

M A R C H 2 0 2 2

---

**MONTHLY UPDATES ON  
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**WILEY**

## NATIONAL

- ⊙ For the second consecutive year, India has been termed as 'partly free' country in terms of democracy and free society, according to the annual report. The report titled "Freedom in the World 2022 – The Global Expansion of Authoritarian Rule" by Freedom House, a US-based NGO that 'assesses political rights and civil liberties. India scored 66 out of 100 in 2022. The country had scored 67 in 2021. India was a free country till 2020 when its score was 71.
- ⊙ From India, six airports have found a place among the 'Best Airport by Size and Region', by the Airports Council International (ACI), in its Airport Service Quality (ASQ) survey for the year 2021. The airports have been adjudged among the Asia Pacific region in different categories based on annual passenger traffic. The ACI Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards takes into account 33 parameters related to passenger amenities to recognize airport excellence in customer experience.  
The six Indian airports include:
  - Category – Over 40 million passengers per year
    - ◊ Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), Mumbai (5th consecutive year)
    - ◊ Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi (4th consecutive year)
  - Category – 15 to 25 million passengers per year
    - ◊ Rajiv Gandhi International airport, Hyderabad
  - Category – 5 to 15 million passengers per year
    - ◊ Cochin International Airport, Cochin
    - ◊ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, Ahmedabad
  - Category – 2 to 5 million passengers per year
    - ◊ Chandigarh Airport, Chandigarh
- ⊙ India has improved its rank by three spots to acquire 136th position in the United Nations' World Happiness Report for the year 2022, which ranked 146 countries. In 2021, India's rank was 139. Finland has topped the 2022 World Happiness Report, for the fifth continuous year.

Afghanistan has been ranked as the unhappiest country in the world, at 146th position.

Top 10 countries of the 2022 World Happiness Report:

- Finland
  - Denmark
  - Iceland
  - Switzerland
  - The Netherlands
  - Luxembourg
  - Sweden
  - Norway
  - Israel
  - New Zealand
- ⊙ Every year, the Nation was observed on March 23 as Martyrs Day (Shaheed Diwas or Sarvodaya Day). The day was observed to pay tribute to the death anniversary of the freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, and Shivaram Rajguru, who laid their lives for the freedom of India. Also, 30 January is observed as Martyr's Day or Shaheed Diwas in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. On March 23, three heroes of our nation were hanged to death, namely Bhagat Singh, Shivaram Rajguru, and Sukhdev Thapar by the British. No doubt, they also sacrificed their lives for the welfare of our nation. These heroes fought for the welfare of people and sacrificed their lives for the same cause. For many young Indians, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev have become a source of inspiration. Even during British rule, their sacrifice urged many people to come forth and fight for their freedom.
  - ⊙ In this month, the merger of Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) will be completed. The decision to merge BBNL and BSNL had already been taken by the government and this process was scheduled to be completed before 31st March. The government has plans to infuse funds of around Rs 1.6 trillion, of which Rs 36,260 crore would be cash support for BSNL over a period of the next three years. As of January 31, BSNL/MTNL had a combined debt of Rs 59,588 crore. The organizations' AGR (adjusted gross revenue) dues (spectrum usage charges and licencing fee) are currently Rs 43,148 crore. For both BSNL and MTNL, the government is thinking of converting AGR dues into equity.



## ECONOMY

- ⊙ The Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH) has been inaugurated by Shaktikanta Das, governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in Bengaluru. RBIH has been set up as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI with Rs 100 crore as an initial capital contribution. An independent board has been constituted for this hub with S. Gopalakrishnan selected as the Chairman. The board also has other individuals from academia as well as industry. This initiative of the RBI puts it among a select few global central banks that are trying to bring about change in the mode of engagement while trying to bring about innovations in this sector.
- ⊙ India's exports crossed the USD 400 billion mark in a fiscal year. This is the first time India's export has reached such heights. This milestone has been achieved due to good performance by various sectors such as engineering, petroleum products, jewellery and gems, and chemicals. Exports increased by 37 percent to USD 400.8 billion in 2021-22 until March 21, compared to USD 292 billion in 2020-21. Earlier, a record of USD 330.07 billion in 2018-19 was reached by outbound shipments.
- ⊙ In the first hike since 2018, the US Federal Reserve increased the interest rates by 25 basis points. In February, inflation in the United States reached 7.9%, which is the highest in 40 years. The Russia-Ukraine war has also led to an increase in global commodity prices. Thus, there is upward inflation pressure. Hence, the interest rates have to be increased to reduce the money supply in the market and curb inflation. The US Federal Reserve projected that its policy rate would hit a range between 1.75% and 2% by end of 2022. If the interest rates are hiked in the United States, it will make investments in the U.S. attractive as there will be higher returns. Thus, foreign investors will pull out their money from emerging markets like India and invest in the US for safe and secure returns. If the flight of capital from India continues, it will result in the weakening of the rupee against the dollar. If the rupee weakens it will result in imported inflation for India.
- ⊙ Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has decided to reduce the interest on provident fund (PF) deposits from 8.5% in 2020-21 to 8.1% in 2021-22. The interest rate of 8.1% will be the lowest interest rate since 1977-78 when the figure stood at 8%. This cut in interest will impact five crore subscribers of the provident fund (PF). Earlier, EPFO had cut the provident fund (PF) deposits rate to a seven-year low of 8.5% for 2019-20. The interest rate was kept unchanged in the fiscal year 2020-21.
- ⊙ On March 8, 2022, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das launched Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for feature phones called "UPI123Pay". IT is a three-step method to initiate and execute services for those who use feature phones. Except 'scan and pay' option, all other transactions can be done by feature phones, with the help of UPI 123PAY. Available services include initiating payments, paying utility bills, recharging FAST Tag, checking bank account balance, setting or changing UPI PIN. Bank account should be linked to feature phone to use UPI 123PAY. There is no need for an internet connection, to initiate and execute transactions.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- ⊙ Australia's La Trobe University in Melbourne developed an early screening tool that can detect autism in children aged between 12 and 24 months. The new tool is known as SACS (Social Attention and Communication Surveillance). It has two elements: SACS-Revised and SACS-Preschool. The SACS tool is translated into eight languages and is currently used in the following 11 countries: Bangladesh, China, Italy, Japan, Nepal, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, and the UK.
- ⊙ With the completion of clinical trials that demonstrated excellent results, the first indigenous drug to treat COVID-19 named Vincov-19 is expected to be made available to the public soon. CSIR-Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB), VINS Bioproducts, and the University of Hyderabad (UoH) has collaborated to create the drug 'Vincov-19.'



- On March 3, 2022, Union Minister of Communications, Ashwini Vaishnaw, and Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) signed the Host Country Agreement (HCA). HCA was signed in a virtual ceremony during the World Telecommunications Standardization Assembly-20 (WTSA-20) being held in Geneva, Switzerland. HCA provides the legal and financial framework for the establishment and operations of the Area Office and innovation center of ITU in New Delhi, India.

## SPORTS

- P V Sindhu won the Swiss Open 2022 defeating Busanan Ongbammrungphan of Thailand in the finals of the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament held in Basel, Switzerland.



This is her second title this season as she had earlier in January won the Syed Modi India International. She is the second Indian woman to win this tournament, following Saina Nehwal who had earlier won in 2011 and 2012. PV Sindhu is a two times Olympics medal winner having won the silver in the 2016 Rio Olympics and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

- The World Para Athletics Grand Prix began on 21st March and will continue till March 24, 2022. This event is being held in Dubai. 450 athletes

from 43 different countries will be taking part in this event. This event will take place over a four-day period. The athletes participating in this competition will be targeting to qualify for both the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Para Games and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. This event will also offer an opportunity to over 100 para-athletes including Indian athletes to get classified.

## PERSON IN NEWS

- CS Rajan has been appointed as the chairman of Infrastructure Leasing and Finance Ltd (IL&FS) and will take office after Uday Kotak's term ends this week.

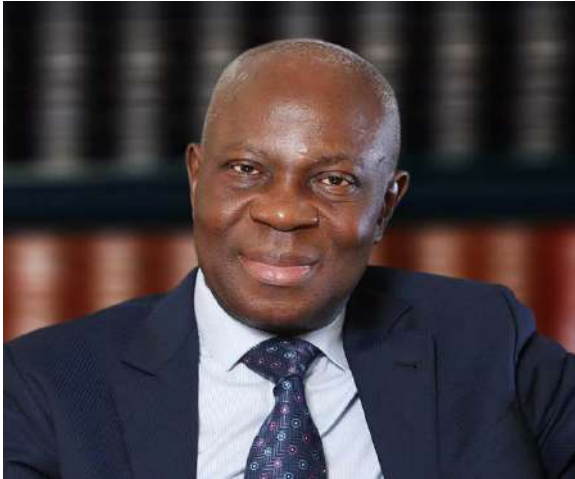


CS Rajan has been appointed to this post for a period of six months. In September 2021, the government had extended the term of Uday Kotak by six months. The term was extended so that continuity could be maintained about the plan being worked out for the crisis-struck organization. Uday Kotak is the chief executive officer (CEO) and managing director of Kotak Mahindra Bank.

- Gilbert F. Hougbo has recently been elected as the International Labour Organization's 11th Director-General.







He is the former Prime Minister of Togo and will be taking office in October 2022. He will be the first African to have been elected to this post. Since 2017, he is serving as the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). From 2008 to 2012, he served as Togo's Prime Minister.

- Debasish Panda has been appointed as the new chairperson of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for a three-year term.



Former Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary Debasish Panda, a retired IAS officer, has been appointed Chairperson of the IRDAI, the insurance regulator, by the Cabinet Appointments Committee. After a two-year service as Secretary of the (DFS) at the Finance Ministry, Panda resigned on January 31, 2022.

- Recently, Sanjeev Sanyal has been appointed to the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) as a full-time member.



Sanyal had previously served as the Finance Minister's Principal Economic Adviser under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. He had been working in the financial markets since the mid-1990s. Till 2015, he was the Managing Director and Global Strategist at Deutsche Bank. In 2017, he was appointed as the Indian government's Principal Economic Adviser. He also serves as the of the G20 Framework Working Group.

- Katalin Novák, a close ally of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, has been elected as Hungary's first female president by the Hungarian parliament. Novák, who was most recently a minister for family policy, described her victory as a win for women.



She won 137 votes to 51 in the parliament, which is dominated by Orbán's right-wing Fidesz party, defeating opponent Peter Rona, an economist. Novák will be succeeding Janos Ader, a co-founder of Orbán's ruling Fidesz party who has served as prime minister since 2012. After Ader's term ends on May 10, she will take office.



- ◎ Following his victory in South Korea's presidential election, Yoon Suk-yeol, a conservative former prosecutor, is set to become the country's next president. The 61-year-old Yoon Suk-yeol defeated Lee Jae-myung by a slim margin. With the final vote count separated by less than 1%, the results were the closest in the country's democratic history.
- ◎ Karolina Bielawska from Poland has won the title of Miss World 2021. She was crowned by 2019 Miss World Toni-Ann Singh of Jamaica. She beat the USA, Indonesia, Mexico, Northern Ireland and Cote d'Ivoire to clinch the coveted title. Indian-American Shree Saini from the United States bagged the first runner-up title, followed by Olivia Yace from Cote d'Ivoire. The 70th edition of the Miss World international beauty pageant was held in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Miss World 2019 Toni-Ann Singh performed 'The Prayer' during the 70th Miss World pageant to express solidarity with Ukraine amid the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

## PLANS AND POLICIES

- ◎ On March 29, 2022, a decentralised waste management technology park will be inaugurated in East Jaffrabad, New Delhi under the Waste to Wealth Mission which is an initiative under the Principal Scientific Adviser to the central government's office. This park will be launched in association with the East Delhi Municipal Corporation.
- ◎ The Union Cabinet which is chaired by PM Modi has approved the extension of 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)' for a time period of six months till September 2022. This scheme's phase-5 was scheduled to end in March 2022. Around Rs 2.60 lakh crore has been spent by the government so far on the scheme, with an additional Rs 80,000 crore earmarked to be spent till September 2022. This will take the total expenditure to around Rs 3.40 lakh crore.
- ◎ The Konkan Railway Corporation has finished electrification of its entire 741-kilometer route that stretches from Roha, Maharashtra to Thokur, Karnataka. This electrification of the 741-kilometer stretch will bring about savings of fuel amounting to Rs 150 crore. It will also reduce the dependence on diesel along with ensuring pollution-free, seamless operations. By December 2023, the Indian Railways have plans for 100 percent electrification of its broad-gauge network.
- ◎ On March 23, 2022, the Sujalam 2.0 campaign was launched by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the Union Minister of Jal Shakti. This campaign has been launched for greywater management. The launch event was held virtually by the Ministry of Jal Shakti's Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS).

## AWARDS AND HONOURS

1. The Oscars 2022 or the 94th Academy Awards ceremony which is presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS). This event was held on March 27, 2022 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. This event honoured the best films that were released between 1st March to December 31, 2021. On 1st February 2022, the voting for nominations concluded and on February 8, 2022, the nominations were announced. The hosts for this ceremony were Amy Schumer, Regina Hall, and Wanda Sykes. For the first time since the 83rd Academy Awards held in 2011 that multiple hosts were featured.

List of winners:

- Best Picture: CODA
- Best Actress: Jessica Chastain for the movie The Eyes Of Tammy Faye
- Best Director was won by Jane Campion for The Power Of The Dog.
- Best Actor: Will Smith for the movie King Richard
- Best Supporting Actress went to Ariana DeBose for the movie West Side Story.
- Best Supporting Actor: Troy Kotsur for the movie CODA
- Best Original Screenplay: Bellfast
- Best Adapted Screenplay: CODA
- Best International Feature Film: Drive My Car (Country-Japan)
- Best Documentary Feature: Summer Of Soul
- Best Animated Feature Film: Encanto
- Best Animated Short: The Windshield Wiper
- Best Original Score: Dune
- Best Live Action Short: The Long Goodbye
- Best Cinematography: Dune
- The Queen of Basketball received the award for Best Documentary (Short)

- Best Original Song: No Time To Die (Movie- No Time To Die)
- Best Production Design: Dune
- Best Costume Design: Cruella
- Best Sound: Dune
- Best Makeup and Hair went to the movie The Eyes of Tammy Faye
- Best Visual Effects: Dune
- Best Film Editing: Dune

© Nari Shakti Puraskar is the highest civilian honor for women in India. Nari Shakti Puraskar is an annual award given by the Ministry of Women and Child Development to individual women or to institutions working for women empowerment. In 1999, the awards were instituted under the title of Stree Shakti Puraskar. In 2015, the awards were reorganized and renamed as Nari Shakti Puraskar. Every year, on International Women's Day (8th March), President of India presents the awards to the recipients at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. The awards are given in six institutional and two individual categories. Each institutional category is named after renowned woman in Indian history.

Nari Shakti Puraskar 2020:

- Anita Gupta (Bhojpur, Bihar): The award The Nari Shakti Puraskar is presented to her for outstanding contribution forempowering rural and underprivileged women.
- Arti Rana (Kheri, Uttar Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded in recognition of her exceptional work for underprivileged and tribal women.
- Dr. Ela Lodh (West Tripura, Tripura) (Posthumous): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded posthumously for her outstanding contribution towards women's health particularly for the marginalised and underprivileged.
- Jaya Muthu and Tejamma (Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to them for their extraordinary contribution for preserving and promoting the age-old intricate Toda Embroidery of Nilgiris.
- Jodhaiya Bai Baiga (Umaria, Madhya Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for resilience and brilliance in promoting the Tribal Baiga Art at the global level. By doing so, she is helping the art from becoming extinct.
- Meera Thakur (S.A.S Nagar, Punjab): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is being awarded to her for promoting the unique Sikki Grass Art and empowering the underprivileged women in Punjab.
- Nasira Akhter (Kulgam, Jammu and Kashmir): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is being awarded to her for exemplary grassroots innovation for environmental conservation.
- Nivruti Rai (Bengaluru Urban, Karnataka): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for excellence in the field of technology, truly representing the 21st Century Women and empowering students to build Artificial Intelligence enabled Hi-Tech future for India.
- Padma Yangchan (Leh, Ladakh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for preserving and reviving the lost cuisine and hand weaving techniques of Ladakh and promoting it at International Level.
- Sandhya Dhar (Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to recognise her exceptional contribution and indomitable spirit & dedication towards divyangjan rights.
- Saylee Nandkishor Agavane (Pune, Maharashtra): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her in recognition of her excellence in promoting Indian Classical Dance internationally despite facing hardship.
- Tiffany Brar (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala): Nari Shakti Puraskar is being awarded to her for exemplary work done for visually impaired rural women and motivating the masses despite being visually challenged.
- Ushaben Dineshbhai Vasava (Narmada, Gujarat): Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for outstanding contribution in organic farming and assisting and educating the women farmers at ground level.
- Vanita Jagdeo Borade (Buldhana, Maharashtra): Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded in recognition of her exemplary efforts in wildlife conservation particularly by rescuing Snakes and creating awareness on the subject.
- Anshul Malhotra (Mandi, Himachal Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her in recognition of her outstanding contribution for skilling the underprivileged rural women in learning handloom weaving and also for preserving and promoting Himachal Handloom.

- Batool Begam (Jaipur, Rajasthan): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for her outstanding contribution in promoting Indian folk music internationally and also being a source of inspiration for others.
  - Kamal Kumbhar (Osamanabad, Maharashtra): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for contribution in promoting women's entrepreneurship in the field of animal husbandry
  - Madhulika Ramteke (Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for remarkable efforts for upliftment of women and their economic empowerment.
  - Neena Gupta (Kolkata, West Bengal): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for her excellence in the field of Mathematics.
  - Neerja Madhav (Uttar Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her in recognition of her work for marginalised people through Hindi Sahitya.
  - Niranjana Mukulbhai, (Kalarthi, Surat, Gujarat): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for promoting Gujarati language and to promote the education of underprivileged tribal girls.
  - Pooja Sharma (Gurugram, Haryana): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for her outstanding contribution in the field of skill development and empowerment of women and entrepreneurship.
  - Radhika Menon (Dharwad, Karnataka): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for excellence in Indian Merchant Navy & exemplary courage.
  - Sathupati Prasanna Sree (Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her exceptional contribution for preserving minority tribal languages.
  - Shobha Gasti (Belagavi, Karnataka): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for remarkable efforts & exemplary contribution for the cause of empowerment of women and girls.
  - Sruti Mohapatra (Bhubaneswar, Odisha): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her indomitable spirit and for outstanding contribution towards the upliftment and empowerment of Divyangjan.
  - Tage Rita Takhe (Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is given to her for excellence in promoting women entrepreneurship and local product internationally.
  - Thara Rangaswamy (Chennai, Tamil Nadu): The Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded to her for her innovative and relentless efforts to create awareness about and cure for mental disorders.
- ◎ The Ministry of Tourism constituted the Swadesh Darshan awards in various categories to acknowledge the efforts made by state governments, union territory administrations, and various implementing agencies. The awards will be given to recognize best practices like innovative approach, achievement of planned objectives, the adoption of sustainability principles in design, planning, and operations, ability to attract private investments in peripheral development, efficient project monitoring, and efforts undertaken to ensure optimal operations and maintenance, etc. The UT administrations and the State Governments have been asked to submit their entries via online mode.
  - ◎ The winner of the Abel Prize 2022 is Dennis Parnell Sullivan, an American mathematician. This award also includes prize money which amounts to 7 Million NOK (Norwegian Krone). He received this award for his contributions to topology, especially its geometric, algebraic, and dynamical aspects. Topology is a field of mathematics that considers two things of different forms to be equivalent only if they can be deformed into each other.
  - ◎ The Stockholm Water Prize 2022 has been awarded by The Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) to Professor Wilfried Brutsaert for his innovative work in evaluating environmental evaporation. This prize is widely considered to be the Nobel Prize for Water. Professor Brutsaert was awarded this prize as he has developed methods for quantifying evaporation and the role it plays in the Earth's energy balance that allows for accurate estimations of how precipitation can evolve. This method is of utmost importance to the exposed local communities across the world as they will be needing to predict daily water levels as well as water levels available in the future.

