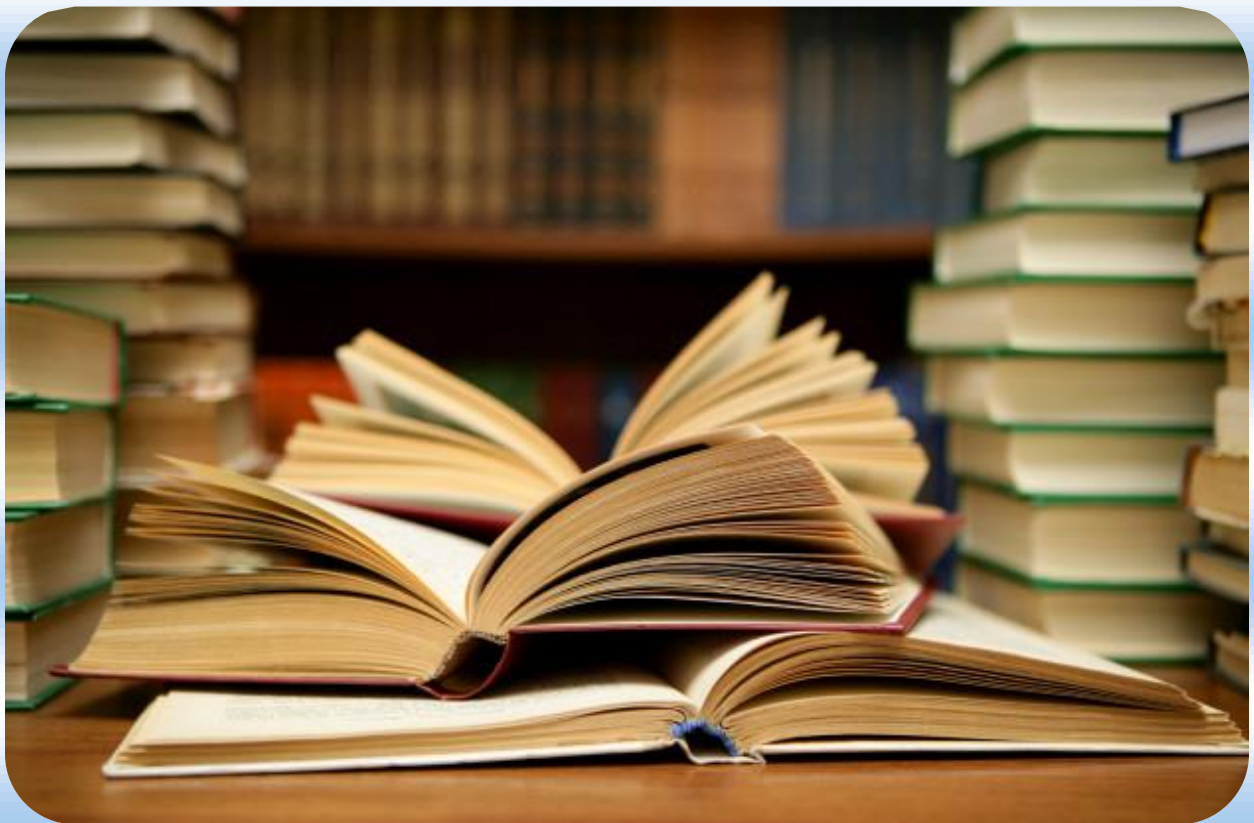


LIBRARY & RESOURCE CENTER, NOIDA

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JANUARY-2024

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India Extends Auto PLI Scheme Tenure, Offers More Flexibility

The Ministry of Heavy Industries on Monday issued a Gazette notification to extend the tenure of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components by one year with partial amendments to provide clarity and flexibility to the scheme. "This decision has been made after receiving the approval of the Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS)," the ministry said in a release.



RBI Proposes Higher 50% Dividend Payout Ratio for Healthy Banks

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday floated a draft circular proposing to tighten dividend payout guidelines for domestic and overseas banks operating in India. The proposal says banks with net non-performing asset ratio (NNPA) of ABOVE 6% and capital adequacy ratio (CRAR) of below 11.5% cannot declare dividends. The regulator has sought public feedback on the proposed norms by January 31 and the circular will be implemented from April 2024 onwards.

Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fibre Connection

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday inaugurated the Kochi-Lakshadweep Islands Submarine Optical Fiber Connection (KLI-SOFC) which will increase the internet speed by over 100 times, from 1.7Gbps to 200Gbps. project, initially announced in August 2020, has been completed.



Three Indian Cities Nominated for Wetland City Tag

India has nominated Indore, Bhopal and Udaipur for the Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) scheme under the Ramsar Convention, which helps cities gain international recognition for their efforts to protect their natural or human-made wetlands. These are the first three Indian cities nominated for WCA based on the proposals received from state wetlands authorities in collaboration with municipal corporations. The wetlands situated in and around these cities provide a plethora of benefits to their citizens in terms of flood regulation, livelihood opportunities, and recreational and cultural values.

NSIL Picks SpaceX to Launch ISRO Satellite GSAT-20

New Space India Ltd (NSIL) plans to undertake its second demand-driven satellite mission GSAT-20 (renamed as GSAT-N2), a high-throughput Ku-band satellite, in the second quarter of this year. This will be launched aboard Falcon-9 under a launch service contract between NSIL and the US-based aerospace company SpaceX. The mission will meet the broadband communication needs of India.



Uttar Pradesh's 'Paying Guest' Scheme to Promote Tourism in Ayodhya

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department's Paying Guest Scheme aims to introduce the rich culinary heritage of Awadh to saints and visitors from India and abroad, providing them with a unique gastronomic experience. The project places a special emphasis on serving millet-based dishes during the International Millets Year celebrations. The Paying Guest Scheme is not only enhancing accommodation option for travellers, devotees, and tourists but is also creating numerous job opportunities in Ayodhya.

Indian Army Chief Gen MM Naravane's Book "Four Stars of Destiny"

The Indian Army and Ministry of Defence are reviewing the memoir of former chief General MM Naravane "Four Stars of Destiny", which contains details about his conversation with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the movement of Chinese troops in Ladakh in 2020 and the Agnipath scheme, the Indian Express (IE) reported on Friday. The book's publisher, Penguin Random House, has been asked not to share the excerpts or soft copies of the book until the review is over, it added. The book was scheduled to start selling this month.

Microsoft Launches AI Odyssey Program to Upskill 100,000 Indian Developers

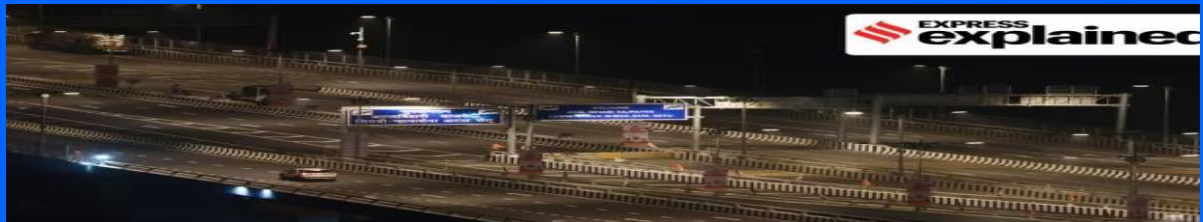
Microsoft has announced the launch of an initiative called AI Odyssey today to train 100,000 developers in India in AI tools and applications. The month-long program is open to all AI enthusiasts regardless of their background or experience in the industry. Interested participants can register for free on aka.ms/AIOdyssey to access the learning modules and resources online. The program comprises two levels that have to be finished by January 31, 2024.

India's First X-ray Polarimetry Satellite Captures Supernova Remnant

The XSPECT payload on XPoSat, India's first X-ray polarimetry mission, has captured its first light from the Cassiopeia A (Cas A) supernova remnant, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), said on Thursday. "The continuous observations facilitated by XSPECT's long-duration capabilities are anticipated to contribute significantly to our understanding of the universe's high-energy phenomena," the space agency said.

Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) Inaugurated

On Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's longest bridge over the sea, the 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link, officially the Atal Setu Nhava Sheva Sea Link. The bridge that was first conceptualised six decades ago will cut the travel time between Sewri and Chirle to under 20 minutes.



Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023

Surat in Gujarat and Indore in Madhya Pradesh were on Thursday jointly declared cleanest cities of the country at the annual clean city awards 2023 of the Union Urban Affairs Ministry. Navi Mumbai bagged the third spot. The Swachh Survekshan awards were given away by President Droupadi Murmu here.



Army Allows Specialized Lt Cols to Skip Command Roles

Army officers specialising in niche technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and drones, among others, can now continue in the same domain on promotion to Colonel instead of getting posted out for command assignments, The Indian Express has learnt. According to sources, the Army is bringing in a new HR policy under which Lieutenant Colonels approved for promotion to the rank of Colonels can voluntarily continue in their field of expertise and not move for command appointments, which is the standard practice at present.

'One Vehicle One FASTag' Initiative

New Delhi: To enhance efficiency of the electronic toll collection system and provide seamless movement at the toll plazas, NHAI has taken 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' initiative that aims to discourage user behaviour of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle. The highway developer is also encouraging FASTag users to complete 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) process of their latest FASTag by updating KYC as per RBI guidelines.

Modi Reenacting Somnath History at Ayodhya

January 14, 1992. Ram Lalla was still inside the Babri Masjid. But more than five years after the locks of the structure had been opened by a Faizabad court's order, devotees were allowed to have darshan of the deity. This day, when the temple town was celebrating Ram Lalla's 'prakatotsava', a high-profile devotee paid a visit for Darshan -BJP chief Murli Manohar Joshi, who was leading BJP's Ekta Yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.



Nagara Style Defines Ayodhya's Ram Temple Design

January 22 is a special date for everyone in India, as it is the date of the inauguration of Ayodhya's Ram Mandir. The beautiful complex of the temple architecture is designed by Chanrakant Sompura and his son Ashish. The style of the temple architecture is known as the "Nagara" style. What is this unique style? Let's understand.



Ayodhya Ram Temple's Solar-Powered "Surya Tilak" for Ram Lalla

Every Ram Navami, Ram Lalla will get a "Surya Tilak". An intricate network of lenses and mirrors will be used in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram temple in Ayodhya to channel a ray of sunlight on the forehead of Ram Lalla at 12 noon for about six minutes on the ninth day of the Chaitra month which marks Lord Ram's birth. The "Surya Tilak" system has been designed by scientists from CSIR and Central Building Research Institute.



"Ram Rajya" Ideal Revived for New Ayodhya Era

AYODHYA: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Monday that the pride of the country has been restored with the homecoming of Ram Lalla to his temple in Ayodhya. "Today, after 500 years, Ram Lalla has returned here and due to his efforts, we are seeing this golden day. We pay our utmost respect to him. The history of this era has so much power that whoever listens to the stories of Ram Lalla, all their sorrows and pains will be erased," Bhagwat said, addressing the gathering at Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple premises after Ram Lalla's 'Pran Pratishtha'.



Trade Connect ePlatform

The commerce ministry will launch an online platform in the next 2-3 months to provide all relevant information, including details about custom duties, for aspiring exporters. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar Sarangi said the portal will act as a one-stop place for getting all information on engaging in export activities. The 'Trade Connect ePlatform' will provide facilitation for new and aspiring exporters, information on various regulations to access markets.

eSakshi App Launched to Track Fund Flow Under MPLADS

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Tuesday, launched a new app to track the fund flow under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme-2023. The new eSakshi app will provide an interface to capture the "entire MPLAD scheme cycle, providing convenience and accessibility like never before," the ministry said. The initiative comes under the ministry's plan to make the MPLAD fund cycle more efficient.

The Punganur Cow – India's Shortest Humped Cattle Breed

Prime Minister Narendra Modi fed cows at his residence, 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, on the occasion of Pongal/ Makar Sankranti on Sunday (January 14). In photographs released by the Prime Minister's Office, Modi can be seen offering green fodder to a group of about six cattle.



National Startup Awards 2023

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has brought forward the shining names of winners of the National Startup Awards of 2023. A total of 84 finalists for the competition had been listed by the Startup India. Out of the list, the government awarded a total of 20 startups across the 15 categories. Some of the categories include the "Pivot Pro Award", the "NextGen Innovator", the "Women led innovation" and more. The list of startups belong from a wide array of sectors such as fintech, climatetech, agritech, and more.

Ancient Settlement Discovered at Vadnagar Dating to 800 BCE

A joint study by the Indian Institute of Technology (Kharagpur) has found evidence of cultural continuity in Vadnagar — the Prime Minister’s native village — even after the Harappan collapse, thus making it likely that the “Dark Age” was a myth.



Alliance for Global Good-Gender Equity and Equality

India on Thursday announced here a new alliance for global good, gender equity and equality, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, with the WEF Founder and Chairman Klaus Schwab offering to partner this initiative with full support. The announcement was made at an India Reception on the sidelines of the WEF Annual Meeting, hosted by apex industry chamber CII and attended by union ministers Smriti Irani and Hardeep Singh Puri as well as WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab, among others.

Uttarakhand’s Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill

On February 5, the Uttarakhand Assembly will convene to pass the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill. After multiple extensions, the five-member committee led by former Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai is expected to hand over its report to the government a couple of days before the assembly convenes. How did the UCC Bill come up at all? What changes is it expected to introduce? We explain.

2024 Padma Awards

For the year 2024, the President approved conferment of 132 Padma awards, up from 106 such awards last year. The list comprises five Padma Vibhushan, 17 Padma Bhushan and 110 Padma Shri awards. While 30 awardees are women, the list also includes nine persons from the category of “Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI” and nine posthumous awardees. Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. The Awards are given in various disciplines / fields of activities, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022

The Ministry of Education has released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022 which said that female enrolment in Higher Education increased to 2.07 crore in 2021-22 from 1.57 crore in 2014-15 (an increase of 50 lakh students, 32 per cent increase). As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) released on Thursday, the enrolment of SC students is 66.23 lakh in 2021-22 as compared to 46.07 lakh in 2014-15 (an increase of 44 per cent).

India Surpasses Hong Kong As World's Fourth Biggest Stock Market

India's stock market has overtaken Hong Kong's for the first time in another feat for the South Asian nation whose growth prospects and policy reforms have made it an investor darling. The combined value of shares listed on Indian exchanges reached \$4.33 trillion as of Monday's close, versus \$4.29 trillion for Hong Kong, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. That makes India the fourth-biggest equity market globally.

Bharat Ratna Announced for Karpoori Thakur

From welcoming the decision to honour the late Karpoori Thakur to pointing out how a BJP stalwart was instrumental in the collapse of his government in Bihar in the late 1970s, the Congress offered a politically qualified response to the Bharat Ratna announcement. Slamming the BJP, the Congress said it reflected the Narendra Modi Government's "desperation and hypocrisy".

Ayodhya's Enduring Ties to Korean Queen Heo

According to Korean legend, a teenage princess from Ayodhya crossed the ocean in a boat some 2,000 years ago, sailed 4,500 kilometres to Korea and married King Kim Suro who founded the Gaya Kingdom in the north Asian country. The princess, Suriratna, then became Queen Heo Hwang-ok.



Focus Sectors for \$1 Trillion Exports Target

India has identified electronics, engineering goods, textiles, marine & agriculture, toys and pharmaceuticals as the six sectors that could help the country achieve almost 70% of its \$1-trillion goods export target by FY30. As per a study by the commerce and industry ministry, these sectors could clock around \$670 billion of exports by 2029-30. India's goods exports in FY23 were \$451.07 billion.

Maratha Military Landscapes of India

'Maratha Military Landscapes' representing extraordinary fortification and military system envisioned by the Maratha rulers will be India's nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List for the 2024-25 cycle, the Culture Ministry said on January 29. The twelve components of this nomination are— Salher Fort, Shivneri Fort, Lohgad, Khanderi Fort, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala Fort, Vijay Durg, and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra, and Gingee fort in Tamil Nadu, it said in a statement.

Finance Ministry Highlights Key Economic Challenges

Interim Budget 2024: 'The Indian Economy: A Review', the 74-page document written by V Anantha Nageswaran, Chief Economic Adviser, has stated that India can aspire to become a \$ 7 trillion economy by 2030. Ahead of an usual Union Budget, the Finance Ministry tables the annual Economic Survey that gives the real growth rate for the coming fiscal. This year, which has Lok Sabha elections scheduled in the month of April and May.

Nitish Kumar Back as Bihar CM for Record 9th Term

Janata Dal (United) president Nitish Kumar took oath as Bihar Chief Minister for a record ninth time on Sunday, returning to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance just 18 months after he left it, in his fifth switch in political loyalties since 2015. Six Ministers and two Deputy Chief Ministers, both from the BJP, were also sworn in with him.



INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Pakistan: Proposed Acquisition of J-31 Chinese Stealth Fighters

Pakistan recently announced a plan to procure FC-31 stealth fighter jets from China, a move experts said will not only significantly enhance the Pakistan Air Force's capabilities, but also open up the international market for the Chinese aircraft, marking a win-win cooperation.



X-59 Quiet Supersonic Aircraft

Nasa has unveiled a one-of-a-kind quiet supersonic aircraft as part of the US space agency's mission to make commercial supersonic flight possible. In a joint ceremony with Lockheed Martin Skunk Works in Palmdale, California, on Friday, Nasa revealed the X-59, an experimental aircraft that is expected to fly at 1.4 times the speed of sound – or 925mph (1,488 km/h). The aircraft, which stands at 99.7ft (30.4 metres) long and 29.5ft wide, has a thin.

The Global Cooperation Barometer 2024

This World Economic Forum report, written in collaboration with McKinsey & Company, measures the current state of global cooperation. It is meant to serve as a tool for leaders to better understand the contours of cooperation broadly and along five pillars – trade and capital flows, innovation and technology, climate and natural capital, health and wellness, and peace and security.

Global Hydrogen Price Index

New Delhi: In a significant move towards enhancing the green hydrogen economy, the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) at GIFT City has entered into a strategic alliance with the Indian Gas Exchange (IGX) and Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC). This collaboration aims to establish a pioneering Global Hydrogen Trading Mechanism, marking GIFT City as a frontrunner in the global green hydrogen market.

Oxfam's Inequality Inc Report

The combined fortunes of the world's five richest men have more than doubled to \$869 billion since 2020 while five billion people have been made poorer, anti-poverty group Oxfam said. An Oxfam report titled "Inequality Inc.", which comes as business elites gather between January 15 and 19 for the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos, found that a billionaire is now either running or is the main shareholder of seven out of the world's 10 biggest companies.



"World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024" Report

The International Labour Organisation has projected the global unemployment rate a tad higher at 5.2% in 2024 compared to 5.1% in 2023 and said that working poverty will persist while the income inequality will widen, suggesting a need for greater social justice for a sustainable recovery. In its World Employment and Social Outlook Trends: 2024 report, released on Wednesday, the ILO said labour markets have shown surprising resilience despite deteriorating economic conditions, but recovery from the pandemic remains uneven as new vulnerabilities and multiple crises are eroding prospects for greater social justice.

Gabriel Attal: France's New Prime Minister

France's new Prime Minister Gabriel Attal vowed on January 30 to boost employment, restore authority in the country's schools and support workers including farmers who have been protesting for days over their eroding incomes. Three weeks after he was appointed by President Emmanuel Macron as France's youngest-ever and first openly gay Prime Minister, Mr. Attal sought to meet people's top concerns in a lively policy address to French lawmakers filled with announcements and promises. The speech alternatively drew applause from his supporters and noisy boos from the opposition benches.



India-Maldives Ties Fray Over Minister's Remarks Against PM Modi

After the derogatory remarks made by Maldivian ministers against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India on social media, Maldives Minister of Foreign Affairs Moosa Zameer said that these remarks against foreign leaders are "unacceptable" and do not reflect the official position of the Maldives government. He stated that the Maldives remains committed to fostering a "positive and constructive dialogue" with all its partners, particularly its neighbours.

Ecuador Declares Emergency as Notorious Gang Boss Flees Jail

Ecuador's president has ordered that criminal gangs be "neutralised" after days of violence culminated in an attack on a television studio. Masked gunmen broke into public television channel TC's live studio during a broadcast, forcing staff to the floor. Police made 13 arrests following the attack, which injured two employees. At least 10 people have been killed since a 60-day state of emergency began in Ecuador on Monday. The emergency was declared after a notorious gangster vanished from his prison cell.

FluxJet: Canada Unveils 621 mph Magnetically-Levitating Train Concept

Canada has unveiled its plans to connect Calgary and Edmonton with a train that will run at the whopping speed of 621 miles or more than 999 kilometers per hour. The fully-electric vehicle will be "a hybrid between an aircraft and a train". It will be able to facilitate up to 54 passengers and 10 tonnes of cargo. It is much like the Hyperloop network, which could see passengers shot through a tube at speeds of 700mph by 2030.



Denmark Launches Green Fuels Alliance to Boost Sustainable Energy Partnerships with India

Chennai: Denmark has announced its Green Fuels Alliance India (GFAI) initiative to boost collaborative efforts between the two countries in the sustainable energy solutions sector and advance their joint global goal towards carbon neutrality. Led by the Danish Embassy and the Consulate General of Denmark in India, the new alliance is a strategic initiative poised to play a pivotal role in advancing the green fuels sector, including green hydrogen, by fostering innovation, collaboration, and partnerships between Danish industries and their counterparts in India.

India and Mauritius to Jointly Build and Launch Small Satellite

India and Mauritius will jointly develop a small satellite which will be launched by ISRO early next year, the Union Cabinet was apprised on Friday. India and Mauritius had signed a Memorandum of Understanding for development of a joint small satellite during the visit of Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan to Port Louis on November 1 last year. The MoU will help to establish a framework for cooperation between Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC).

Rising Acidity Threatens Antarctic Shelf Ecosystems

A new study has raised concerns about the rising acidity levels of the continental shelves in Antarctic Marine Protected Areas (MPA) under high levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon emissions from human activities may be vertically mixed with ocean waters in coastal regions, resulting in severe acidification at all water levels, it suggested.



WHO Issues Guidance on Healthcare AI Ethics

The World Health Organization (WHO) is releasing new guidance on the ethics and governance of large multi-modal models (LMMs) – a type of fast growing generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology with applications across health care. The guidance outlines over 40 recommendations for consideration by governments, technology companies, and health care providers to ensure the appropriate use of LMMs to promote and protect the health of populations.

China's Population Falls Again in 2023

The year 2023 saw 11.1 million deaths and 9 million births in China, marking the second year in which the country's total population has reduced. In the same year, India overtook China as the most populous country in the world. In numbers released on Wednesday (January 17), the Chinese government said that the total population stood at 1.4 billion. Here's what you need to know about the reasons behind this fall, and what its possible impact can be for China.

Cameroon Launches World's First Malaria Vaccine Program for Children

The world's first routine vaccine programme against malaria has started in Cameroon, in a move projected to save thousands of children's lives across Africa. The symbolic first jab was given to a baby girl named Daniella at a health facility near Yaoundé on Monday. Every year 600,000 people die of malaria in Africa, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Children under five make up at least 80% of those deaths.

