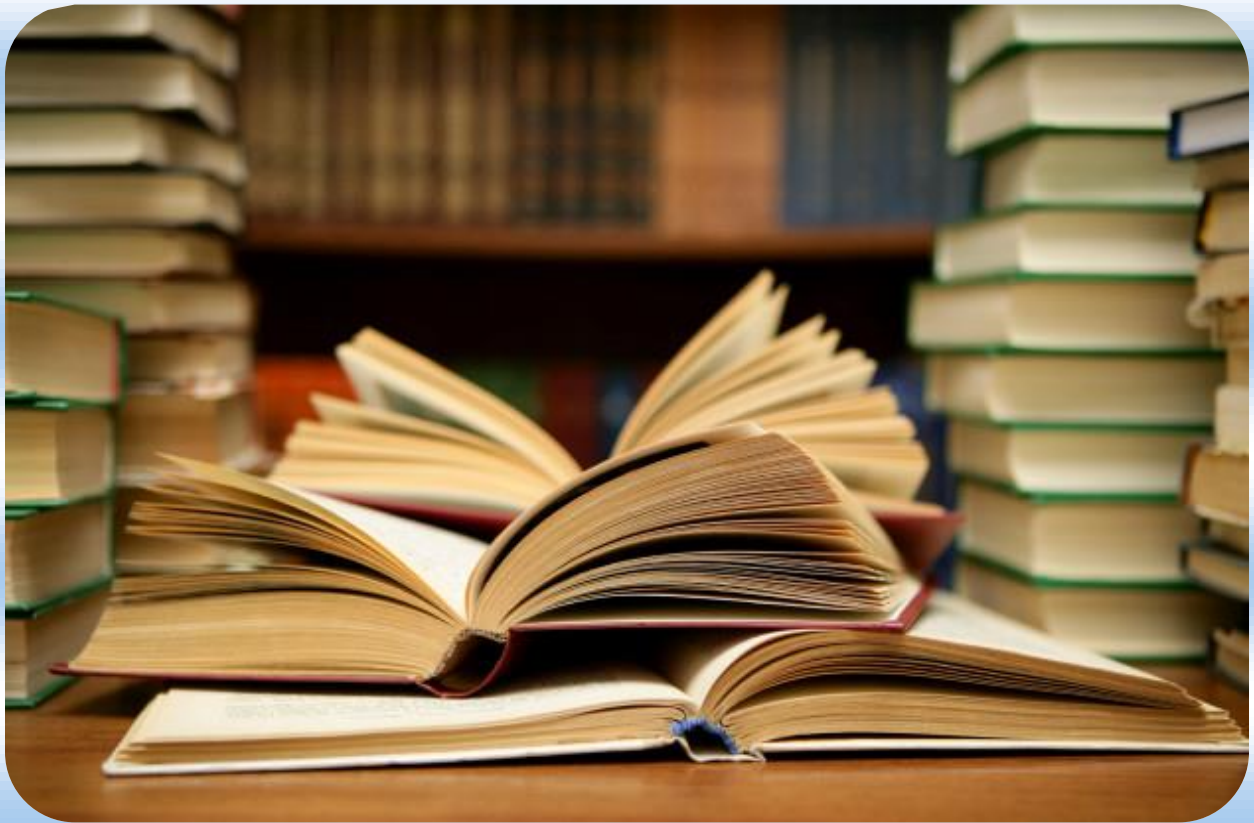


## LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



# DECEMBER-2023

# NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

## ***Indian Space Research Organisation has announced a plan to launch its first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSAt)***

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced that India is set to launch its first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSAt), aiming to investigate the polarisation of intense X-Ray sources. According to ISRO, while space-based X-Ray astronomy has been established in India, focusing predominantly on imaging, time-domain studies, and spectroscopy, the upcoming XPoSAt mission marks a major value addition. This research, supplementing traditional time and frequency domain studies, introduces a novel dimension to X-Ray astronomy, generating anticipation and excitement within the scientific community.



## ***Nandan Nilekani, K P Singh, and Nikhil Kamath have been named on the 17th edition of Forbes Asia's Heroes of Philanthropy list***

Nandan Nilekani, co-founder of Infosys, K P Singh, chairman emeritus at DLF, and Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, have been named on the 17th edition of Forbes Asia's Heroes of Philanthropy list released on Thursday. The unranked list "highlights business leaders who are donating from their fortunes and giving personal time and attention to their select causes", Forbes said in a press release. The annual list, which spotlights 15 philanthropists, does not include corporate philanthropy except for privately-held companies where the individual is a majority owner.

## ***India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at 7.6% in the July-September 2023 quarter, as per initial estimates from the National Statistical Office***

India's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at 7.6 per cent in the September quarter of 2023-24, outperforming expectations by a wide margin as manufacturing and construction activities expanded by double digits. These figures signalled that economic recovery was well underway in Asia's third-largest economy, despite the current adverse geopolitical situation. While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had projected GDP growth of 6.5 per cent for the second quarter of FY24, a Reuters poll of economists estimated it to be slightly faster, at 6.8 per cent.

### ***Cab aggregator Uber announced the launch of its global flagship electric vehicle service Uber Green in Bengaluru***

Cab-aggregator app, Uber on Thursday announced its global flagship electric vehicle service Uber Green in Bengaluru, allowing residents of the tech city to book sustainable, eco-friendly rides on the app.. The first Uber Green vehicles were flagged off by Karnataka IT-BT Minister Priyank Kharge from Bengaluru Palace on the sidelines of the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2023. The feature is now available in several parts of the city, including most of central Bengaluru, and will be ramping up service to more geolocations in the city.

### ***R Vaishali becomes India's third female chess Grandmaster, after Koneru Humpy and D Harika***

Indian chess player Vaishali Rameshbabu earned her grandmaster title by crossing 2,500 International Chess Federation (FIDE) ranking points at the IV El Llobregat Open in Spain on Friday, becoming only third Indian female player to do so. Earlier having fulfilled three GM norms, Vaishali completed the one final requirement on Friday by attaining the required number of rating points. She is the third female player to attain the grandmaster title, besides Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli.

### ***66 Indian Airports are operating on 100% Green Energy: Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)***

The goal of running airports on green energy is to progressively work towards carbon neutrality and achieve net-zero emissions. This directive extends to upcoming Greenfield Airports, urging developers and respective state governments to adopt practices conducive to achieving Carbon Neutrality & Net Zero.



### ***India won the final T20I by six runs against Australia and finished the series 4-1***

AUS vs IND 5th T20 highlights: Shreyas Iyer's refined fifty combined well with fine death overs performance by inexperienced pace duo of Arshdeep Singh and Mukesh Kumar as India pipped Australia by six runs in a thrilling encounter to record a comprehensive 4-1 series win.





### ***Rajya Sabha passed the Post Office Bill, which repeals and replaces the Post Office Act of 1898***

Rajya Sabha passed the Post Office Bill on Monday, which repeals and replaces the Post Office Act of 1898. The Bill, according to the government, will ensure the effective functioning of the Postal Department as a messenger service and as a provider of banking facilities. The Opposition, citing the provisions empowering any officer to intercept, open or detain any item in the interest of the security of the State, expressed concern that such free-hand to officers will harm the right to privacy.

### ***Increased women representation is observed in 2023 state polls as 46% MLAs retain seats***

More women were elected to Madhya Pradesh (MP), Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram assemblies on Monday than in 2018 after the election results were declared in the four states. While 46 per cent of legislators retained their seats in those four states and Rajasthan, of the 57 legislators, who switched sides, only 21 emerged victorious.



### ***JSW Infrastructure to acquire majority stake in PNP Maritime Services***

JSW Infrastructure on Monday said it has signed an agreement with SP Port Maintenance, a Shapoorji Pallonji Group company, to acquire majority stake in PNP Maritime Services (PNP Port). The agreement is to acquire over 50 per cent shares in PNP Port through its subsidiary JSW Dharamtar Port, JSW Infrastructure said in an exchange filing. "JSW Dharamtar Port has entered into share purchase and other relevant transaction documents for acquisition of 50 per cent plus 1 shares (10,00,001 equity shares) of PNP Maritime Services Private Limited from SP Port Maintenance Private Ltd," it said.

### ***ReNew inks initial pact with Asian Development Bank for USD 5.3 billion funding***

Renewable energy firm ReNew Energy Global Plc has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for a funding of \$5.3 billion. "The MoU was signed at COP28, Dubai by ReNew's Founder, Chairman, and CEO, Sumant Sinha, and Suzanne Gaboury, Director General, Private Sector Operations Department, ADB," the company said in a statement. ReNew, founded by Sumant Sinha, has a clean energy portfolio of 13.8 gigawatts (GW) as of September 30, 2023.

### ***Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the fourth largest insurer in the world, S&P ranking***

Insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the fourth largest insurer in the world, according to a ranking based on life and accident & health reserves of companies in 2022 by S&P Global Market Intelligence. The state-owned insurer is ranked after Allianz SE, China Life Insurance Company and Nippon Life Insurance Company. According to the report, LIC's reserves stood at \$503.7 billion. Germany's Allianz SE (\$750.20 billion), China Life Insurance Company (\$616.90 billion) and Nippon Life Insurance Company (\$536.80 billion) are the top three insurance companies in the world.

### ***Rapido, a commute app known for bike-taxi services, announced its entry into the cab market***

There's a hint of new competition riding into a sector that has attracted attention for being in a duopoly-like situation. Rapido, a commute app known for its budget-friendly bike-taxi services, on Tuesday announced its entry into the cab market, which is currently dominated by marquee brands Uber and Ola.



### ***GST officers detected 21,791 fake GST registrations and over Rs 24,000 crore of suspected tax evasion during a two-month-long special drive***

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said GST officers have detected 21,791 fake GST registrations and over Rs 24,000 crore of suspected tax evasion during a two-month-long special drive. In a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha, the minister said to safeguard the interest of honest taxpayers and avoid extreme hardship to taxpayers, instructions have been issued from time to time, directing officers to exercise due caution and care in the exercise of powers such as summons, provisional attachment of property.

### ***Parliament passes J-K Reservation, J-K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bills***

The Parliament on Monday passed the Jammu- Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill and Jammu-Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill 2023, the day the Supreme Court upheld abrogation of Article 370. The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, proposed the two bills in the Rajya Sabha after it was passed in the lower house on December 6. After intense and long debate, and even a walkout staged by the Opposition, the two Bills were passed in the upper house by a voice vote first.

### ***Gujarat's traditional dance form 'Garba' was included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO***

The UNESCO on Wednesday approved the inclusion of garba, Gujarat's most popular folk dance form, in its Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity. A decision to "inscribe" the dance form as "intangible heritage" was taken at the 18th session of the UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Republic of Botswana.



### ***'Sebi, RBI share concern about some credit funds masking bad loans'***

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) share concerns over instances of alternate investment funds (AIFs) being used to mask bad loans in the financial system, a top official said on Wednesday. Sebi has seen "dozens of cases" of "egregious regulatory violations" by AIFs, such as to avoid recognition of non-performing assets, Ananth Narayan, a whole-time Sebi member, said at an event in Mumbai.

### ***Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) issued a drug safety alert for the commonly used painkiller mefenamic acid***

Pharma standard body Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) has late last month issued a drug safety alert for commonly used painkiller mefenamic acid, popularly sold under the brand name Meftal.



### ***Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cancelled the licence of 'Urban Co-operative Bank, Uttar Pradesh'***

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday revoked the banking licence of "Urban Co-operative Bank Limited, Sitapur, Uttar Pradesh" with immediate effect. The decision comes as a response to severe financial irregularities and non-compliance with banking regulations, the central bank said in a release. With the immediate cancellation of its licence, Urban Co-operative Bank is now prohibited from conducting any banking activities, including accepting and repaying deposits.

### ***IDFC First Bank has introduced a UPI-based digital RuPay Credit Card for its customers***

IDFC First Bank has announced the introduction of IDFC First Bank digital RuPay Credit Card, powered for UPI for its customers. This digital card is an addition to customers' existing IDFC First Bank Credit Cards, and it seamlessly blends the benefits of UPI transactions and core credit card offerings, the bank said in a statement.

### ***RBI MPC: Repo rate kept unchanged at 6.5%, FY24 GDP estimate hiked to 7%***

RBI monetary policy announcement: The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (RBI MPC) kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent for the fifth time in a row on Friday. In its bi-annual policy announcement, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the decision was unanimous. Das also said that with a majority of 5-1, the RBI MPC has decided to maintain the "withdrawal of accommodation" stance. He, however, cautioned that the near-term forecast remains uncertain owing to food inflation.

### ***Reserve Bank of India (RBI) enhanced the UPI payment limits for healthcare and education to ₹5 lakh from ₹1 lakh***

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) today proposed enhancing the limit of UPI transactions undertaken for medical or healthcare and educational services from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh per transaction. "The limit for various categories of UPI transactions has been reviewed from time to time. It is now proposed to enhance the UPI transaction limit for payment to hospitals and educational institutions," Governor Shaktikanta Das said during his monetary policy statement, adding that this will encourage the use of UPI for these purposes.

### ***Dual Financing Approach being adopted to elevate MSMEs' contribution in Renewable Energy Transition: IREDA at COP28***

Chairman & Managing Director of the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA) Pradip Kumar Das has highlighted the significance of lending to micro, small & medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the renewable energy sector, emphasizing both its economic and environmental contributions. During a session on "Pioneering Sustainability in MSMEs: Envisioning Global Growth and Local Impact" organized by the International Solar Alliance and CII, as part of COP 28 in Dubai on Sunday.

### ***Vishnu Deo Sai, a prominent tribal face of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is set to become the next chief minister of Chhattisgarh***

Vishnu Deo Sai, a prominent tribal face of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is set to become the next chief minister of Chhattisgarh. After being elected leader of the BJP's legislature party on Sunday afternoon, Sai was invited by Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan to form government in the state. The swearing-in of the new chief minister may take place either on December 12 or December 13, according to the availability of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a senior BJP leader was quoted as saying in a PTI report.



### ***Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches 'Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth'***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 'Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth' via video-conferencing on Monday. During the programme, Modi will also address vice-chancellors of universities, heads of institutes and faculty members in workshops organised at Raj Bhawans across the country, which will symbolise the start of the initiative, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on Sunday.

### ***Share of urban women with salaried jobs at 6-year low in the second quarter: PLFS***

As more companies ask their employees to return to office after the pandemic, the share of women employed in regular salaried jobs in urban India decreased from 54 per cent in the first quarter to 52.8 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year, according to the quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data. The slump in the share is the lowest in wage employment in any quarter in the last six years when the National Statistical Office started releasing the quarterly PLFS surveys in Q3 of FY19.

### ***India's plan for 50,000 electric buses on its roads gets support from United States***

The \$390 million fund will act as a guarantee for manufacturers seeking loans to expand production, Indian and US officials said at a side event at COP28. India currently only has 12,000 e-buses in operation.



### ***Supreme Court's verdict upholding the abrogation of Article 370***

The story so far: A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on Monday unanimously upheld the power of the President to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, which in August 2019 led to the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) into two Union Territories and denuded it of its special privileges.





### ***Senior BJP leader Dr Mohan Yadav was unanimously elected as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister***

Mohan Yadav on Wednesday took oath as the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh at the Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national president JP Nadda were also present at the ceremony. The two deputy chief ministers - Rajendra Shukla and Jagdish Devda- also took the charge officially on Wednesday. Former Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh houhan arrived at the venue.

### ***Tata Power EV and IOCL to jointly set up over 500 charging points***

Tata Power EV Charging Solutions Ltd (TPEVCSL) on Monday announced that it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to install over 500 electric vehicle (EV) charging points across the country. Tata Power will set up the stations at IOCL's retail outlets.



### ***BJP selected first-time MLA, Bhajan Lal Sharma, as the next Chief Minister of Rajasthan***

Jaipur: Springing yet another surprise, the BJP on Tuesday selected another low-profile party worker and a first-time MLA—Bhajanlal Sharma—as its Legislature Party leader and the next Chief Minister of Rajasthan. A Brahmin face, Bhajanlal is 56 years old and someone who has been a diligent party worker, besides being the state unit's general secretary for four terms now. In choosing him, BJP top brass has given a categorical indication that generational change and grooming a new crop of leaders in the states are now the party's priority.

### ***The BBC is launching a new company for Indian language services, in compliance with foreign investment rules***

BBC on Tuesday said that four of its staff members are planning to leave the organisation to form a new entity, which will provide its language services in India on a commissioned basis, in compliance with India's FDI investment norms. Rupa Jha, Mukesh Sharma, Sanjoy Majumder and Sara Hassan will lead the new entity called Collective Newsroom Pvt Ltd. "The establishment of Collective Newsroom Private Limited ensures the BBC and Collective Newsroom can meet their shared commitment to Indian audiences and cover stories on India that matter to global audiences. It is in compliance with the Indian Foreign Direct Investment law," it said in a statement.

### ***10 Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have transferred Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of more than ₹11,617 crore to the NARCL between Jan. and Nov.***

New Delhi: A total of 10 Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have transferred Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of over Rs 11,617 crore to NARCL between January and November this year, the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday. In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL) has recovered Rs 16.64 crore as on November 30, 2023.

### ***India's retail inflation rises to 5.55% in November 2023***

New Delhi: India's retail inflation rose to 5.55% in November from 4.87% in October, data released by the National Statistical Office showed. This is likely caused by food price increase, which was also pointed out by the Reserve Bank of India in its monetary policy review last week. Last year, retail inflation was close, at 5.88% in November. Since August, inflation had been on a decline. It was 6.83% in August. July saw the highest at 7.44%.

### ***India votes in favour of immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Gaza conflict***

India on Tuesday (December 13) voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) that demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict and the unconditional release of all hostages. This was the first time India supported such a resolution since the war broke out more than two months ago. The 193-member UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the resolution at an emergency special session, with 153 nations voting in its favour, 10 voting against and 23 abstentions.

### ***PM Modi Unveils Varanasi's Swarved Mahamandir, World's Largest Meditation Center***

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seen inaugurating the newly built Swarved Mahamandir in Umaraha, Varanasi, today, adding a magnificent spiritual landmark to the holy city, in a video shared by ANI. Standing tall at seven floors and boasting a capacity of 20,000 devotees, the Swarved Mahamandir is a breathtaking architectural marvel.



# INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

## ***Japan firm TDK Corporation to make iPhone Lithium-ion battery cells in India***

Apple Inc is bringing its global lithium ion (Li-ion) battery cell supplier, TDK Corporation, to India. The leading electronic component and device maker from Japan will manufacture the battery cells in India to power the iPhones assembled in the country, say sources aware of the development. The cells will be supplied to Apple's Li-ion battery assembler, Sunwoda Electronics, which is already operating in the country and currently imports the cells from various markets around the world.

## ***China frames 'One Province, One Policy' plan to tackle financial risk***

China's regulator wants provinces to come up with their own plans to handle financial risks, according to a report, about a month after officials pledged to set up a mechanism to resolve local debt issues. The country should make a greater effort in financial risk management but the policies need to be tailored, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, the Xinhua News Agency cited Li Yunze, head of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, as saying in an interview. Provinces have to devise their own policies on how to handle risks, according to the report.

## ***England midfielder Jude Bellingham created history, becoming the first Real Madrid player to win the Golden Boy award***

Star English midfielder Jude Bellingham has created a milestone by becoming the first Real Madrid player to win the 'Golden Boy Award' in Turin on Tuesday. The 'Golden Boy Award' is given to the best footballer under 21 years of age playing at a European club. The 20-year-old made his place from a list of 25 finalists, including his Los Blancos teammate Arda Guler.





### ***Google unveils 'Gemini,' AI tech trained to behave like humans***

Google took its next leap in artificial intelligence Wednesday with the launch of project Gemini, an AI model trained to behave in human-like ways that's likely to intensify the debate about the technology's potential promise and perils.



### ***Samir Shah, a British-Indian has been picked by the U.K. government to head the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as its next chair***

In a significant move, the government of the United Kingdom has selected Samir Shah, a 71-year-old British-Indian media executive, to take the helm as the next chair of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Shah, born in Aurangabad and a UK resident since 1960.



### ***Lionel Messi has been named Time magazine's 'Athlete of the Year' for 2023***

Arguably one of the greatest in football history, Lionel Messi has been named as Times magazine's Athlete of the Year for 2023. The news comes after Messi won the 2023 Ballon d'Or for a record-extending eighth time, further elevating his status in football folklore.



### ***U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak defended an updated plan to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda***

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has defended his plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, a day after his immigration minister resigned over “strong disagreements with the direction” of the government’s immigration policy. Sunak appealed to his Conservative MPs on Thursday to unite behind the plan as the issue left his party in disarray. Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick resigned after the government published emergency legislation aimed at allowing the controversial Rwanda deportation scheme to move forward, saying the bill did not go far enough.

### ***Cash-strapped Pakistan secures \$655 million financing package from ADB***

Cash-strapped Pakistan has secured a \$ 655 million financing package, including an expensive \$ 300 million loan at market rates, from the Asian Development Bank, days after Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar declared the country's public debt as unsustainable. The ADB approved a financing package for Pakistan under three different loans. Among other components, these include \$ 300 million for improving domestic resource mobilisation; \$ 275 million for rehabilitating schools damaged by the devastating August 2022 floods.

### ***Chinese naval vessels have become the first to dock at a new pier at a Cambodian naval base***

Chinese naval vessels have become the first ships to dock at a new pier at a Cambodian naval base that the United States and some international security analysts say is destined to serve as a strategic outpost for Beijing’s navy. The docking of the two ships, which received little publicity, coincided with an official visit to Cambodia this week by China’s top defense official, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission He Weidong.

### ***Javier Milei was sworn in as Argentina’s President***

Argentina’s new president, Javier Milei, has vowed to lead his country out of decades of “decadence and decline” but said its punishing economic crisis would intensify over the coming months, as a “who’s who” of the global far right assembled in Buenos Aires to celebrate the radical libertarian’s inauguration. Addressing tens of thousands of supporters outside Argentina’s turquoise-domed neoclassical congress, Milei – a mercurial former TV celebrity known as El Loco or the Madman – compared his shock election with the start of the Soviet Union’s collapse.

### ***The children of imprisoned Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi accepted this year’s Nobel Peace Prize***

The teenage twins of jailed Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi have accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf. Ms Mohammadi - who is serving a 10-year jail term in Tehran - won this year's prize for her work fighting against the oppression of women in Iran.



### ***Hong Kong holds the territory's first 'patriots only' local elections***

Residents went to the polls on Sunday in Hong Kong's first district council elections since an electoral overhaul was implemented under Beijing's guidance of patriots administering the city, effectively shutting out all pro-democracy candidates. Turnout is expected to be much lower than in the last elections, held at the height of the 2019 anti-government protests. Some pro-democracy voters, dismayed by the drastic rule changes, including the elimination of most directly elected seats, are turning their backs on the polls.



### ***Rijul Maini Wins Miss India USA 2023***

Rijul Maini, a medical student from Michigan, recently crowned Miss India USA 2023 in New Jersey. Saloni Rammohan and Sneha Nambiar secured Miss Teen and Mrs India USA titles, respectively. Greeshma Bhat and Ishita Pai Raikar were first and second runners-up.





### ***Kerala-Based Startup, Genrobotics Ranks Top 3 In Global AI Summit For Indian Startups***

Genrobotics, a Kerala-based startup acclaimed for leveraging technology for social change, has been adjudged among top three Artificial Intelligence (AI) startups of India at the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit 2023 organised by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in New Delhi.



### ***Fuel Price Cut Anticipation Grows As Global Crude Oil Slips Below \$80/Bbl***

The demand to reduce retail prices for petrol and diesel gained momentum as international crude oil prices dipped below \$80 per barrel last week, stabilising in the \$76-77 range. This push is reinforced by the impressive performance of oil marketing companies (OMCs) from April to September 2023 and the retail inflation in November 2023 staying within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) comfort zone.



### ***Bhutan Plans 1,000-Sq. Km. Green City On Assam Border, Linking South To Southeast Asia***

Bhutan plans to build a massive "international city" in an area of over 1,000 sq. km. on its border with Assam, Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck announced to applause from a packed audience of 30,000 at the Changlimathang stadium in Thimpu on December 17, pitching the project as an "economic corridor connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia via India's northeastern States".



