability in toll collection.

NHAI is actively promoting the completion of the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process for the latest FASTag. FASTags with valid balances but incomplete KYC details will face deactivation or blacklisting by banks after January 31, 2024.

AYODHYA'S LATA MANGESHKAR CHOWK ILLUMINATES AHEAD OF RAM TEMPLE INAUGURATION



The city of Ayodhya is witnessing a significant transformation with the upcoming inauguration of the Ram temple. A key highlight in this transformation is the Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, which has recently been illuminated, drawing attention both nationally and internationally.

The Chowk, named after the legendary Indian playback singer Lata Mangeshkar, has become a popular selfie hotspot for locals and tourists alike.

This bronze sculpture, weighing 14 tonnes and made by renowned sculptor Ram Sutar, stands as a symbol of Lata Mangeshkar's musical legacy.

UNION MINISTER JYOTIRADITYA M SCINDIA INAUGURATES ASIA'S LARGEST AVIATION EXPO WINGS INDIA 2024

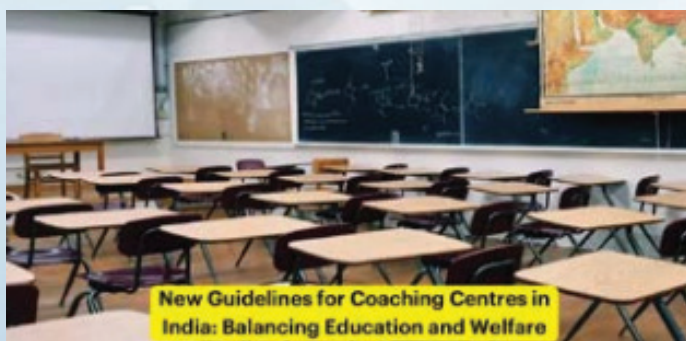


Union Minister for Civil Aviation Shri Jyotiraditya M Scindia inaugurated Wings India 2024, Asia's largest aviation expo, at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad. The theme of Wings India 2024 is "Connecting India to the World in Amrit Kaal: Setting the Stage for India Civil Aviation @2047".

The aim is to support a USD 20 trillion economy by 2047 with a robust aviation system .

The expo served as a platform for industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to exchange ideas and forge partnerships.

NEW GUIDELINES FOR COACHING CENTRES IN INDIA: BALANCING EDUCATION AND WELFARE



The Ministry of Education in India has announced new guidelines for coaching centres.

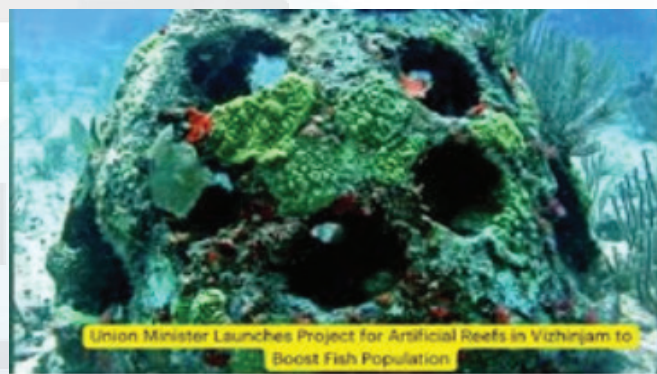
These guidelines provide a legal structure for the operation of coaching centres. They define the minimum standards for the functioning of these centres.

Only those with a minimum qualification of grad-

uation are eligible to teach. Coaching centres are prohibited from making false claims about ranks or marks to entice students. Students below 16 years old cannot be enrolled, and admission is allowed only for post-secondary school examinations.

These guidelines come in response to growing concerns about student welfare, unregulated growth of private coaching, and rising cases of student suicides and other incidents linked to coaching centres.

UNION MINISTER LAUNCHES PROJECT FOR ARTIFICIAL REEFS IN VIZHINJAM TO BOOST FISH POPULATION



In a significant move to boost fish production and promote sustainable fishing, Union Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala inaugurated an artificial reef project in Vizhinjam, Kerala.

This initiative aims to double the income of fishermen by enhancing fish stocks and contributing to the economic well-being of the local fishing community. The project is designed to boost fishery resources in the region, thus improving the livelihood of traditional fishermen.

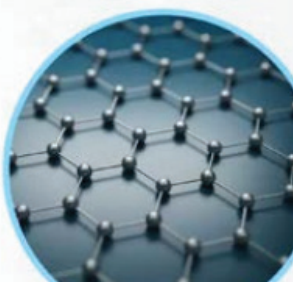
The Kerala State Coastal Development Corporation, with technical assistance from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), is overseeing the project. The project will deploy 6,300 artificial reef units across 42 fishing villages from Pozhiyoor to Varkala in Thiruvananthapuram district .

MEITY SECRETARY LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST GRAPHENE CENTRE AND IoT COE IN KERALA



India's first
Graphene Centre
"India Innovation Centre
for Graphene (IICG)"

Maker Village, Kochi, Kerala



In a significant development, MeitY Secretary S Krishnan inaugurated the India Innovation Centre for Graphene (IICG) and a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Intelligent Internet of Things (IIoT) Sensors in Kerala.

The Digital University Kerala (DUK) (formerly IIITMK) and CMET, Thrissur, play crucial roles as technical partners in establishing these pioneering centers.

The CoE in IIoT Sensors, situated at Makers Village Kochi, is a distinctive facility created by the collaborative efforts of MeitY, Government of India, and Government of Kerala.

The primary objective is to boost the development of sensors within the domain of Intelligent IoT systems, encompassing a wide array of applications across networks, devices, and sensor systems.

FARSI AS INDIA'S NEW CLASSICAL LANGUAGE



In a noteworthy development aimed at strengthening cultural ties, the Government of India, under the New Education Policy, has decided to include Farsi (Persian) as one of the nine classical languages of India.

This announcement was made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during a two-day visit to Iran, highlighting the cultural, literary, and linguistic connections between Iran and India.

Farsi, also known as Persian, is an Indo-Iranian language belonging to the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages.

It has a rich historical and cultural significance, not only in Iran but also in the broader Persian-speaking world. The language is known for its extensive literary heritage, with poets like Rumi and Hafez making significant contributions to Persian literature.

State News

ODISHA CM NAVEEN PATNAIK INAUGURATES PURI JAGANNATH TEMPLE'S HERITAGE CORRIDOR



The SMPP (Shree Mandir Parikrama Prakalpa) introduces a 75-meter-wide space around the temple, referred to as the heritage corridor.

This expansive area has been meticulously divided into nine distinct zones, each serving a specific purpose aimed at enhancing the overall experience for visitors and preserving the cultural heritage surrounding the Shree Jagannath Temple.

The first zone comprises a 7-meter green buffer adjacent to the Meghanada Pacheri, the temple's boundary. This zone acts as a protective barrier, preserving the sanctity of the temple premises.

MOH-JUJ FIGHTS: A CULTURAL RESURGENCE IN ASSAM



After a hiatus of nine years, Moh-Juj, the traditional buffalo fights, have made a comeback in Assam. This revival, held during the Magh Bihu festival in mid-January 2024, marks a significant cultural reclamation in Assam.

The tradition of Moh-Juj was suspended in 2015 following the Supreme Court's ban on similar events like Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu. The ban was primarily due to concerns regarding animal cruelty.

However, recognizing the cultural significance of Moh-Juj, the Assam government, after deliberations and the issuance of detailed SOPs, decided to permit these events again.

Moh-Juj symbolizes strength and valor in Assamese culture. The revival of Moh-Juj is seen as a reclamation of Assam's rich cultural traditions that have been passed down through generations.

MAMATA BANERJEE OPENS 47TH KOLKATA BOOK FAIR, FEATURING THE UK AS THE THEME COUNTRY



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the 47th International Kolkata Book Fair on January 18, amidst a drizzle that posed challenges for last-minute preparations for several stall owners.

The United Kingdom (UK) holds the spotlight as the theme country for this year's book fair, which is scheduled to continue till January 31.

The Kolkata Literature Festival is set to enrich the fair with discussions, readings, and interactions with prominent literary figures. The festival adds a dynamic layer to the overall cultural experience, providing attendees with opportunities to engage with thought-provoking discussions.

UNVEILING ARUNACHAL PRADESH'S PAKKE PAGA HORNBILL FESTIVAL AND THE NYISHI TRIBE



Arunachal Pradesh, nestled in the northeastern part of India, boasts a vibrant cultural mosaic and unparalleled biodiversity. The Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF) serves as a testament to this diversity, bringing together communities, traditions, and conservation efforts.

The PPHF, inaugurated in 2015, holds a unique purpose: recognizing the Nyishi tribe's crucial role in hornbill conservation within the Pakke Tiger Reserve.

Beyond cultural festivities, the festival aims to establish alternative income sources, steering away from harmful practices like hunting and logging. It serves as a platform for creating national awareness about the natural wonders of the Pakke Tiger Reserve and its surroundings.

TALLEST AMBEDKAR STATUE TO BE UNVEILED TODAY IN VIJAYAWADA, ANDHRA PRADESH



The Andhra Pradesh government is set to unveil the world's tallest statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the esteemed architect of the Indian Constitution, in a grand ceremony today in Vijayawada.

The colossal structure, named the 'Statue of Social Justice,' stands at an impressive height of 206 feet, making it one of the top 50 tallest statues globally, with Sardar Vallabhai Patel's 'Statue of Unity' claiming the top spot.

The 'Statue of Social Justice' stands tall at 125 feet, mounted on an 81-feet pedestal, making it the tallest statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the world. The sheer magnitude of the structure is a visual representation of the profound impact of Dr. Ambedkar's ideals on justice and equality.

Banking News

DLABS AT ISB LAUNCHES 'BUILD FOR BILLIONS' JOINTLY WITH RBI INNOVATION HUB, UBI

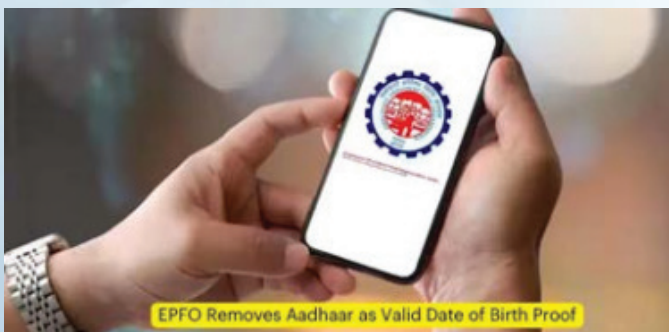


DLabs at the Indian School of Business (ISB) has announced the initiation of 'Build for Billions', a startup accelerator program centered around financial inclusion for the informal economy.

This innovative program has been launched in partnership with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) and Union Bank of India.

The primary theme of 'Build for Billions' is to foster financial inclusion within the informal economy. It aims to address livelihood issues for gig workers, migrant workers, domestic workers, street vendors, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and construction laborers who represent the informal economy.

EPFO REMOVES AADHAAR AS VALID DATE OF BIRTH PROOF



The Employees' Provident Fund Organization has recently issued a circular stating the removal of Aadhaar from the list of acceptable documents for proof of date of birth (DoB) for correction and updation purposes.

This decision, effective from January 16, 2024, follows a directive from the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and aligns with the Aadhaar Act, 2016, which does not recognize Aadhaar as proof of date of birth.

The UIDAI emphasizes that Aadhaar is primarily an identity verification tool and not a proof of birth. This is supported by a memorandum from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and a judgment by the Bombay High Court.

HDFC BANK AIMS FOR SINGAPORE EXPANSION WITH BANKING LICENSE APPLICATION



In a strategic move, HDFC Bank Ltd, India's largest private sector lender, is actively pursuing its first branch in Singapore. Following its significant merger with Housing Development Finance Corp. last year, HDFC Bank is looking to expand its global footprint.

With Singapore hosting a substantial Indian diaspora of nearly 650,000 non-residents and persons of Indian origin, HDFC Bank sees an opportunity to cater to this market.

The bank is strategically positioning itself to offer a range of financial products and services tailored to the needs of the Indian community in Singapore....

RBI ANNOUNCES REVISED ELIGIBILITY NORMS FOR URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANKS (UCBs) INCLUSION IN SECOND SCHEDULE



In a recent press release, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) disclosed the revision of eligibility norms for the inclusion of urban co-operative banks in the second schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934. The objective is to bring these banks under an updated regulatory framework.

The Government of India, through a notification dated Sep 04, 2023, has stated that licensed Tier 3 and Tier 4 Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks meeting the criteria for FSWM by the RBI are eligible.

To be considered for inclusion in the Second Schedule, UCBs must meet the following criteria: a) Capital Adequacy: Maintain a Capital to Risk Weighted Asset Ratio (CRAR) of at least 3% more than the minimum CRAR requirement applicable to the UCB. b) Regulatory and Supervisory Compliance: Have no major regulatory and supervisory concerns.

Business News

KVIC LAUNCHES 'KHADI SANATAN VASTRA' FROM ITS FLAGSHIP STORE IN CP, NEW DELHI



The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has recently unveiled a new clothing range called 'Sanatan Khadi Vastra' at its flagship store in Connaught Place, New Delhi.

This launch aligns with the broader vision of promoting Khadi as a symbol of national pride and sustainable fashion.

The design for the 'Sanatan Vastra' was prepared at the Khadi Center of Excellence (COEK) located at the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).

The manufacturing of Khadi does not involve any mechanical or chemical processes, making Sanatan textiles unique as they are prepared as per traditional Indian methods.

FOXCONN AND HCL GROUP FORGE PARTNERSHIP FOR CHIP PACKAGING UNIT IN INDIA



Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn, a long-time Apple Inc. partner, is diversifying from China and joining forces

with HCL Group to establish a chip packaging and testing facility in India.

Foxconn's subsidiary, Foxconn Hon Hai Technology India Mega Development, will invest \$37.2 million for a 40% stake, with the remaining held by HCL.

The collaboration aims to set up an outsourced semiconductor assembly and testing (OSAT) facility in India. OSAT facilities do not engage in chip fabrication but provide third-party chip packaging and testing services.

L&T SECURES 'MEGA ORDER' FOR MUMBAI-AHMEDABAD BULLET TRAIN



Electrification Project L&T Construction's railways strategic business group has clinched a significant contract valued between ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 crore for a pivotal segment of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.

The 'mega' order, received from a Japanese agency overseeing the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project (MAHSR), entails the construction of 508 route km of high-speed electrification works.

L&T will undertake the design, supply, manufacturing, construction, testing, and commissioning of a 2×25 kV power supply electrification system. This includes high-speed overhead equipment, traction substations, and MV/LV power distribution equipment works.

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA GREENLIGHTS JSW GROUP'S 38% STAKE BUY IN MG MOTOR INDIA



The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has given the nod to significant business transactions. Among the approved deals is the JSW Group's strategic move to acquire a substantial 38% stake in MG Motor India.

CCI has also approved the merger between Fincare Small Finance Bank Limited and AU Small Finance Bank, designating AU Small Finance Bank as the surviving entity.

Tata Electronics has received CCI approval for the complete acquisition of Wistron Infocomm Manufacturing (India) Pvt Ltd. CCI has granted approval for Burman Family entities, namely Puran Associates, M.B Finmart, VIC Enterprises, & Milky Investment, to acquire shareholding in Religare Enterprises.

PETROLEUM MINISTRY APPROVES ONGC'S GREEN ENERGY UNIT



The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has granted approval for the formation of a subsidiary company by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC), dedicated to the green energy and

gas sector.

The newly approved subsidiary, tentatively named "ONGC Green Limited," is slated to be a wholly-owned entity of ONGC. However, the proposed name is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.

The subsidiary is envisioned to engage in various aspects of the energy sector's value chain, focusing on green hydrogen, hydrogen blending, renewable energy (solar, wind, and hybrid), biofuels, biogas, and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

INDIA'S FIRST SELF-MADE AIRCRAFT SEAT UNVEILED AT WINGS INDIA 2024



In a significant milestone for the Indian aviation industry, Timetooth, a Bengaluru-based engineering company, has unveiled India's first-ever domestically manufactured aircraft passenger seat at the Wings India 2024 event.

This groundbreaking development marks a departure from the industry norm, where 100% of aircraft seats used by India's registered air travel companies are imported.

Timetooth, in collaboration with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and with support from Indian airline companies took the initiative to launch India's first indigenous aircraft passenger seat...

Defence News

IRAN'S MILITARY RECEIVES ADVANCED HOMEGROWN DRONES



The Iranian army marked a significant milestone in its defense capabilities as it formally received a substantial number of domestically developed reconnaissance and combat drones in a ceremony held on January 23, 2024.

The event, attended by the Iranian Army's Chief Commander Abdolrahim Mousavi and Defense Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani, showcased the latest advancements in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology.

The delivered UAVs encompass a diverse range of capabilities, including the multipurpose Ababil-4 and Ababil-5, Arash, Bavar, and Karrar jet-powered target drones. Each drone is tailored to specific mission profiles, highlighting the versatility of Iran's indigenous drone technology.

INDIA AND EGYPT ARMIES UNITE FOR EXERCISE CYCLONE'S SPECIAL OPERATIONS



The Indian Army contingent, comprised of 25 highly skilled personnel from The Parachute Regiment (Special Forces), has arrived in Egypt to participate in the eagerly awaited 2nd edition of the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise CYCLONE.

The Indian contingent will be joined by counterparts from the Egyptian Commando Squadron and the Egyptian Airborne Platoon, totaling another 25 personnel.

The primary objective of Exercise CYCLONE is to familiarize both the Indian and Egyptian special forces with each other's operating procedures in the context of Special Operations in desert and semi-desert terrain.

UNION BUDGET OF INDIA



In accordance with Article 112 of the Constitution of India, the government is mandated to present the Union Budget at the Parliament before the commencement of each financial year. This budget outlines the projected receivables and payables for the upcoming fiscal year, running from April 1st to March 31st.

The Union Budget plays a pivotal role in shaping the economic trajectory of India, aiming for rapid and balanced growth, social justice, and equality. The following key objectives underscore its significance:

The budget dictates changes in direct and indirect taxes, including alterations to income tax rates and tax brackets, shaping the financial landscape of the country. For instance, the income tax slab for the fiscal year 2020-21 is determined by the budget.