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1. General Upendra Dwivedi Takes Charge as Chief of Army Staff (June 30, 2024)

General Upendra Dwivedi took over as the 30th Chief of Army Staff on June 30, 2024, succeeding General Manoj Pandey.

An Overview of the News

- General Upendra Dwivedi, PVSM, AVSM, ADC, was currently serving as a four-star General Officer in the Indian Army.
- Prior to his appointment as the Army Chief, he held the post of 46th Vice Chief of Army Staff.

Key Appointments as Lieutenant General:

- Director General Infantry
- General Officer Commanding in Chief (Headquarters Northern Command) from 2022 to 2024
- Vice Chief of the Army Staff

Education:

- Alumnus of Sainik School, Rewa
- National Defence College
- US Army War College
- Holds an MPhil in Defence and Management Studies
- Two Master's Degrees in Strategic Studies and Military Science

Honors:

- Param Vishisht Seva Medal
- Ati Vishisht Seva Medal
- Three GOC-in-C Commendation Cards

2. Arundhati Roy Wins 2024 PEN Pinter Prize for Unflinching Writings (June 29, 2024)

Renowned Indian author Arundhati Roy has won the prestigious PEN (Poet, Playwright, Editors, Essayist, Novelist) Pinter Prize 2024 for her 'unflinching and unswerving' writings.

An Overview of the News

- The prize is shared with a designated 'Writer of Courage', someone who has been persecuted for speaking out about their beliefs.
- She will receive the award at a ceremony co-hosted by the British Library (BL) in London, United Kingdom (UK) on October 10, 2024.

Selection Process:

- Arundhati Roy was chosen by a panel of judges: Ruth Borthwick (Chair of English PEN), Khalid Abdalla (Actor and Activist), and Roger Robinson (Writer and Musician).

About PEN Pinter Prize:

- Establishment: 2009 by English PEN, a founding center of a global literary network promoting literature and human rights.
- Purpose: Recognizes "Writers of Courage" who defend the dignity and rights of others through their words.
- Namesake: Award given in memory of playwright Harold Pinter, Nobel Prize in Literature recipient in 2005.
- Eligibility: Writers in English residing in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, or the Commonwealth.
- **Previous Winners (2023):**
 - Michael Rosen (British author)
 - Rahile Dawut (Chinese anthropologist, Writers of Courage)

About Arundhati Roy:

- Profile: Well-known contemporary Indian writer in English, screenwriter, activist, actress, and peace activist.
- Prosecution Threat: Currently facing the threat of prosecution over historic comments on Kashmir 14 years ago.
- **Notable Works:**
 - "The End of Imagination" (essay critiquing Indian nuclear policies)
 - "The Cost of Living" (1999)
 - "Power Politics" (2001)
 - "Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers" (2009)
 - "Ministry of Utmost Happiness" (2017)
 - "Broken Republic: Three Essays" (2011)

Other Awards & Honors:

- Booker Prize: Won in 1997 for debut novel "The God of Small Things," the first Indian writer to achieve this.
- Sydney Peace Prize: Awarded in May 2004 for her work in social campaigns and advocacy of non-violence.

3. Naveen Chandra Jha Appointed as MD & CEO of SBI General Insurance (June 28, 2024)

Naveen Chandra Jha has been appointed as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD & CEO) of SBI General Insurance Company Limited.

An Overview of the News

- His nomination came from the parent company, State Bank of India (SBI), replacing Kishore Kumar Poludasu.
- Before his current role, Jha served as the Deputy Managing Director of SBI and has been associated with SBI since 1994.
- He has held various key positions including Chief General Manager (CGM) of Amaravati Circle, Andhra Pradesh (AP).
- Jha's experience spans Branch Management, Credit and Risk Management focusing on Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Credit, Human Resources (HR) & Administration, and Retail Banking.
- In the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2024, SBI infused additional capital amounting to Rs 489.67 crore into SBI General Insurance Company Ltd.

About SBI

- Founded as Bank of Calcutta in 1806, later renamed Bank of Bengal.
- Merged with Bank of Bombay and Bank of Madras in 1921 to form Imperial Bank of India.
- Renamed State Bank of India on July 1, 1955, after independence.
- Headquarters located in Mumbai.
- Current Chairman: Dinesh Kumar Khara.

4. SEVENTEEN Appointed UNESCO's First - Ever Goodwill Ambassadors for Youth (June 28, 2024)

On June 26, 2024, **Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO**, appointed **K-pop group SEVENTEEN** as UNESCO's first-ever Goodwill Ambassador for Youth.

An Overview of the News

- The appointment was made during a ceremony in **Paris, France**, where SEVENTEEN pledged **USD 1 million towards UNESCO's initiatives**.
- SEVENTEEN and UNESCO launched a joint program aimed at youth, titled **"Going Together For Youth Creativity and Well-Being"**.
- This program includes an ambitious Global Youth Grant Scheme to support youth-led projects worldwide.

Global Youth Grant Scheme

- The scheme targets youth-led projects addressing challenges in well-being and development through music, arts, and sports.
- It supports project leaders aged 18 to 30 from diverse backgrounds and regions globally.

Role of SEVENTEEN as Goodwill Ambassadors

- SEVENTEEN will actively participate in UNESCO's campaigns and events as Goodwill Ambassadors.
- They will promote UNESCO's values during their performances and engagements worldwide.

Previous Initiatives and Collaborations

- In 2022, SEVENTEEN initiated the '#GoingTogether' campaign with the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.
- This initiative supported educational projects in Timor-Leste and provided educational aid in Malawi.

Engagement with UNESCO Youth Forum

- Through the UNESCO Youth Forum, UNESCO fosters direct communication between young people and leaders of its 194 Member States.
- This forum enhances youth engagement and advocacy within UNESCO's global initiatives.

IMPORTANT POINTS:-

- SEVENTEEN participated in the 13th UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris in November 2023.
- They delivered a speech and performed live for the first time in France during the event.
- Their performance reached over 40 million online viewers.
- Members of SEVENTEEN include: **S.Coups, Jeonghan, Joshua, Jun, Hoshi, Wonwoo, Woozi, The8, Mingyu, DK, Seungkwan, Vernon, and Dino**.

NOTE:- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, has named British actor, producer, and model Theo James as its new Global Goodwill Ambassador.

5. Pradeep Singh Kharola Appointed as Director General of NTA (June 26, 2024)

Pradeep Singh Kharola, retired IAS officer (1985 Kerala cadre), has been appointed as Director General of the National Testing Agency (NTA) by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, Ministry of Education.

An Overview of the News

- Currently serving as Chairman and Managing Director of India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO).

Challenges Faced by NTA:

- NTA has encountered issues such as exam cancellations and allegations of paper leaks (e.g., NEET-UG, UGC NET, CSIR UGC NET).
- Concerns raised about inconsistent marking practices affecting public trust.

Objectives of the Appointment:

- Tasked with restoring credibility to NTA through enhanced security measures and transparent examinations.
- Focus on reforms in testing procedures and marking schemes.

Immediate Priorities:

- Strengthening exam security to prevent future leaks.
- Implementing rigorous evaluation processes to ensure fairness.

Committee Formation:

- A seven-member committee established to assess NTA operations and recommend improvements.
- Expected collaboration with Kharola to drive necessary reforms.

Monitoring and Expectations:

- Kharola's tenure will be closely monitored for rebuilding public confidence in NTA.
- Emphasis on transparency and fair practices in competitive examinations.

About NTA

- The National Testing Agency (NTA) operates autonomously under India's Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education since November 2017.
- Its primary mandate is to organize entrance examinations for admissions and recruitment purposes.
- NTA conducts a variety of national-level exams covering fields such as engineering, medicine, management, and pharmacy.
- These exams are crucial for securing admission and fellowships in higher educational institutions across India.
 - Headquarters:- **New Delhi**
 - Chairperson:- **Pradeep Kumar Joshi**
 - Director General:- **Pradeep Singh Kharola, IAS (Additional charge)**

6. Om Birla Re-Elected as Speaker of Lok Sabha (June 26, 2024)

Senior BJP MP Om Birla re-elected as the Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha.

An Overview of the News

- Election by voice vote; opposition fielded Congress MP K. Suresh but did not press for voting.
- Om Birla previously served as Speaker in the last Lok Sabha.

Address by Om Birla:

- Thanked members of the House for the opportunity and trust.
- Emphasized priorities: enriching parliamentary values and democratic traditions.
- Highlighted participation of over 64 crore voters in the 18th Lok Sabha elections.
- Stressed MPs' responsibility to meet people's expectations effectively.
- Advocated for debate and discussion over stalemate, maintaining dignity in protest methods.
- Affirmed strict actions to maintain the House's dignity and decorum.

About Lok Sabha

- The Lok Sabha is composed of representatives chosen by direct election based on Universal Adult Suffrage.
- The Constitution of India allows for a maximum of 550 members: 530 from States and 20 from Union Territories.

- Currently, the Lok Sabha has 543 elected representatives.
- The term of the Lok Sabha is five years from its first meeting unless dissolved earlier.
- During a state of emergency, the term can be extended by Parliament for up to one year at a time, but not beyond six months after the emergency ends.

7. Atul Kumar Chaudhary Named New TRAI Secretary (June 25, 2024)

The Government of India (GoI) has appointed Atul Kumar Chaudhary as the new Secretary of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on deputation on foreign service terms, initially for a period of two years.

An Overview of the News

- This appointment follows the superannuation of V Raghunandan on May 31, 2024.
- Atul Kumar Chaudhary has been serving as the Deputy Director General (DDG) in the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) since 2021.

About Atul Kumar Chaudhary:

- He is an Indian Telecommunication Services (ITS) officer of the 1989 batch.
- He served as Deputy Director General (DDG) in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), under the Ministry of Communications (MoC).
- He has held multiple roles in personnel management, human resources (HR), administration, licensing, and the vigilance wing of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and DoT.

About TRAI:

- It is a statutory body that regulates the telecommunications sector in India.
- Established: **1997**
- Chairman: **Anil Kumar Lahoti**

8. Manoj Jain Appointed as New Chairman and Managing Director of BEL (June 24, 2024)

Manoj Jain appointed as Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) with effect from June 20, 2024.

An Overview of the News

- Earlier Manoj Jain served as Director (R&D) and held additional charge of Bangalore Complex Director.

Predecessor and Current Roles:

- Bhanu Prakash Srivastava served as CMD (Additional Charge) from November 2022 to June 19, 2024.
- Currently serves as Director (other units) since April 20, 2022.

Manoj Jain's Career Highlights:

- Joined BEL in August 1991 as a Probationary Engineer.
- Key contributions include development of Digital Multiplexers, Cross Connects, CDOT Exchanges, and Military Switches.
- Chief Scientist at Central Research Laboratory Bangalore (CRL-BG) from December 2017 to May 2019.
- General Manager of Electronic Warfare and Avionics SBUs at BEL's Bangalore Complex in June 2021.
- Additional charge of Director (HR) from November 2022 to May 2023.
- Received several R&D awards, Key Contributor Awards, Raksha Mantri's Award, and SODET Awards.

About BEL:

- CMD: Manoj Jain
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka
- Established: 1954

9. UNHCR Appoints Theo James as Global Goodwill Ambassador (June 19, 2024)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Refugee Agency, has named British actor, producer, and model Theo James as its new Global Goodwill Ambassador.

An Overview of the News

- Theo James' birth name is Theodore Peter James Kinnaird Taptiklis.
- Goodwill Ambassadors are prominent public figures associated with UNHCR.
- They enhance the organization's global visibility through their influence, dedication, and hard work.

Theo James' Support for UNHCR:

- Theo James has been a High Profile Supporter of UNHCR since 2016, actively engaging through field visits, fundraising events, and advocacy campaigns.

- In 2016, he embarked on his first UNHCR field mission to Greece to gain firsthand knowledge of UNHCR's work and the refugee crisis.
- In 2019, he contributed his voice to a video for UNHCR's High-Level Segment on Statelessness, promoting the global efforts of the "#IBelong Campaign" to End Statelessness.

• **Notable Works of Theo James as an Actor:**

- Underworld: Awakening (2012)
- Divergent (2014)
- The Divergent Series: Insurgent (2015)
- Allegiant (2016)
- How It Ends (2018)
- The White Lotus (2022)
- The Gentlemen (2024)

About UNHCR:

- UNHCR, formally known as the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.
- A global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes due to conflict and persecution.
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees: **Filippo Grandi**
- Headquarters: **Genève, Switzerland**
- Established: **1950**

10. ACC Reappoints Ajit Doval as NSA and PK Mishra as Principal Secretary to PM Modi (June 15, 2024)

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the reappointment of Ajit Kumar Doval as the National Security Advisor (NSA) and Pramod Kumar (PK) Mishra as the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, effective June 10, 2024.

An Overview of the News

- Ajit Doval has been serving as the NSA since May 30, 2014, and this marks his third consecutive appointment to the position.
- PK Mishra has been serving as the Principal Secretary to the PM since September 2019.
- Both Ajit Doval and PK Mishra will hold the rank of Cabinet Minister in the Table of Precedence during their term.
- Their appointments are co-terminus with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders.

About Ajit Kumar Doval

- Serving as NSA since May 30, 2014, and this is his third consecutive term.
- Former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1968 batch of Kerala cadre.
- Actively involved in anti-insurgency operations in Punjab and Mizoram, earning the title 'Indian James Bond'.
- Served as Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) from 2004 to 2005.
- Appointed as Chairman of the Strategic Policy Group (SPG) in October 2018.

About PK Mishra

- Serving as Principal Secretary to the PM since September 2019.
- Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from the 1972 batch of Gujarat cadre.
- Served as Secretary to Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture from 2006 to 2008.
- Held the position of Additional Principal Secretary to the PM from 2014 to 2019.
- Extensive expertise in policy making and administration, including roles as Secretary of Agriculture and Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, Chairman of the State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC), and in disaster management.

Additional Appointments by ACC

- New Advisors to the PM:
 - Amit Khare: Retired IAS officer appointed as Advisor to the PM.
 - Tarun Kapoor: Retired IAS officer appointed as Advisor to the PM.
- Appointment Details:
 - Both advisors have been appointed in the rank and scale of Secretary to the Government for a period of two years, effective from June 10, 2024, or until further orders.
 - These appointments are on a contract basis as per usual terms and conditions.

About ACC

- Chairperson: **Narendra Modi**
- Headquarters: **New Delhi, Delhi**